

Applying to UCL



...and other competitive universities

Matt Skidmore – Senior Access Officer (Teacher and Professional Engagement)

- Two years as an Admissions Officer at the University of Surrey
- Over three years as an Admissions Officer at UCL
- Over three years in the Access and Widening Participation team at UCL

What is UCAS?

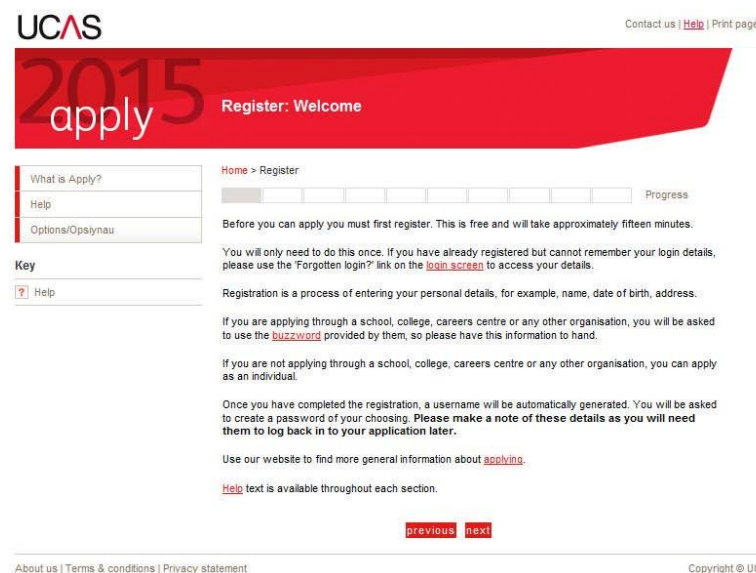
- Universities & Colleges Admissions Service
- One application form which UCAS distributes to your university choices

UCAS – What happens to your application?

- Apply online: www.ucas.com
- Sent to universities
- Admissions Tutors and Admissions teams make decisions
- Interview invitation / conditional offer / unconditional offer / unsuccessful
- Decisions tracked online

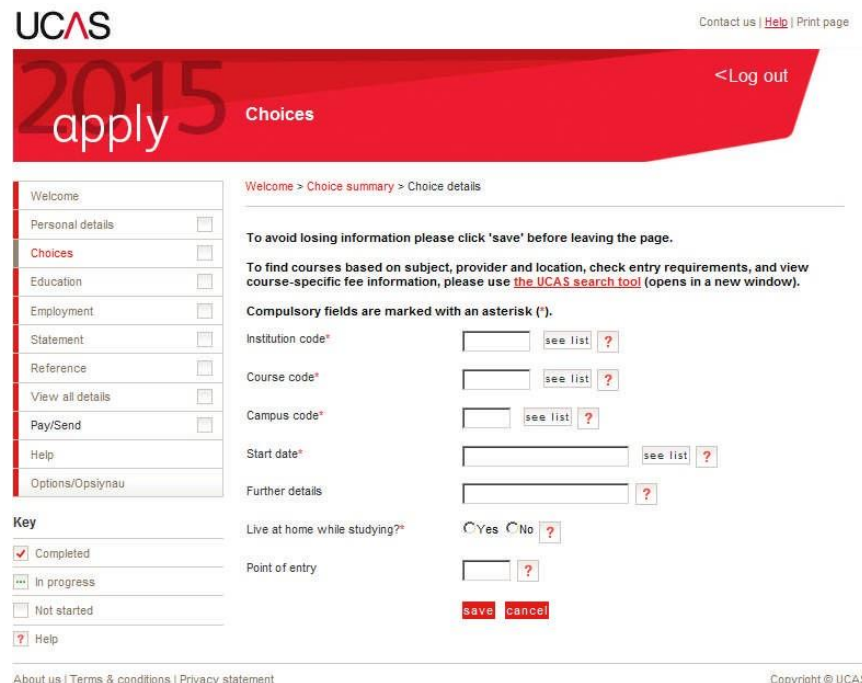
UCAS Apply

- Personal details
- Additional information
- Choices
- Education
- Employment
- Personal Statement
- Reference



Choices

- > 5 course choices (4 for medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine)
- > Equal choices – NOT ranked in order of preference



UCAS 2015 apply Choices

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Welcome > Choice summary > Choice details

To avoid losing information please click 'save' before leaving the page.

To find courses based on subject, provider and location, check entry requirements, and view course-specific fee information, please use [the UCAS search tool](#) (opens in a new window).

Compulsory fields are marked with an asterisk (*).

Institution code* [see list](#) [?](#)

Course code* [see list](#) [?](#)

Campus code* [see list](#) [?](#)

Start date* [see list](#) [?](#)

Further details [?](#)

Live at home while studying?* ☐ Yes ☐ No [?](#)

Point of entry [?](#)

[save](#) [cancel](#)

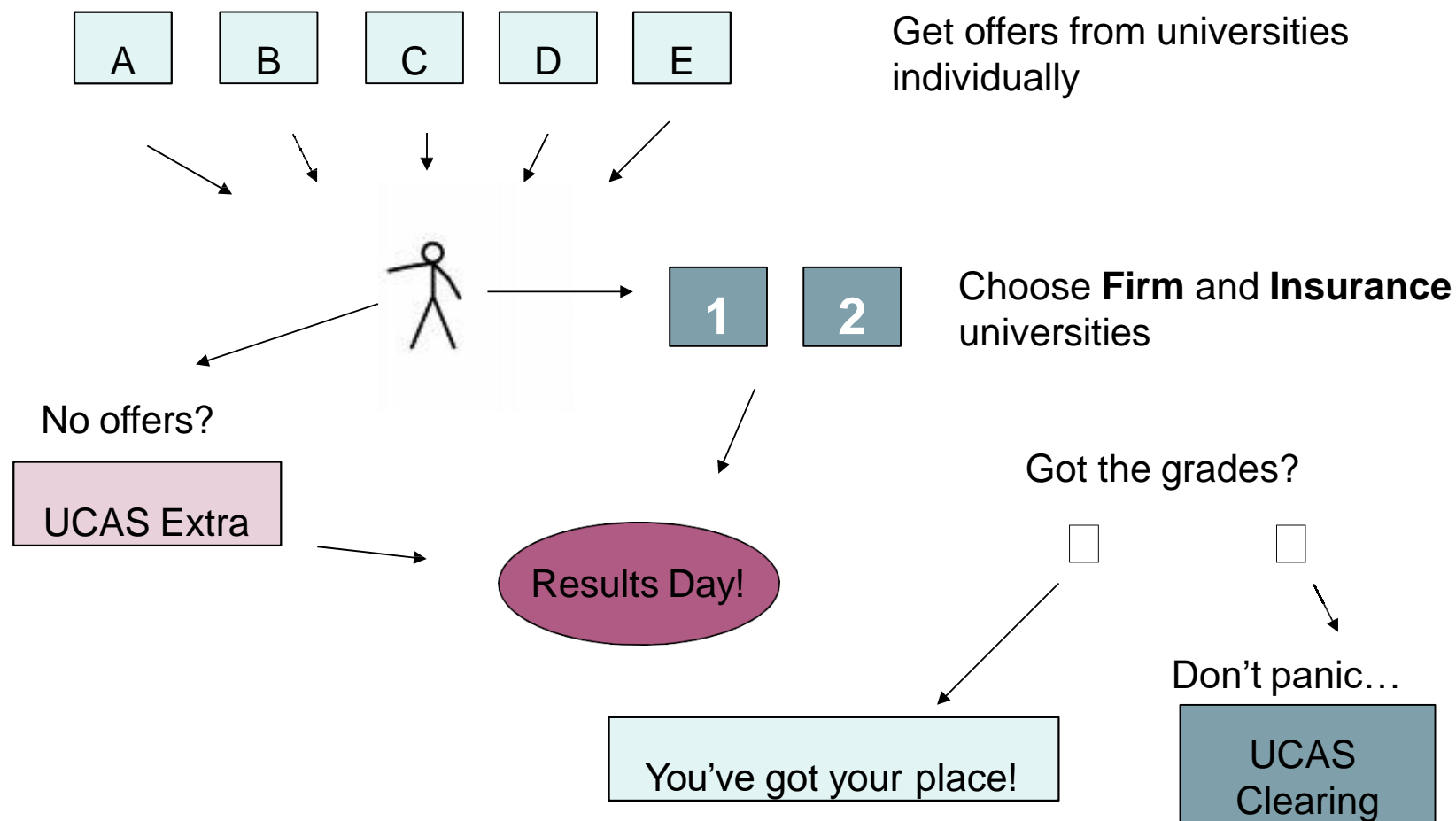
Key

- ☒ Completed
- ☐ In progress
- ☐ Not started
- [?](#) Help

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Decisions...



UCAS: General Dos & Don'ts

DO

- Research course
- Be realistic – do your subjects/ grades meet the requirements?
- Be aware of additional requirements – BMAT/ LNAT
- Use the full space
- Check the form carefully BEFORE you submit it
- Use the UCAS 'How to Apply Guide' to help you

UCAS: General Dos & Don'ts

DON'T

- Apply for widely differing courses
- Apply to the same institution 5 times
- Forget the application deadlines!
 - 15th October for Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Sciences
 - 15th January for all other programmes

**How can you
make your
application
stand out from
the crowd?**



- What are admissions tutors looking for?

What admissions tutors tell us...

- Academic ability / deep interest in the subject
- Motivation & enthusiasm for study
- Understanding of what the degree involves
- Transferable skills – critical thinking, communication, time management, independent learning
- Potential to contribute inside & outside of class

What do admissions tutors use to decide?

Your UCAS form

- personal statement, predicted grades, AS results, GCSE results & reference.

Interviews

- Not all unis/ departments interview – some give tasks to do at home
- Structure of interviews vary across departments/ unis.

Admissions tests

- BMAT for Medicine
- LNAT for Laws
- Portfolios for Fine Art & Architecture

What is the Personal Statement?

- UCAS say it is “your chance to show why you want to study the course and why you'd make a great student”
- 47 lines or 4000 characters
- Only one for all your choices.
- Structure:
 - 75% - **Why you want to study this degree**
 - 25% - **Extra curricular activities**

Structure

- Introduction
 - Impact! Why do you want to study this subject?
- Body (4 or 5 paragraphs)
 - What attracts you to the subject?
 - Particular areas of interest
 - Experience of the subject area (beyond the curriculum)
 - Extra-curricular activities
- Conclusion
 - Recap why you want to apply, memorable ending

Prove it!

How can you demonstrate that you have the interest and ability that admissions tutors are looking for?

- Motivation / interest / understanding:
Taster days, masterclasses, wider reading, museum visits, shadowing, relevant work experience
- Transferable skills:
Work experience, volunteering, hobbies and interests.
Reflect on what you've learnt through them

Show it, don't say it

Some 'Dos'

- Be specific and give details and examples
- Personalised: why do you want to study this subject?
- Work experience, volunteering, extra curricular activities: whatever it is, analyse, reflect on it and relate it to course
- Get someone else to read your statement

Some 'Don'ts'

"Ever since I was little..."

"sparked my interest..."

"From a young age..."

"passionate about..."

> Clichés:

- "Ever since I was a child..."
- Quotes

> Clever jokes or puns can misfire!

> The Shopping List

> Plagiarism

Some more 'Don'ts'

- Don't trust everything you read of the internet...Student Room.
- Don't substitute evidence with enthusiasm.
- Don't lie!
- Don't be dramatic in order to be memorable but DO sell yourself, this is not the time for modesty.
- Don't include information that is listed elsewhere on the application e.g. achieved or predicted grades.

UCAS: Personal Statement summary

- Check grammar and spelling
- Standard English – but be true to your voice
- Back up what you're saying with examples
- Clear structure
- Make it easy to read
- Ask someone else to read it



Writing an Academic Reference.



What will we cover?

- Why is the academic reference important?
- Relevant information
- Predicted grades guidance.
- How to structure a personal statement.
- The UCL perspective.

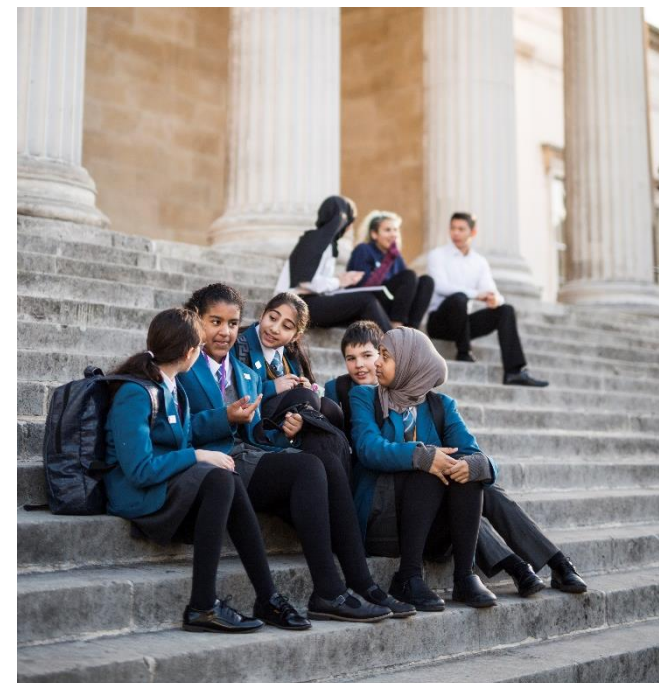


Why is the academic reference important?

- First chance
- First impressions
- Used as a tool

Why is the academic reference important?

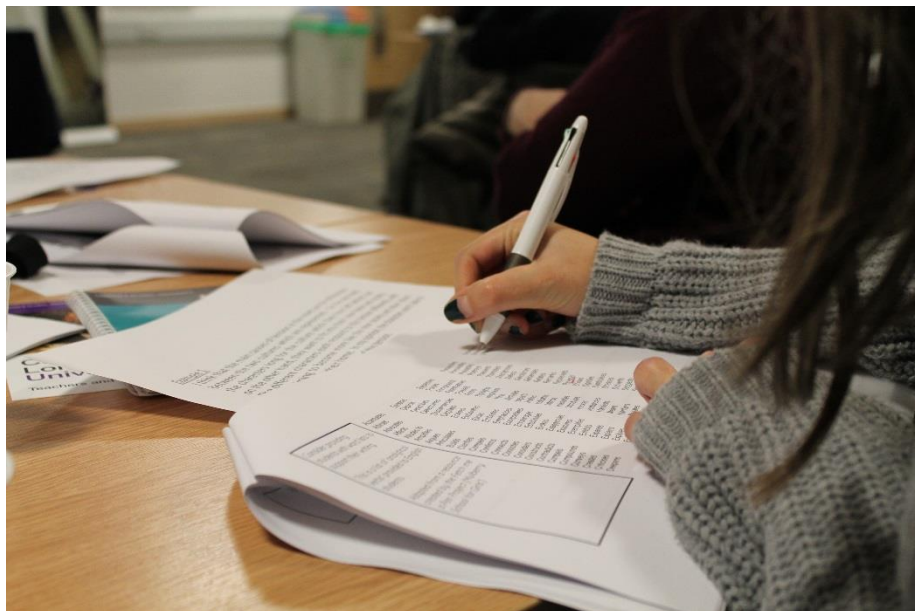
- All universities differ
- Approaches vary
- Who should you contact if you are unsure?



Why is the academic reference important?

- Broad admissions process
- Reference used in conjunction with other parts
- What else might universities do?

Information you should include



- Don't miss anything out
- We don't know it all
- Accuracy is vital

Information you should include

- Avoid duplication
- Contextual information?
- How much contextual information?

Information to include about the applicant

- Suitability for their chosen course/subject area.
- Motivation.
- Potential.
- Independence and original thinking.
- Analytical ability.
- Study skills, communication skills – both written and oral.



Predicted grades

- Be realistic.
- No need to repeat the predictions in the main text.
- No split grades e.g. A*/A.
- Please give an overall grade and individual grade predictions

The structure

- 47 lines and 4,000 characters.
- There is not one unique way of writing a reference.
- Make sure you copy the text from Word.

The structure



- An equal split.
- Contextual information at the beginning.
- Any relevant information about the student should also be included at the start of the reference.

The structure

- Consistency is key.
- Extra information.



The UCL perspective

- The academic reference is one of the most important parts of the application.
- It should be as thorough and accurate as possible.
- It is of equal importance.



Summary

- Make sure you check the whole application before submitting it.
- Build a comprehensive picture of the student.
- Make sure to include any relevant outreach activities or contributions to school life.
- Keep a copy of everything for future reference.

Jack Chamberlain

Student Recruitment Coordinator - UK Recruitment & Admissions

- Over five years working within Recruitment and Admissions
 - Widening Participation projects
 - School/college Outreach
 - UCAS Confirmation & Clearing
- Two years coordinating the PARTNERS Programme and it's associated Summer School, including:
 - Working with the admissions department to process applications to the University

Personal Statements & Academic References

Newcastle University Perspective

Personal Statements & Academic References

- They are used as a selection tool at two stages of the admissions cycle
- During the initial application stage from September onwards
 - To decide which students receive an offer
- Also used during Confirmation and Clearing in July/August
 - Near miss candidates
 - To decide which students are accepted, if they didn't meet the grades

Personal Statements & Academic References

- Consider additional written statements which may be necessary, for example:
 - Widening participation programmes
 - Degree programmes linked to other institutes

Newcastle University examples:

- PARTNERS Programme (WP)
 - Additional application form, with the opportunity for both student and teacher to provide extenuating circumstances via written statement
- Flying Start Business Degree (delivered with PwC)
 - Additional selection criteria, such as assessment centre and online interview

Personal Statements – Interest in different subjects?

- How to apply to two different subject areas but demonstrate a passion and interest in both?
 - Example: student applies to four medicine courses and one engineering course

Personal Statement:

Medicine-orientated

Direct communication:

Engineering-orientated

- Direct communication to Engineering admissions with a separate personal statement, specifically tailored towards this course


Personal Statements – tips for your students!

- Be honest!
- Include any relevant personal circumstances
- Make it cohesive
- Ask others to read it
 - Teachers, friends & family
- Avoid generalised statements
- Give specific examples
- Check it over!
 - Double check grammar & spelling
 - Don't depend solely on a spellchecker

A Guide to University Interviews

Interviews - Overview

- Used to select which applicants receive an offer to study
- Format of interviews varies greatly between each university and each course
- Can be used in combination with an admissions test
 - Eg. LNAT (Law) or UCAT (Medicine/Dentistry)
- There may be two interviews:
 - One for the university
 - One specifically for the course

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Universities may
be able to offer
financial support
for interviewees

Types of Interview - Traditional

- Students will be interviewed by one or more interviewers about their application and why they chose the course.
- Could take the form of an academic discussion, rather than traditional questions
 - eg Cambridge and Oxford
- May contain group work activity
 - Contributions from each candidate is key

Types of Interview - Mini Multiple Interviews (MMI)

- A series of question stations
- Typically 6 – 10 stations per interview
- Each station tests a different competency
- Used to assess qualities required for that course
- Range of styles at each station, eg:
 - Typical interview question
 - Role play/scenario
 - Maths test
 - Ethical Reasoning
 - Manual dexterity
- **Used by most medical & dental schools**

MMI Example Stations

- What did you learn from your work experience?
- Without using your hands, explain how to tie shoe-laces.
- Discuss one of your hobbies outside of school and how the skills you gained from this activity will help you in your career.
- What personal qualities do you think are not required for a Nurse?
- You are on your way home from a lecture and you reach a bus stop. A student from your course is sat at the bus stop looking very upset. You don't know their name and you haven't spoken to them before. Demonstrate how you would approach this situation.

Interview Examples at Newcastle University

Medicine (A100)

- UCAT admissions test
 - Submitted with UCAS application
- MMI interview
 - Seven question stations
 - Seeking candidates who are personally attuned to NHS values
 - Ethical scenario-based station(s) should be expected

Music (W300)

- Informal audition
 - Approx. 5 minutes
 - Used to identify a student's capabilities and musical style
 - Looking for confidence and precision
- Traditional interview
 - Approx. 25 minutes
 - Students will be asked about their musical studies, practice and interests

How can your students prepare for university interviews?

- Upon receiving their invite, make sure students do their research!
 - What kind of interview will they be facing?
 - Find out as much as possible about the course and university
 - When and where will the interview take place (specifically, which building)?
- Practice answering questions with family and friends
 - Increased confidence
 - Think about body language
 - However, be careful students don't over-rehearse!
- Reread their personal statement
 - Think about what questions may be asked in relation to this
 - Think about relevant topics that particularly interest them

A large, solid pink circle containing the text "Research is key!" in white.

**Research
is key!**

How can your students prepare for university interviews?


- Practice speaking out loud when completing homework
 - Particularly useful when practising for academic questions
- Read around the subject
 - Demonstrate their interest and passion for the subject by having up-to-date knowledge
 - For example:
 - Newcastle University Medical interviews, students are asked ethics-related questions, so it's really important that students research the 4 ethical principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice.



Universities often
have online
guides for
students, so they
know what to
expect

What can you do to help students prepare?

- Help students to use the interview as an opportunity to assess the offering
 - Is the course/university/city right for them?
 - What questions could they ask to gather this feedback?
- Host mock interview sessions for students
- Develop answers using the STAR technique:
 - Situation
 - Task
 - Action
 - Result

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Consider
linking up with
other local
schools for
interview
sessions