
THE UNIVERSITY APPLICATION PROCESS

UNIVERSITY ACADEMY
HOLBEACH

A guide for parents



This guide is for anyone supporting a young person 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 6th Form directly at Donna.Allen@uah.org.uk

Why Higher Education?

Making the decision about going to university involves all the family, so it's important that everyone, including parents, guardians know about the benefits

While your son or daughter is at university they'll have the opportunity to:

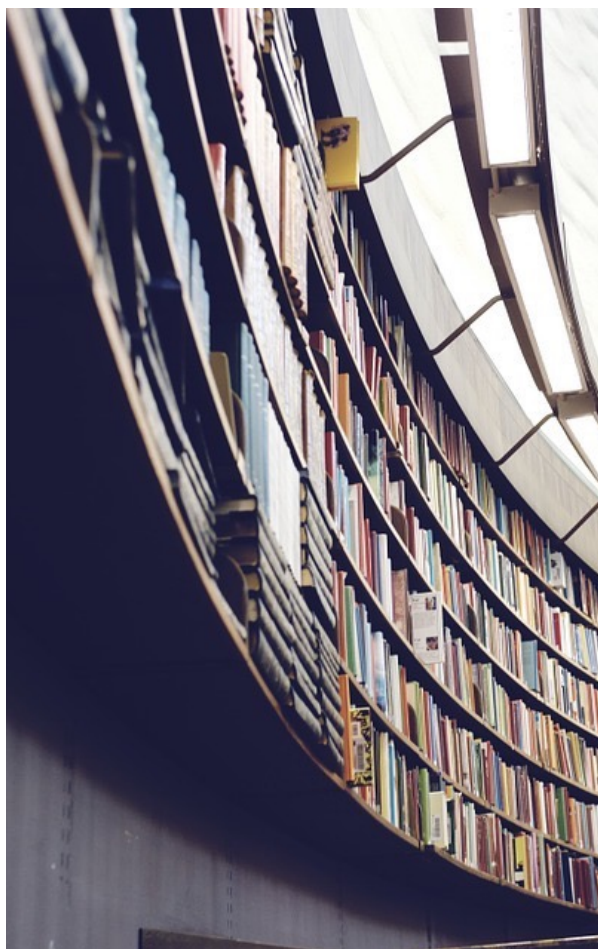
- Study a subject that they are passionate about
- Achieve a qualification that will lead to their chosen career

Ultimately, going to university will equip your son or daughter with skills and experiences they can use in their career and in their personal life.

- Learn to be an independent thinker for all aspects and challenges of life
- Develop important skills that will widen their prospects
- Become more independent and self-confident
- Make lifelong friends

Once they have their degree, your son or daughter will have:

- The opportunity to follow their career path
- Better job prospects
- Higher earning potential
- Ultimately, going to university will equip your son or daughter with skills and experiences they can use in their career and in their 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 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.

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

- UCAS

By using their website — www.ucas.com your son or daughter will be able to find out more about how to research courses, make and track applications.

There is a specialist section to help support parents at www.ucas.com/parents which includes information and helpful video guides.

There are over 35,000 courses available to choose from, it is vital therefore that students 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

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

Schools will set earlier deadlines than UCAS so that staff have enough time to check and write references for each individual student. Therefore please adhere to school deadlines so that you son / daughter can meet the external UCAS deadlines.

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'. A secondary navigation bar highlights '16-18 Choices' and 'Undergraduate'. The main banner area features a large red section with the text 'Check Track to see by 24 June' and a 'Sign in to Track' button. Below the banner, there are two columns of links. The left 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 right column, under '2. Find a course', includes links for 'Find out how to apply', 'Thinking about your course', 'Browse through our 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 students complete lots of research

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

Get online

They will need to start their search online at search www.ucas.com this will allow them to look through all Universities and all courses. It will also allow them to

look at fees, entry requirements and details on

“By using their website how to apply for individual courses.

your son or daughter will be able to find out more about how to research courses, make and track applications.”

Once they have narrowed down their field they will then need to look at the individual Universities website for more in depth detail about the courses and facilities. They can also look at virtual tours at www.ucas.com/virtual-tours

- UCAS

Things your son or daughter can do to help them plan their future ...

- Write a list of things they are interested in
- Talk to as many people as they 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 pupils 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 sign up for. If there are other Open Days that students wish to go on then UAH encourages parents to take their son/daughter to these. You can find out about open days at www.cas.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 on www.ucas.com/taster-courses

The UCAS Tariff

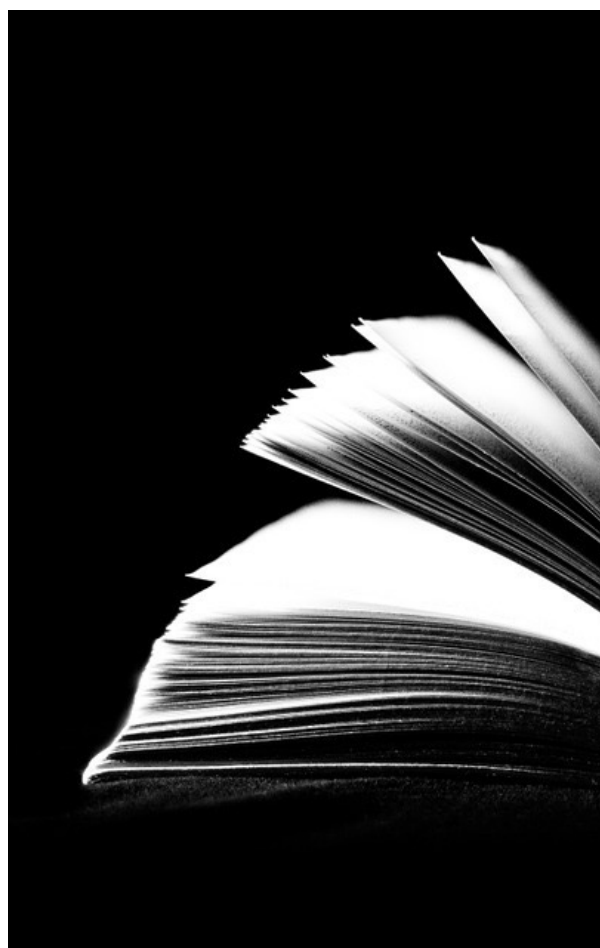
This is used by Universities to make broad comparison between qualifications used for entry to higher educations. Points have been allocation to a wide range of qualifications and these can be added together, within certain rules to achieve a Tariff score.

- For courses starting before September 2017 – www.ucas.com/tariff-tables
- For courses starting from September 2017 – www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/tariff/new-tariff.

Filling in their UCAS Application

University Academy Holbeach will offer considerable advice and guidance to your son / daughter. They can also watch a short video about filling in their application www.ucas.com/fillinginyourapplication

It's vital that your son or daughter remembers their log in details as they will need them throughout the year!



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

Register for UCAS

This is the first steps 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 they 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

“It’s vital that your son or daughter remembers their log in details as they will need them throughout the year!”

- UCAS

Once all of these sections are complete staff at UAH will check all of the details and they write your son / daughter’s reference and predicted grades.

UCAS charges a fee to administer the application process which is payable by students if they decide to apply. The Academy is invoice for the amount and then students are required to pay the school. This fee is around £23 however this is amended yearly by UCAS so please check their website

Starting Work on their Personal Statement

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

Where to start?

Get them to:

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

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

Pulling it together

Taking all the ideas and turning them into their winning statement is the next step.

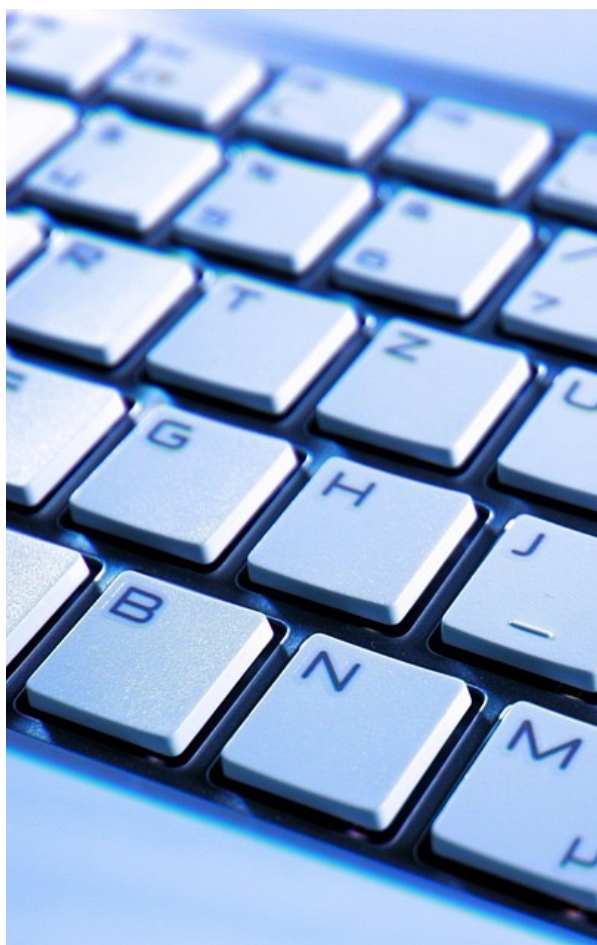
Key points

- Students have a maximum of 4000 characters to write their personal statement.
- It is vital that personal statements are well written and accurate in terms of their spelling, punctuation and grammar
- It must be their own work – UCAS has software that scans all statements for plagiarism. If it is found that your son / daughter has plagiarised from another statement then it is likely they will be banned from applying to University.

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

Make sure it has a clear structure

1. A punchy opening paragraph showing their excitement and understanding of what the course is all about
2. Evidence to support their interest for the course. This can include:
 - Skills from their current course (both academic and practical)
 - Academic knowledge from their 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 your son / daughter and why they are perfect for the course.

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.co.uk/personalstatement

Once students have completed the UCAS form

1. Staff at University Academy will check the form with your son / daughter 1:1 and instruct them 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)
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

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

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

- UCAS

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

- **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.

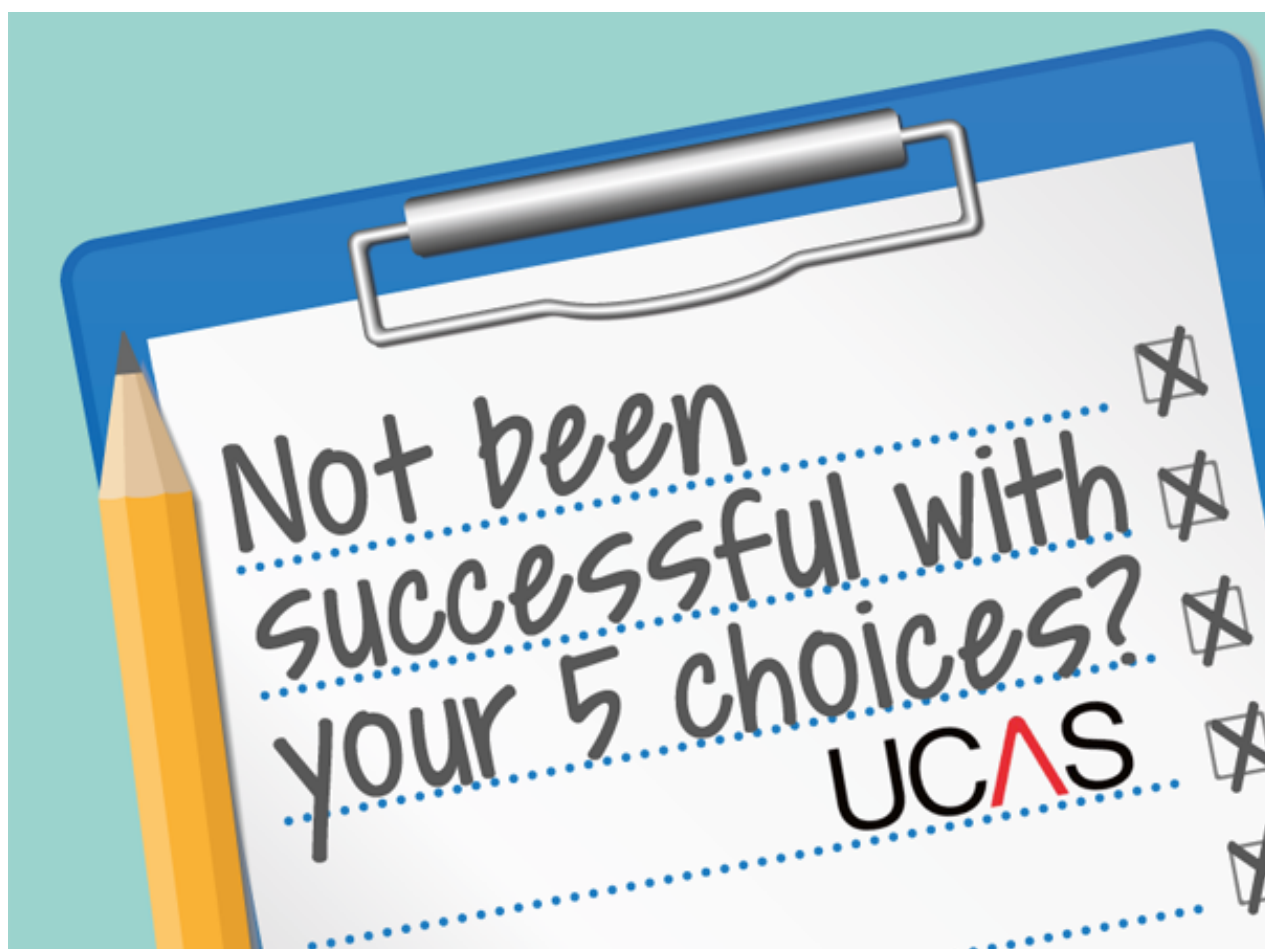
7. Once they have made a decisions on their firm and reserve choice they decline their other offers through UCAS Track

UCAS Extra

If you son / daughter changes their mind about what they want to study at University before result day then they 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



Preparing for Results Day

Result 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 son / daughter will do if they don't get the results they were expecting. This will help save time and stress later!

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

- The University may still accept them — this is particularly true if they only missed out by one grade (although there is no guarantee)
- The same University may offer them a place on an alternative course
- They may decline them in which case students can do the following:
 - Look for a different course through Clearing – 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.

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

You can find out more about scholarships at: 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



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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

Repayments – how much will it cost?

- Students will only start repaying their student loan when they have left university and are earning 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 or <http://www.slc.co.uk/>

Getting help online

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