

# UCAS for beginners:

Top tips and insight into university admissions and the UCAS application process



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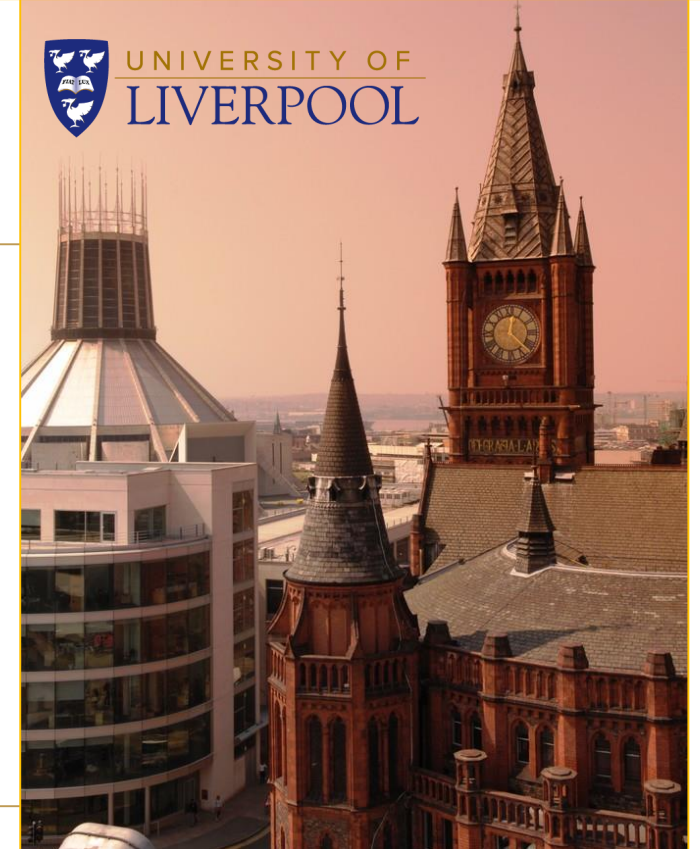


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# Content

1. UCAS timeline– student perspective
2. UCAS timeline – university perspective
3. Admissions
4. UCAS Reference & Personal Statement
5. Support from universities
6. Additional support







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# UCAS Timeline for Students



[www.ucas.com/apply/key-dates](http://www.ucas.com/apply/key-dates)

# UCAS Timeline for Students

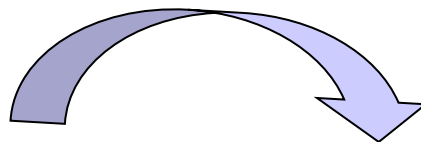
## Research

Prospectuses, Virtual Open Days, [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com), school activity...

Read academic books and journal articles

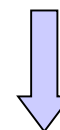


## Interviews/offers & Visit Days

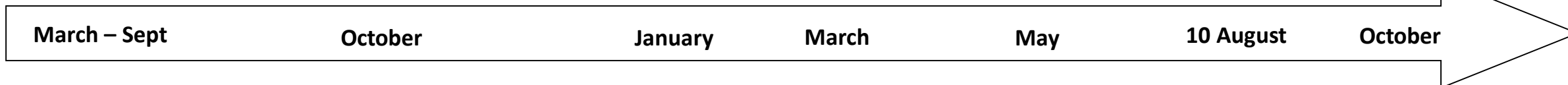
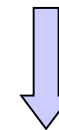


## Results

Confirmation, Clearing and Adjustment



## Start



## APPLY 15<sup>th</sup> Oct

- Dentistry
- Medicine
- Vet Science
- Oxford
- Cambridge

## APPLY 15<sup>th</sup> Jan

- All courses (except 15 Oct & March exceptions)

## DECIDE May/June/July

- Must tell UCAS which course you select. If not they will decline all your offers. (Date depends on when you receive offers)

**UCAS Extra!**

# University's perspective

## UCAS Timeline - Main Cycle



New cycle  
UCAS/Universities open  
application process. Universities  
confirm entry criteria with  
Departments

Some offers may be returned within  
days, others much longer.  
Universities often contact students  
via email if further information is  
needed

Admissions teams processing  
UCAS extra choices, chasing  
missing documents  
(international).  
Visit Days taking place

**Oct-April**

**Nov - April**

**May**

**Sept-Oct**

**Oct - April**

**Feb - July**

Universities assess applications  
and send their offer decisions  
to UCAS.

Interviews/auditions typically  
held. Each university conducts  
and organises these differently.  
Largely outside UCAS process

Deadline for Universities to  
respond to applications sent by  
January UCAS deadline

# University's perspective

## UCAS Timeline - Results / Clearing



Exam results embargoed but released to universities for processing. Largely uncontactable period

### Final Confirmation

Admissions, Academic Departments and support staff help to direct, offer and process clearing enquiries/offers  
From 3pm students refer themselves and offers are matched. If no UCAS update - check emails (poss alternative course)

### Clearing & Adj Cont.

Students confirmed, received accommodation offers, welcome packs and course start dates

Oct

### Early Confirmation

Students meeting offers - accepted and sent to UCAS  
Students missed conditions - Considered again if spaces are available, sometimes accepted, otherwise sent to UCAS and referred to Insurance/Clearing

### Results Day

In most cases- courses will remain in clearing until places are full. Sometimes entry criteria changes slightly

### Enrollment

Final deadline for remaining decisions on applications for courses starting that year (official end of cycle)

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# Process & Offers

## Offers

**Conditional** (most common during main cycle)

**Unconditional** (Results received / unconditional schemes)

**Alternative** (Widening Participation Offers, MOOCs, Interview Discount, Contextual Programmes)

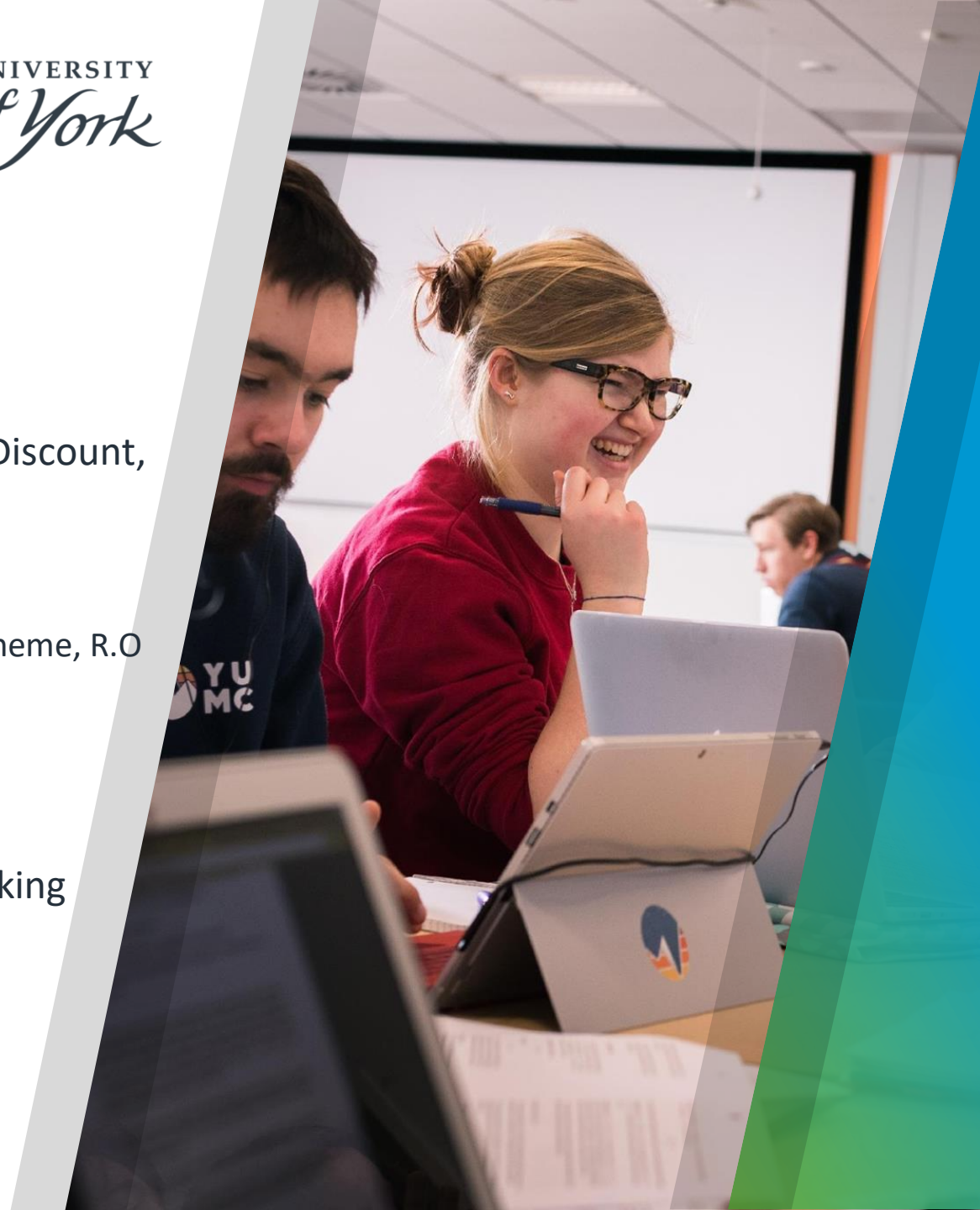
**Liverpool:** Liverpool Scholars, Realising Opportunities (R.O), Contextual Data

**York:** Next Step York, YorWay to York, Contextual Admissions, York Access Scheme, R.O

## Choices

### Firm/Insurance Choices

Important that students carefully consider Insurance choice, unpicking can be tricky and requires the consent of the university



# Process & Offers

## Text and Tariff

### Offer Text:

Wording can be very important and contractually binding. AND is not the same as OR.

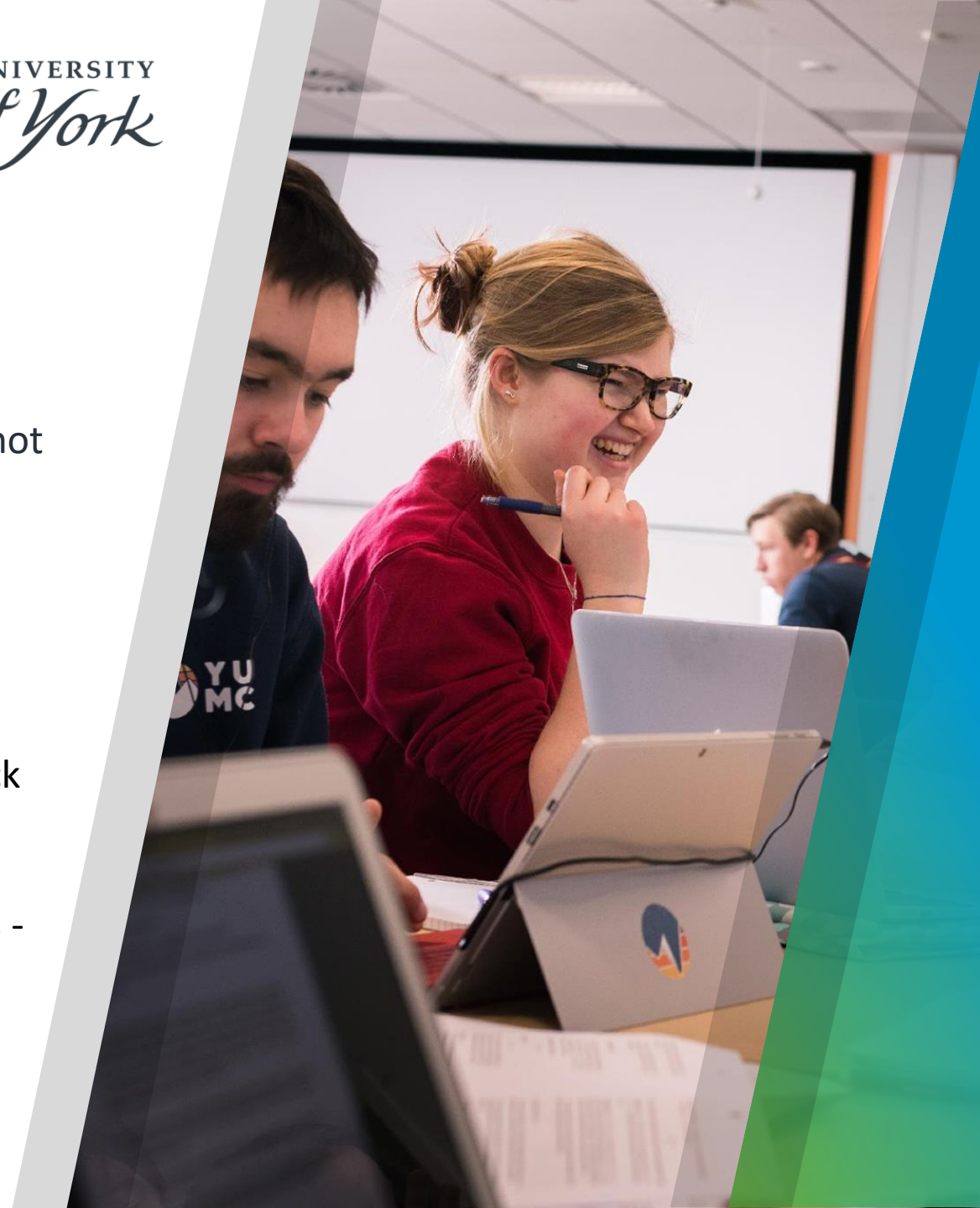
Essential subjects are particularly important for Russell Group universities

### Tariff:

Russell Group universities accept a range of qualifications but check with each if you are unsure. BTEC, Cambridge Pre-U, IB etc...

Some institutions may request UCAS tariff points instead of grades - (96 = CCC A-level, MMM BTEC Nat.Ext.Dip)

Tariff points are standardised by UCAS

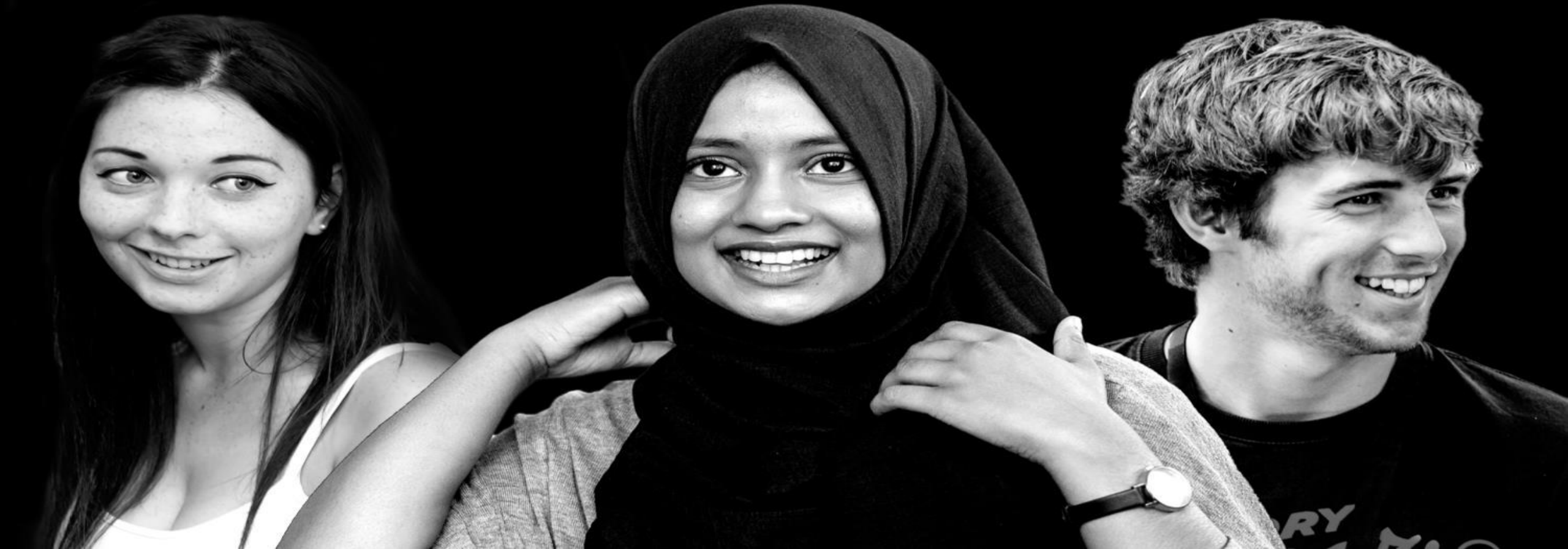


# Jargon Buster

- **Deferred entry**  
By request only, up to individual universities
- **UCAS extra**  
Can have good opportunities but before deadline is preferable
- **Confirmation  
Clearing  
Adjustment**  
Very busy period for universities and schools
- **PQA/PQO**  
Changes could be afoot, post qualification / post offer
- **Mitigating Circumstances**  
Keep the university informed where possible
- **Change of course**  
As long as students meet entry criteria, there can be some flexibility



# UCAS Reference & Personal Statement



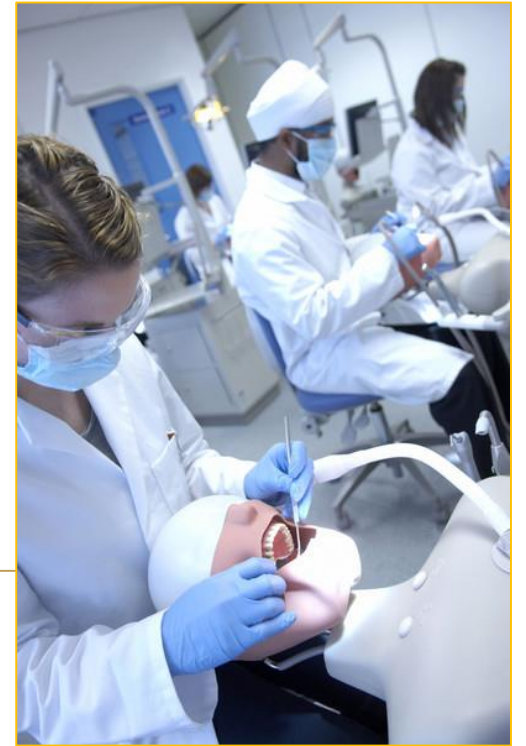
# The UCAS Reference

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# The Basics

- Online application
- 4000 characters or 47 lines of text, whichever comes first
- Use word processing software
- When you add your reference save regularly as there is a 35 minute inactivity log out





## Suggested Structure

- Contextual information about the school
- Academic performance
- Special or mitigating circumstances
- Extra-curricular activities
- Suitability for the course

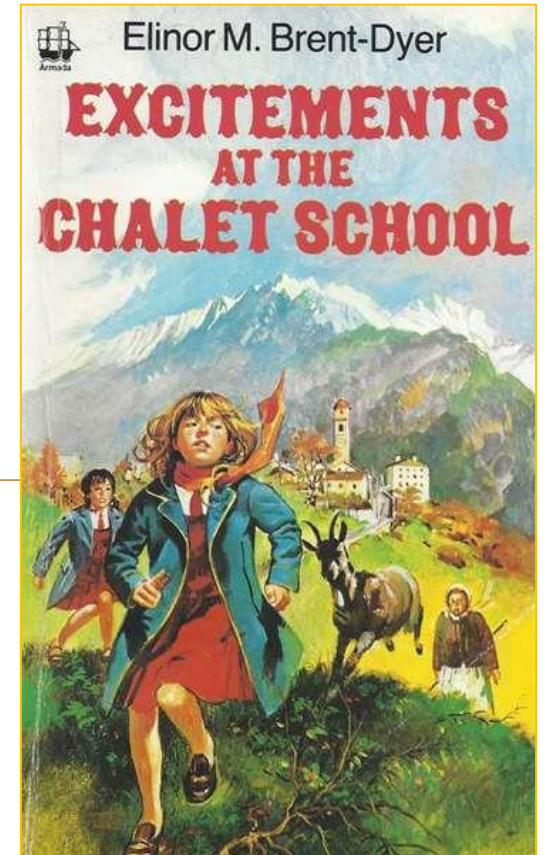




# Suggested Structure

## Contextual information about the school

- How many students in the sixth form?
- What percentage go on to HE?
- Is there a high proportion of Widening Participation students?
- Has there been any disruption to provision?
- COVID 19 Response

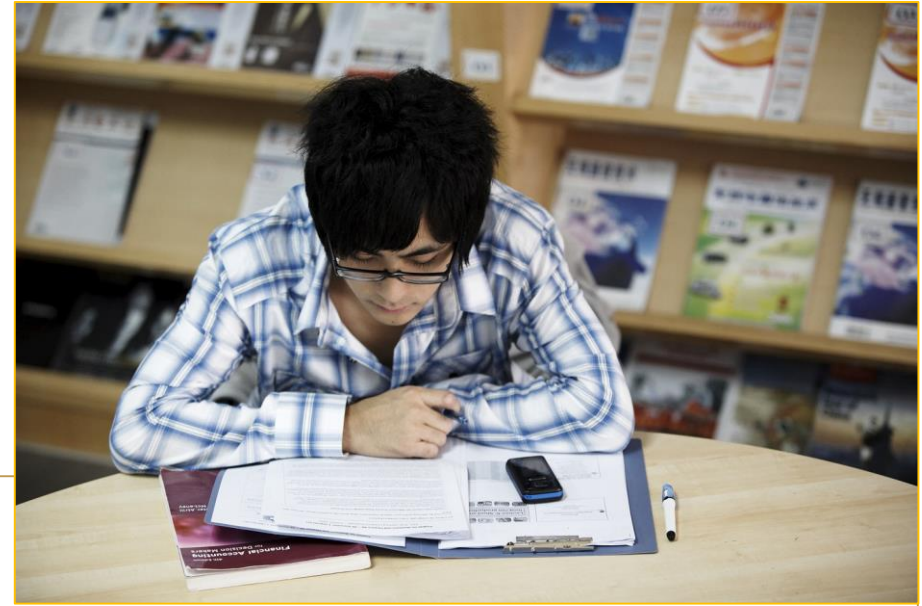




# Suggested Structure

## Academic performance

- If the student has not taken A levels please provide details (eg: Full BTEC title and relevant units if not in the academic section of the form)
- Put grades into context ('should easily achieve', 'in the top 10% of the school')
- Ensure you explain if predicted grades are at an odds against recently achieved results





# Suggested Structure

## Special or Mitigating Circumstances

- If there has been anything which has impacted on the student's achievement you can disclose it but only if you have their permission
- Ensure the exam board are also aware of any issues
- Contact university admissions teams



# Suggested Structure

## Extra-curricular activities

What has the student done to

- Further their understanding of what they have applied for
- Prepare themselves for a future career
- Improve their skills to make them a better student





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# Suggested Structure



## Suitability for the course

- Clearly indicate if you DO recommend the student as any ambiguity may suggest that you do not!
- Include commentary about the students suitability for higher education, this subject area and/or future career



*Remember, this it is a reference, **not a report!***

## Tips

- Have meetings with students so that you know what they want to apply for and what they have done to prepare themselves. This will allow you to make a more personalised reference and support their Personal Statement claims.
- Ask each subject teacher to contribute and have one person collate it.
- Be honest with your students about their predicted grades and try to resist pressure to inflate them. Students who do not achieve the conditions of their offers risk dropping into Clearing.



## **What our Admissions Tutors say**

- Be aware of entry requirements, plus any subject specific requirements
- Ensure you include a school registered email address
- Some HE providers have an additional form for extenuating circumstances
- Keep a copy of the reference for your records



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[www.ucas.com/advisers/references](http://www.ucas.com/advisers/references)

UCAS

Further education

Undergraduate

Postgraduate

Alternatives


Careers



Sign in

 / Advisers

# HOW TO PROVIDE A REFERENCE

Explore this section 

# Personal Statement

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# Personal Statement Basics

- A formal application
- 4,000 characters / 47 lines
- Ensure the requirements for all 5 courses are addressed
- Discuss understanding of the subject/career
- Spelling, grammar and punctuation are correct





# Personal Statement Content

## What to include?

- Look at university & UCAS websites
- Ask university staff on Open Days or via email

## *Ensure content is bespoke to the course!*

- Why do they want to study the subject?
- What have they done to explore the subject and develop useful skills?
- Use appropriate examples and give details
- Be analytical and reflective – not merely descriptive!

**UCAS**

### Preparing your personal statement

1. Preparation	2. What to include	3. How to write it	4. Technical details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You can only write one personal statement, so don't mention a uni or college by name.</li><li>• Check uni and college websites to see what skills and qualities they'd like you to have.</li><li>• Make a list of things you want to include.</li><li>• Start drafting early.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why you're interested in the subject.</li><li>• Your enthusiasm for the subject.</li><li>• How your previous studies relate to the course(s).</li><li>• Relevant aspects of jobs, placements, work experience or volunteering.</li><li>• Activities or hobbies that show your interest in the subject.</li><li>• Any training or achievements that show your skills.</li><li>• Demonstrate you're a great candidate and you have skills and qualities they're looking for.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction – start with an opening sentence that encourages the reader to read on.</li><li>• Structure what you want to include in an order that's most relevant to what the uni and colleges are looking for.</li><li>• Conclusion – reinforce your commitment, enthusiasm and skills suited to uni/ college life.</li><li>• Check your grammar, spelling and punctuation.</li><li>• Leave time to get feedback and redraft.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Length – up to 4,000 characters or 47 lines of text (including spaces and blank lines).</li><li>• Make sure you don't copy – our software detects any similarities and this could jeopardise your application.</li></ul>



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# Experiences & Skills



Subjects ▾

Courses ▾

Using FutureLearn ▾

Keep learning, wherever you are

## Stay connected

Is coronavirus affecting your education or work? Explore online courses to continue studying, build professional skills, and connect with experts.

[View courses](#)

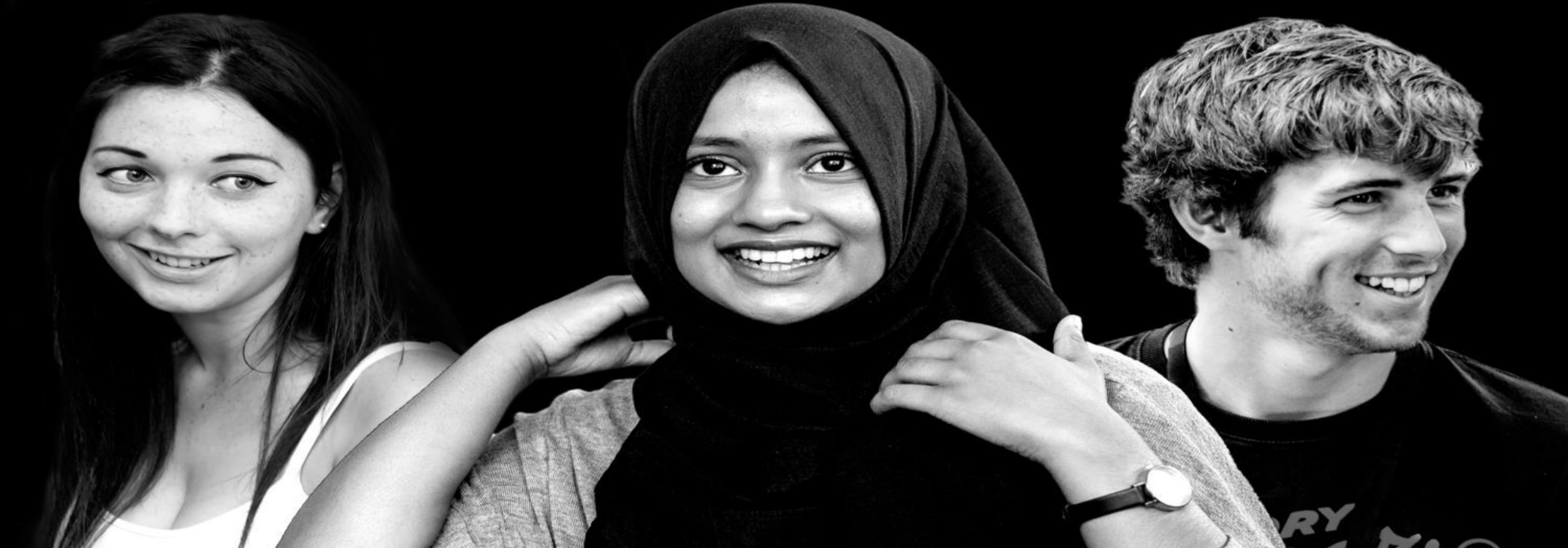


Search online courses



[Sign in](#)







# Gatsby Benchmarks

<b>1. A stable careers programme</b>	Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by pupils, parents, teachers and employers.
<b>2. Learning from career and labour market information</b>	Every pupil, and their parents, should have access to good-quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
<b>3. Addressing the needs of each pupil</b>	Pupils have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each pupil. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
<b>7. Encounters with further and higher education</b>	All pupils should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
<b>8. Personal guidance</b>	Every pupil should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a careers adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all pupils but should be timed to meet their individual needs.



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# School Outreach

## Our Campus

- Campus visits, taster lectures, practical workshops, overnight residential stays, Open Days, museum visits

## Your Campus/Virtually

- HE Fairs
- HE Talks for students/parents
  - Personal statements, student finance, UCAS applications, Applying to the Russell Group, Student life, Benefits of HE...
- Academic talks





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# Widening Participation

## Post 16 Schemes

### Realising Opportunities

A collaborative scheme with leading research-intensive universities

[www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk](http://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk)

### Local WP schemes

#### Liverpool

- Scholars
- Disrupted Education
- Destination  
Medicine/Vets

#### York

- Next Step York
- YorWay to York





# Teacher Support

- Teacher and Adviser Conferences
- Monthly e-bulletins
- Continuing Professional Development Courses and lectures (Academic Departments)
- Admissions and careers stats
- Website resources
- HE Talks: UCAS reference writing, Introduction to UCAS...



# Additional Sources of support

You're not alone

- **Advancing Access**

Resources, blogs, webinars and CPD sessions

- **University level conferences and resources**

Schools & Careers Advisers website - **Liverpool**

[liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/schools/](http://liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/schools/)

Teachers' and Advisers' Hub - **York**

[york.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges/teachers-hub/](http://york.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges/teachers-hub/)

- **UCAS**

Conferences, webpages, hub, phone lines

- **Latest News - WonkHE, UCAS, Twitter**

Sign up to mailing lists and read articles where possible.  
Changes are made frequently

- **Speak to us**

University outreach / recruitment / widening access teams are useful contacts



UCAS



ADVANCING  
ACCESS

24 leading universities  
working together with  
schools and colleges





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## Contact us

**Louise Carr**

[schoolsandcolleges@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:schoolsandcolleges@liverpool.ac.uk)

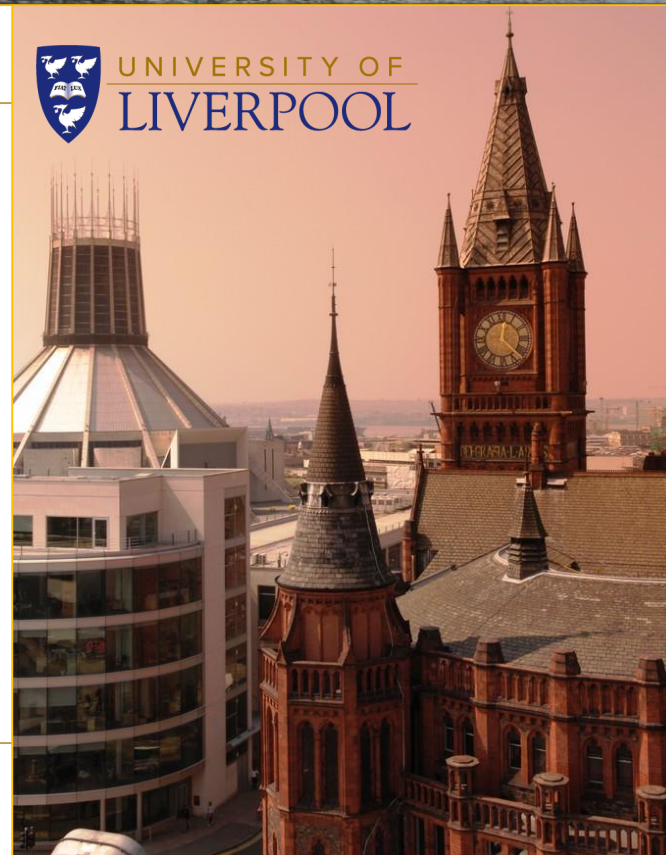
[www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/schools](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/schools)

[www.liverpool.ac.uk/widening-participation](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/widening-participation)

**Richard Hall**

[outreach@york.ac.uk](mailto:outreach@york.ac.uk)

[www.york.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges](http://www.york.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges)



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