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# THE UNIVERSITY APPLICATION PROCESS

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UNIVERSITY ACADEMY  
HOLBEACH

## A guide for students



**This guide is for anyone applying to study at University. It covers the key stages of the UCAS process.**

University Academy Holbeach runs numerous sessions for pupils offering advice and guidance however if you would like any further information then please contact the Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form directly at [Donna.Allen@uah.org.uk](mailto:Donna.Allen@uah.org.uk)

Ultimately, going to university will equip you with skills and experiences that you can use in your career and in your personal life.

## Why Higher Education?

Going to University is a big decision, so it's important that you spend time researching all your options as well as talking about your ideas to parents / guardians and teaching staff.

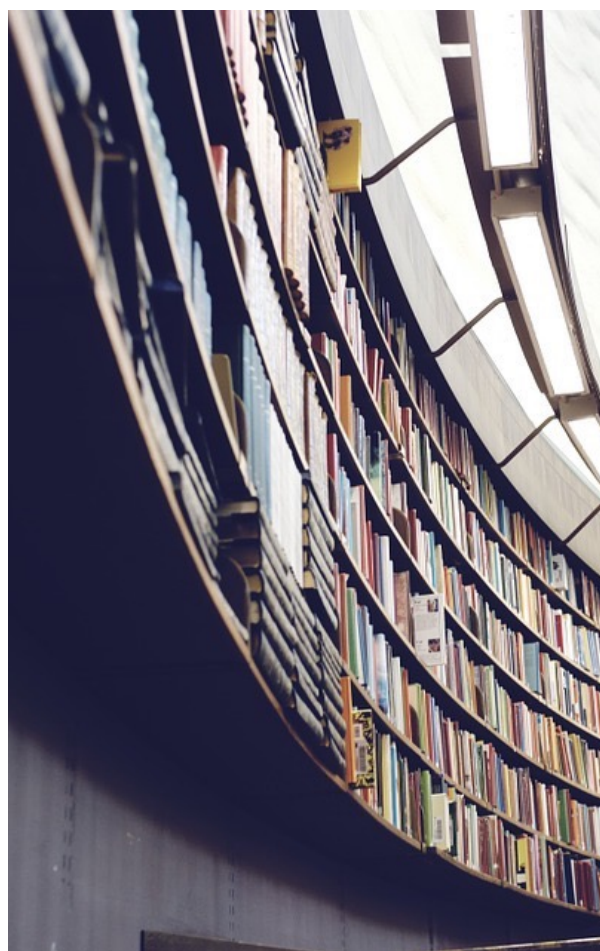
At university you will have the opportunity to:

- Study a subject that you are passionate about

- Achieve a qualification that will lead to your chosen career
- Learn to be an independent thinker for all aspects and challenges of life
- Develop important skills that will widen your prospects
- Become more independent and self-confident
- Make lifelong friends

Once you have your degree you will have:

- The opportunity to follow your career path
- Better job prospects
- Higher earning potential
- Ultimately, going to university will equip you with skills and experiences you can use in your career and personal life.



## What is UCAS?

UCAS is the organisation that processes application to study full time courses at universities and colleges in the UK. However they don't just process applications; their aim is to help students make informed choices that are right for them, by

**“Their aim is to help students make informed choices that are right for them”**

- UCAS

guiding them through the entire higher education application process. To support this, they provide a wide range of information and supporting services for learners, applicants and their parents.

By using their website — [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) you will be able to find out more about how to research courses, make and track applications.

There are specialist sections to help and support you as well as helpful video guides.

There are over 35,000 courses available to choose from, it is vital therefore that you complete lots of research

## Dates You Need to Know

### Summer of Year 12

- Students can start completing their Application forms on APPLY (UCAS)

### Year 13

#### Mid-October

- UCAS deadline for applications — for students wishing to apply to Oxford or Cambridge

#### December

- UCAS deadline for all applications — if students wish to guarantee that their applications are viewed and given equal consideration by all of their University choices. This is also the University Academy Holbeach School Deadline for all applications.

#### June

- Last UCAS deadline — however no guarantees are made and most places have already been allocated — so don't leave it this late!

You should start your search online using the UCAS website

#### Mid-August

- A Level results / BTEC result confirmation-all University places are confirmed with students

#### Clearing starts-

- This service is for students who have not got any University options but still wish to attend

There will be specified cut off dates for replying to offers — details can be found on [www.ucas.com/whentoapply](http://www.ucas.com/whentoapply)

Schools will set earlier deadlines than UCAS so that staff have enough time to check and write references for each individual student. Please stick to the school deadline to guarantee you have enough time to send your form!

The screenshot shows the UCAS website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: UCAS, Advisers, Providers, Corporate, and Events. Below this is the UCAS logo and the tagline 'At the heart of connecting people to higher education'. The main content area features a large red banner with the text 'Check Track to see by 24 June' and a 'Sign in to Track' button. To the left of the banner is a vertical sidebar with social media icons for Facebook (727), Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn (39), Pinterest (10), and a plus sign for more (6.7K). Below the banner, there are two columns of links. The first column, under '1. Getting started', includes links for 'Thinking about uni?', 'What to study', 'International and EU students', 'Information for parents', and 'Sign up to the UCAS Undergraduate newsletter'. The second column, under '2. Find a course', includes links for 'Find out how to apply', 'Thinking about a course', 'Browse through courses', 'Visit unis and open days', and 'Book to visit a course'.

## Choosing a Course and a University

There are over 35,000 courses available to choose from it is vital therefore that you complete lots of research

Eventually you will need to decide on a maximum of 5 different Universities / courses to apply for.

### Get online

You will need to start your search online at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) this will allow you to look through all Universities and all courses. As well as showing you fees, entry requirements and details on how to apply for individual courses.

Once you have narrowed down the field you will then need to look at the individual Universities website for more in depth detail about the courses and facilities. You can also look at virtual tours at [www.ucas.com/virtual-tours](http://www.ucas.com/virtual-tours)

**“By using the UCAS website you will be able to find out more about how to research courses, make and track applications.”**

- UCAS

Things you can do to help you plan your future:

- Write a list of things you are interested in
- Talk to as many people as you can to find out about their experiences of work and university
- Arrange some work experience to find out more about the subject in the workplace
- Try some part time work at weekend or holidays
- Try some volunteering

## Getting Out and About

### UCAS Convention

University Academy Holbeach offers all students the opportunity to go to the UCAS convention at Lincoln. This is a great opportunity for you to talk to staff from over a 100 Universities and ask questions about their courses and facilities as well as collect prospectuses

### University Open Days

University Academy Holbeach organises trips out to University Open Days every year that students can sign up for. If there are other Open Days that you wish to

go on then UAH is happy for you to go to these. You can find out about open days at [www.ucas.com/events/exploring-university/find-open-day](http://www.ucas.com/events/exploring-university/find-open-day)

### Taster Days

These are usually tailored to specific courses or subjects and include things like workshops. They can be one day, over the weekend or a week. You can search for taster courses at: [www.ucas.com/taster-courses](http://www.ucas.com/taster-courses)

## The UCAS Tariff

This is used by Universities to make broad comparison between qualifications used for entry to higher education. Points have been allocated to a wide range of qualifications and these can be added together, within certain rules to achieve a Tariff score.

- For courses starting before September 2017 – [www.ucas.com/tariff-tables](http://www.ucas.com/tariff-tables)
- For courses starting from September 2017 – [www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-starting/entry-requirements/tariff/new-tariff](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-starting/entry-requirements/tariff/new-tariff).



University Academy Holbeach offers all students the opportunity to go to the UCAS convention at Lincoln.

## Filling in the UCAS Application

University Academy Holbeach will offer lots of advice and guidance. You can also watch a short video about filling in the application [www.ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication](http://www.ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication)

It's vital that you remember your log in details as you will need them throughout the year!

## Register for UCAS

This is the first step to starting the UCAS process. It is free and takes about 15 mins to enter in all of the basic details. Once registered there are 7 sections that you need to complete

1. Personal details
2. Additional Information



3. Student Finance
4. Choices – students can apply for a maximum of 5 different Universities / courses
5. Education – all exams that were completed in year 11 and those that are due to be completed in year 13
6. Personal Statement – this is their opportunity to convince the University to offer them a place
7. Employment

Once all of these sections are complete staff at UAH will check all of the details and then write your reference and predicted grades.

## Starting Work on your Personal Statement

Many students find writing their personal statement the most difficult part of the whole process

### Where to start?

- Think about what is exciting about yourself and makes you stand out — in a good way
- Write down words that come to mind — anything that shows why you are really excited about the courses you are applying for. Keep it positive

**“It’s that you remember your log in details as they will need them throughout the year!”**

- UCAS

- List supporting evidence to back up why you are so excited about the courses you have chosen, include work experience or out of school activities
- Think about the skills you can use on the course; leadership, communication, playing music etc

### Pulling it together

Taking all the ideas and turning them into a great statement is the next step.

### Key points

- There is a maximum of 4000 characters to write your personal statement.
- It is vital that personal statements are well written and accurate in terms

of spelling, punctuation and grammar

- It must be your own work – UCAS has software that scans all statements for plagiarism. If it is found that you have plagiarised from another statement then it is likely you will be banned from applying to University.

### **Make sure it has a clear structure**

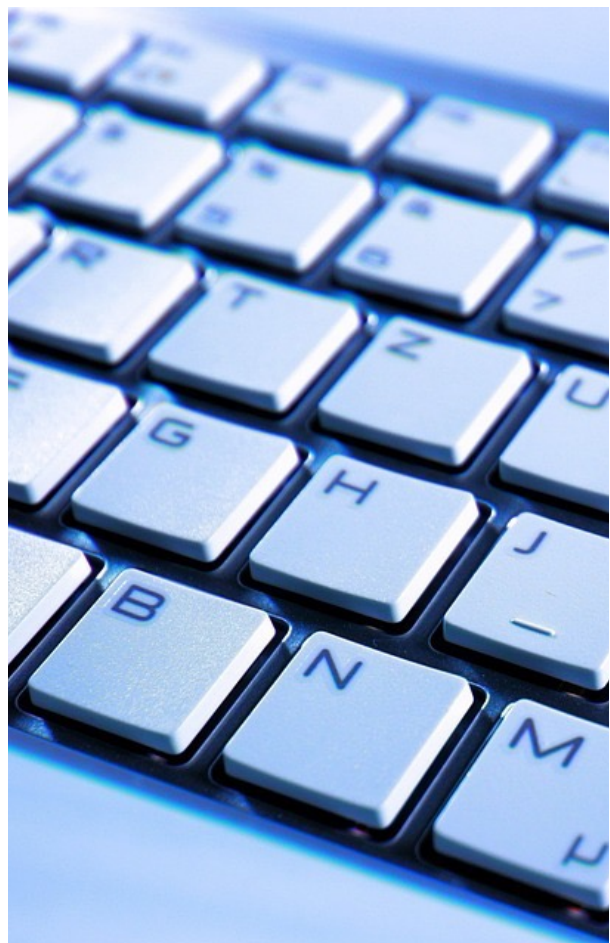
1. A punchy opening paragraph showing your excitement and understanding of what the course is all about
2. Evidence to support your interest in the course. This can include:
  - Skills from your current course (both academic and practical)
  - Academic knowledge from your current courses / research , etc.
  - All other relevant skills and personal qualities, this must be evidenced by discussing extra-curricular activities, part time work / work experience
3. Closing paragraph — end with a concise paragraph leaving the reader with a clear understanding of why the course is right for you and why you are perfect for the course.

**Students have a maximum of 4000 characters to write their personal statement.**

Students will get a lot of support and help with their personal statements from specialist tutors at University Academy Holbeach.

The average student will take 6 re-drafts of their personal statement before it is ready to be sent off to Universities. It is therefore vital that students start their statements in the summer term of year 12 to give themselves enough time to do this successfully. A poor personal statement may well mean that students will not be offered a place at University!

You can get additional help and support about personal statements at: [www.ucas.com/personalstatement](http://www.ucas.com/personalstatement)



## Once students have completed the UCAS form

1. Staff at University Academy will check the form with students 1:1 and instruct you on how to send it
2. Teaching staff then have to complete a 4,000 character academic and pastoral reference and provide realistic predicted grades (which are based on AS exams / mock tests/current work)
3. The UCAS form then goes to UCAS who check it for plagiarism
4. It will then be sent out to all 5 Universities for consideration
5. The Universities then notify students through “ UCAS Track” their decisions

### Types of Offer:

- **Conditional offers** — the offer is dependent on the student achieving certain grades
  - **Unconditional offer** — means they are guaranteed a place if they accept
  - **Unsuccessful** – the university has decided they do not want to offer the student a place
6. Students then wait for replies from all of their Universities before making a decision about which one they would like as their first choice university and which one is their reserve choice. They must ensure that they read all of the terms and conditions carefully before making their decision. Further information can be found at: [www.ucas.com/replies](http://www.ucas.com/replies)

**“A poor personal statement may well mean that you will not be offered a place at University!”**

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- **Firm Choice** – this is their first choice and they are committed to going here if they meet the Universities criteria
  - **Insurance Choice** – this is their back up and they will only go here if they do not meet the criteria for their firm choice. They must therefore choose a university that has a less demanding entry requirements.
7. Once they have made a decisions on their firm and reserve choice you then decline your other offers through UCAS Track



## UCAS Extra

If you change your mind about what you want to study at University before result day then you have one last opportunity to find a more suitable course.

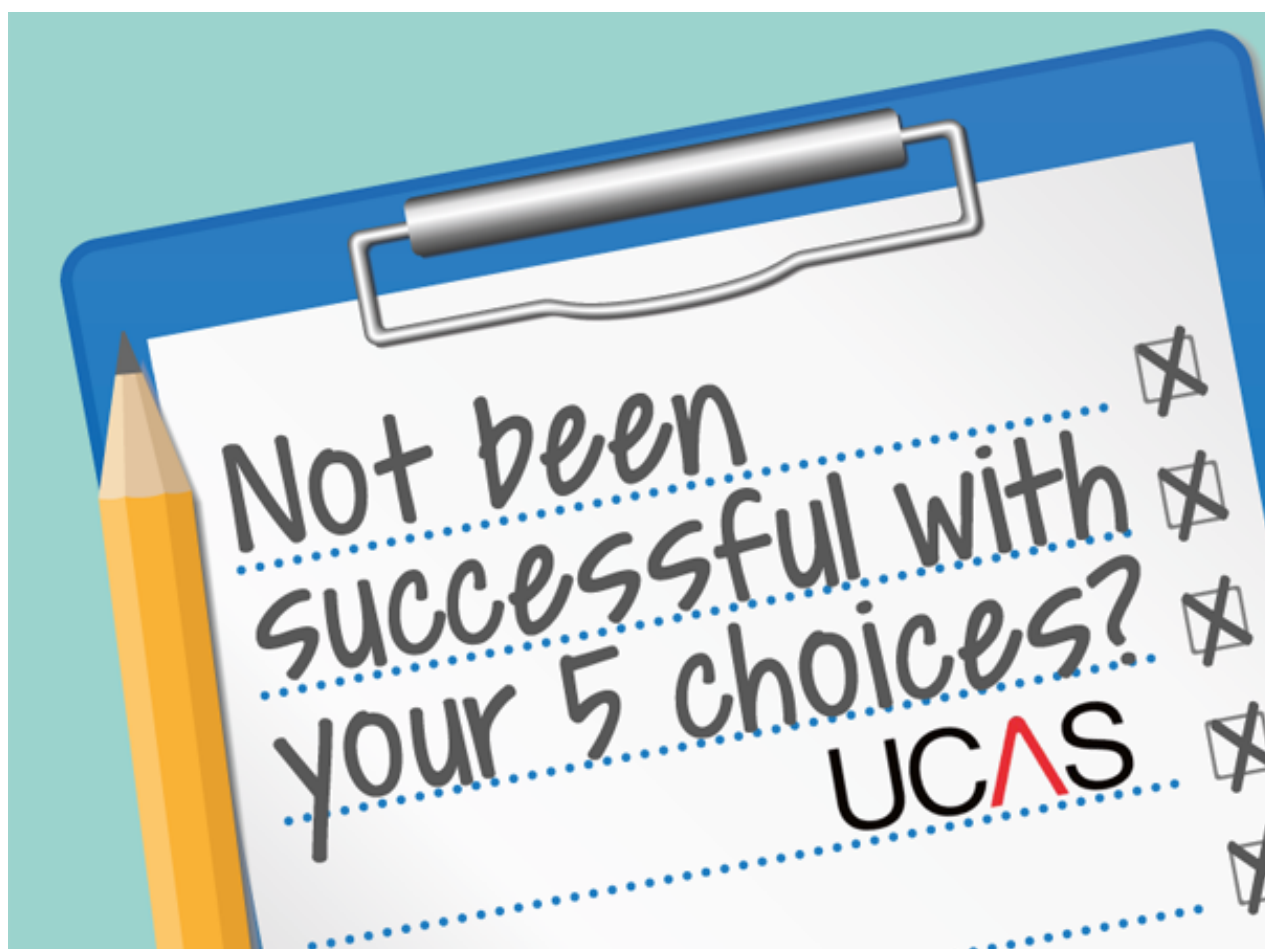
This is done through UCAS Extra which opens in late February and closes in early July. There are only limited places through this so there is no guarantee that students will find a more suitable course. This is why researching Universities and courses thoroughly in the first instance is so important.

For further information: [www.ucas.com/extra](http://www.ucas.com/extra)

## Preparing for Results Day

Results day is in Mid-August – this is when all Universities will contact students and either confirm their offers or withdrawn their offers if students haven't met the entrance criteria.

Before you get to results day it is important to spend some time considering what you will do if you don't get the results you were expecting. This will help save time and stress later!



## If you don't achieve what you wanted to what are the alternatives?

- The University may still accept you — this is particularly true if you only missed out by one grade (although there is no guarantee)
- The same University may offer you a place on an alternative course
- They may decline you in which case you can do the following:
  - Look for a different course through Clearing – [www.ucas.com/clearing](http://www.ucas.com/clearing)
  - Retake exams and apply next year
  - Move on into full time work/apprenticeship or traineeship instead

There is more information at: [www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/alternatives-higher-education](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/alternatives-higher-education).

## Student Finance

The majority of students take out a student loan to pay for their time at University. This is made up from a mixture of repayable and non-repayable loans, as well as means tested and non means tested loans and grants.

- Tuition Fees – up to £9,000 per Year
- Maintenance loans and grants — these cover living cost such as accommodation, food etc
- Special support grants — specific additional payment in specific situations
- Extra support is also available for students with disabilities

You can find out more about loans at: [www.gov.uk/studentfinancesteps](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinancesteps)

You can find out more about scholarships at: [www.scholarship-search.org.uk](http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk)

There are also lots of subject specific loans, bursaries and grants available particularly if the student is looking at a career in the NHS for example: [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk)

## When do students need to apply?

Students should apply as soon as possible in the spring of their year 13

## How do they Apply?

It is all done online

- Students complete a section about their course / university
- Parents then have to complete a section; this include information about earnings, dependent children , etc.
- The Student Loan company may ask for documentary evidence which you then must send to them
- Once the loan application has been sent to them they will reply by sending a loan declaration containing the details of the funding they will receive. They must sign and return this

## When will the Student Receive the Loan?

Students are paid over 3 instalment at the start of each term



There are also lots of subject specific loans, bursaries and grants available

## Repayments – how much will it cost?

- Students will only start repaying their student loan when they have left university and are clearing over the income threshold — see the current threshold amount on the student loan website
- The amount they will pay back each month is dependent on how much they are earning
- The loan is written off after 30 years (if it hasn't all been paid back already)
- For further information about student finance go to [www.ucas.com/startingstudies](http://www.ucas.com/startingstudies) or <http://www.slc.co.uk/>

## Getting help online

- Careers Advice - National Careers Service for England - [www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)
- Students with disabilities / Disability Rights UK [www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org) and [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas)
- Gap Year - [www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)
- General higher Education Advice - [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)
- NUS - [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)