



**Applying to University  
Guide  
2020-21**

*(Updated 22 January 2021)*

# Contents

<b>Where do you start? UCAS basics</b> .....	3
Key Dates .....	2
How to choose a University subject.....	4
UCAS Grades and UCAS Tarriff Points.....	6
Contextual Offers.....	7
Types of Courses .....	9
Where to study – Choosing a University.....	11
* <i>Oxford and Cambridge (or ‘Oxbridge’) and Russell Group Universities</i> .....	111
Course Choices – how many?.....	12
Applying for Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and other NHS Healthcare courses .....	12
Applying for Law courses.....	12
Applying for Acting, Theatre, Music and Dance courses .....	15
Applying for Art & Design, Photography and other creative courses .....	126
Writing your Personal Statement .....	167
<b>PURPLE FORMS</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Offers and Rejections .....	23
Replying to Offers – Making Firm and Insurance Choices.....	24
EXAM DATES AND RESULTS DAY DATE in 2020/21 .....	27
What happens on Results Day? .....	288
<i>Useful Websites and Resources</i> .....	29

## *Where do you start?*

**UCAS WEBSITE** - <https://www.ucas.com/>

**Start here** : The UCAS website has lots of well-written guides about how to apply for University. There are *How To* videos to take you through all aspects of completing and submitting your application such as - <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application>

**In school** : Your main point of contact/knowledge is Claire Connor (front desk) – she has experience of working within University Admissions in a wide range of Universities including Bristol, Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton Universities. She can check your Personal Statement drafts and advise on course choices, and all the detailed stuff about UCAS. Your subject teachers are useful for ideas about what University subjects you could consider and for A level/BTEC subject related examples to go in your Personal Statement – especially for STEM subjects. Dr Arnold can advise about EPQs and Applying to Oxford or Cambridge. Your Tutor can also advise you – they are probably the person who knows you best at school.

**Start early.** Researching ‘which course/subject’, and ‘which Universities’ takes time. You then have to write your application and spend time getting your Personal Statement right. *This always takes much more time than you expect. Don't keep putting it off.* The school deadline for getting your UCAS totally completed and submitted to UCAS is **30 November**.

**UCAS BUZZWORD** (like a password, that will connect your UCAS account to this school) : **fromefutures21**

**ULN** (Unique Learners Number) – this helps the Universities and Exam Boards ‘match’ your exam results. Claire has the list of individual student numbers at the Front Office desk.

**Applying for University (and alternatives)** – useful introductory guide, aimed at parents, but full of information : [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/widening-participation/sites/widening-participation/files/2019\\_awpo\\_parents\\_guide.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/widening-participation/sites/widening-participation/files/2019_awpo_parents_guide.pdf)

**What's it like at University?** Good short video from the University of Leicester : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqYPNoBvS84>

## *Key Dates*

Thursday 15 October (18:00 UK time) – UCAS deadline for Oxford or Cambridge, and most Medicine, Dentistry, or Veterinary Science/Veterinary Medicine applications.

**MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2020 - internal deadline: all Frome College UCAS applications must be completed by this date – but we encourage you to submit your application well before this date.**

We need to write your reference and add your predicted grades. This takes time – it's not appreciated if you leave everything to the last minute and then expect everyone to run around and help you because of your poor-planning.

**PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE EVERYTHING TO THE LAST MINUTE - START NOW!**

**15 January (18:00 UK time) – UCAS deadline for the majority of undergraduate courses.** After this Universities will *not* treat your application with ‘equal consideration’ and for some courses they will not be accepting *any* further applications.

## *How to Choose a University Subject*

**The most important factors to take into account when choosing a subject to study at University are whether it interests you, whether you are any good at it - and if you will you enjoy studying it for at least the next three years.**

### **1. How are interested am I in the subject?**

Being interested in a subject tends to go with an aptitude for it ('being good at it'), but you can also be good at something you really don't want to study for three whole years. Remember that being motivated is an essential part of your success at University and enjoying the subject you are studying is most of the fun of being at University.

### **2. Will learning about that subject interest me for three years?**

Think about what really does interest you. What really interests, fascinates and enthuses you? This bit is actually far more important than focusing on what job it might or might not lead to.

### **3. Do I choose a subject with an obvious career path?**

Don't be afraid of picking something that doesn't have an obvious career path; the point of University study is not to prepare you for a specific job (with some obvious exceptions) - even people with Law degrees don't necessarily become lawyers.

University level study is intended to train you in how to use your brain effectively and provides you with the opportunity to acquire skills that can be used in any number of ways. This is why you see job adverts that say 'Graduate – any subject'. The actual subject is far less important to your career prospects, so always, always go for a subject or course that you are passionate about rather than 'it'll get me a well-paid job at the end' as your starting point for picking a subject.

### **4. Should I consider choosing a degree subject that is entirely new?**

There will be lots of degree subjects that you can take at University that you might not have heard of, or even thought about.

**Don't just go for the obvious** – like Biology, because you did A level Biology – what about Anatomy, Biomedical Science, Equine Studies, Marine Biology, Plant Science? These are all named degrees that allow you to specialise within Biology.

Degree subjects like Neuroscience, Anthropology, Classical Studies, European Studies, Pharmacology, International Development, American Studies, Technical Theatre for example, are not A level subjects. Do you know what they are? Make sure you have a look at *all* the courses that a University offers - you might find something more unusual that really appeals to you.

### **5. Should I consider choosing a degree with a placement or study abroad?**

What 'extras' are on offer? Work placement, industrial experience, field trips, study abroad, optional units from other subject areas such as a language? These can be important plus points on your CV when you eventually look for a job. Work placements etc are usually paid – a big bonus in the middle of your degree! If the degree title includes 'Study Abroad' or similar, then you will be funded through

Student Finance for this extra year. And you don't have to be good at languages – there are also opportunities to go to Australia, USA, Canada as well as more exotic destinations like China, South America and Japan.

### **6. Should I consider a joint honours degree (combined subjects)?**

Look at degree courses in joint or combined subjects - two subjects may leave more career options open to you once you graduate, especially if one subject has a more vocational slant (like Business Studies or a language). These courses often have lower admissions requirements than a single subject course, not because they are 'easier' but because there is less applicant demand for some subject combinations. 'Film Studies with Egyptology' anyone?

Some Universities offer 4 year **Liberal Arts, Flexible Honours or Combined Honours** courses These allow you to study units from many different subjects across humanities, social science and other disciplines - and the connections between them. These courses usually include a year abroad in Europe, USA or Australia.

### **7. Should I opt for an accredited course?**

For some professional careers, it will matter which degree you do as some courses will be accredited and approved by the professional association for that profession, others may not be. If you intend to work in an area like engineering, psychology, architecture, or accountancy, you should check that the courses you are thinking of applying to will give you that status.

### **Your interests and abilities.**

- What school subject(s) have you enjoyed the most?
- *Why* do you enjoy that subject (make sure it isn't just the teacher who taught it, but the subject itself).
- In which subjects do you achieve the best grades?
- What subjects have been a real problem to get motivated about?
- What else are you *good* at doing - even if this is outside school?
- Are you better at practical subjects (those that are more clearly focused on a particular job or vocational area) or do you find theory (a more abstract or academic focus) more interesting? ie. which would be better for you – a degree in nursing or human biology?

### **Do you have the predicted grades for the degree courses you're interested in?**

Each University will list the required A level subjects/grades or BTEC requirements, **and** any required GCSE grades, needed for the course you are interested in on the relevant course page on their website. If it isn't clear exactly what is required, then you can email the University and ask. All University entry requirements are different – even for the same course. Make sure you check a range of different University sites to see what these differences are. See the section about Contextual Offers over the page.

## UCAS GRADES and UCAS 'Tariff' POINTS

The more academic Universities will ask for *specific grades and subjects* as the entry requirement for each course – such as 'AAB including A in English or Drama' or 'BTEC Extended Diploma D\*DD'. This is exactly what they want – not a close approximation. For these Universities, A\*CC does not equal BBB. BTECs are usually accepted instead of A levels for many courses, but make sure you check carefully what the requirement is if you are taking a combination of A levels and BTECs. If in doubt, email the University and ask.

Other Universities will instead ask for a total number of *UCAS points*, and this many include specifics within it – '120 UCAS points including at least one A level' or '112 UCAS points including an Engineering subject'. A points offer means you can include qualifications like AS levels in the points total.

See below for a UCAS **points table** for A levels and BTECs. The UCAS website has a more detailed guide that includes many other qualifications.

BTEC Extended Diploma	BTEC Diploma	BTEC 90-credit Diploma	BTEC Subsidiary Diploma	BTEC Certificate	AS level	A level	UCAS tariff points
D*D*D*							168
D*D*D							160
D*DD							152
DDD							144
DDM							128
DMM	D*D*						112
	D*D						104
MMM	DD						96
		D*D*					84
MMP	DM						80
		D*D					78
		DD					72
MPP	MM						64
		DM					60
			D*			A*	56
PPP	MP	MM	D			A	48
						B	40
		MP					36
	PP		M			C	32
				D*			28
		PP		D		D	24
					A		20
			P	M	B	E	16
					C		12
					D		10
				P			8
					E		6

**EPQ** - A\*: 28 points; A: 24 points; B: 20 points; C: 16 points; D: 12 points; E: 8 points

## Contextual Offers

**These are lower grade offers that take into account the circumstances of applicants and are designed to ‘widen participation’ at some ‘higher grade’ Universities.**

ALL Frome College students applying to **Bristol and Aberystwyth** Universities who are made an offer will automatically be made this lower grade ‘Contextual Offer’. For Bristol, typically 2 grades below the normal offer, for Aberystwyth, 1 grade below. These offers are made to encourage ‘widening participation’ applications to the bigger, more academic, Universities. **Durham** will automatically make a Contextual offer if you meet the entry requirements for the course.

This means that you only need to have the Contextual grades as your predicted grades to apply – you do not need the normal offer grades. For instance for Chemistry at Bristol (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/2021/chemistry/bsc-chemistry/>) a Frome College student only needs to have predicted grades of ABB or above with A in Chemistry, not AAA.

Many other ‘top’ Universities will select for these lower offers on the basis of your home **Postcode**. You can check this using the Office for Students website <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/search-by-postcode/> If your home postcode is in ‘**Polar 4, quintile 1**’ you will be eligible for a lower grade offer from one of these Universities. Some other Universities also use ‘quintile 2’, some also make Contextual Offers to care-leavers, refugees, disabled students, young carers, students from military families etc. If you google the name of the University and ‘Contextual’, you can usually find the relevant information for that University.

Universities that use this ‘Polar’ postcode criteria include :

Aston	Newcastle
Bath	Nottingham
Bangor	
Birmingham	Queen Mary, University of London (QMUL)
Bournemouth	Reading
Durham	Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL)
Edinburgh	Royal Northern College of Music
Exeter	St Andrews
Lancaster	Sheffield Hallam
Leeds	Southampton
Leicester	Sussex
London School of Economics (LSE)	University College London (UCL)
Loughborough	Warwick
Manchester	York (inc. York-Hull Medical School)

You don’t need to tell the individual University that you are eligible for a Contextual Offer – your application will automatically be flagged as ‘eligible’.

*Please note : Most Universities already asking lower grades, or using UCAS Points, will not make Contextual Offers – their offers are low enough already.*

## ***GRADES, OPEN DAYS – and other things to be aware of***

### **Make sure you made the right A-level choices**

Before you apply make sure you are studying or have studied the entry subjects the course requires. For instance, most Engineering courses require A-levels in Maths and Physics. Most History and English courses will require you to have studied the subject at A-level. However, other subjects – Law, some social sciences and many other subjects do not specify any particular A level subjects at all.

If you have the ‘wrong A levels’ for your now preferred course/career pathway, don’t despair. Many Universities run Foundation (1 year, pre-degree) courses for exactly this situation – ie. you have all Arts subjects and you want to do Biomedical Science.

### **Double check GCSE requirements**

Make sure you meet any GCSE requirement in full. If you lack any required grades at GCSE level (usually grade 4 in Maths and/or English but some STEM subjects may want higher grades) you might want to consider retaking them during your A-level exams to improve your grade. Ask your Tutor about this. *Without the right GCSE grades you risk immediate rejection – no matter how good your A level predictions are.*

### **Do you need work experience?**

For some of the more vocational courses, work relevant experience is essential – Nursing, Teaching, Medicine etc. You need to show that you are fully aware of the demands of the job, and that you have the necessary personal qualities for this career.

### **Open Days**

Normally, this is the perfect opportunity to work out whether both the University, and the subject course you are interested in, is right for you. Obviously, the pandemic has meant all Open Days have been cancelled this year. But don’t despair! The Universities are all running ‘**online**’ **virtual Open Days** and are trying to give you a similar experience of their University and help you make the right choices. ***Open Day Calendar*** here : <https://www.opendays.com/calendar/>

Remember, you have to register with the University for an Open Day, and they will send you a link enabling you to access the Open Day online. Also there are Open Day films and Campus Tour films on **YouTube** – worth watching to see what the University looks like, what student accommodation there is, and what facilities are available.

## Types of Courses

### Degree courses – what the names mean

Bachelor degrees (BA, BSc etc) usually last either three or four years if studied full-time (although some courses like Medicine or Dentistry are longer). You can concentrate on a single subject, combine two subjects in a single course (often called dual or joint honours courses), or choose several subjects (combined honours). Most courses have core modules which everyone studies, and many courses allow you to choose options or modules to make up a course that suits your interests.

Some Bachelor degrees offer 'extras' such as a work placement or year in industry, which forms part of the course. Others will include a Year or Semester Abroad. These are worth doing – interesting, and they make you more attractive to future employers.

There are also courses which have an extra year known as an '**Integrated Masters degree**' or an Undergraduate 'M' degree. This means you follow the BSc or 'ordinary degree' pathway, then continue for an extra year as preparation for research and/or further study. Some professional courses such as MPharm (the professional degree for Pharmacy) only have this 'M' format. These undergraduate M degrees are most common in STEM subjects.

### Foundation years

Some degrees offer a Foundation or 'preliminary' year as the first year, sometimes called 'year zero'. They are generally one year, full-time courses delivered at a University, and these will lead on to Year 1 entry to the main degree at the same University. You'll still be treated as a full-time undergraduate student and be eligible for Student Finance. Foundation years are designed to develop the skills and subject-specific knowledge required to undertake a degree course, and are typically for those without high enough grades for Year 1 entry.

### Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art & Design)

This one-year qualification – often shortened to '**Art Foundation**' – is widely recognised as a primary route for admission to some art and design degree courses. The learning is tailored to a student's specific area of art and design subject interest, so they can progress to study that area at degree level. For funding purposes, this course is classified as a further education course, so Student Finance is *not* available, even if you take the course at a university or college. However, UK/EU students under the age of 19 on 31 August of the year of entry will not be charged a tuition fee. As a result, many students choose to take this course straight after school or college and live at home.

## **Foundation degrees ('FD').**

Foundation degrees are usually two-year courses (longer if part-time), that are equivalent to the first two years of an undergraduate degree. They are not the same as a foundation year.

This is a flexible qualification that combines academic study with work-based learning and can be studied full time, part time or by distance learning while you work. This route is a good option for students who need a course with lower entry requirements and fewer examinations, would prefer a practical, vocational course and who would prefer to study while they work, or are not yet ready to commit to three full years at university.

Foundation degrees focus on a particular job role or profession, enabling you to gain professional and technical skills to further your career. They can be used as a standalone qualification for employment, but are more commonly used as the basis for progression to a final 'top-up' year at University, leading to a full bachelor's degree. The final year may be taken at a different university or college.

## **Degree level Apprenticeship.**

This is a new type of higher level apprenticeship, which can lead to a Bachelor's degree as part of an apprenticeship. It is important to check the full details of a given job and apprenticeship with the employer and training provider. These courses are a good fit for students who want to gain work experience rather than studying full-time at university, but would like to achieve the same degree status, without incurring any student debt.

Students need to be highly committed – competition can be fierce and entry qualifications can be high. If you are considering this option, you may want to keep your options open by making an application to a conventional full-time degree course through UCAS at the same time.

## **HNCs, HNDs, and other routes.**

The Higher National Certificate (HNC), a one-year work-related course, is equivalent to the first year of a University degree programme. The Higher National Diploma (HND) is a two-year, work-related course, which can be seen as equivalent to the first two years of a University degree. *Bath College offers HNC and HND courses in many different subjects.*

As with a Foundation degree, it is possible to progress from these courses to complete a full undergraduate degree at a University, either through a specific top-up course, or by directly entering a degree in year three.

This 'top-up' route is common for those who take an HNC or HND in Engineering – Portsmouth University is a good example. The UCAS points required for HNC/HND are quite low and this is a good, practical qualification that employers respect. Its good option if you are not sure about doing a full degree course.

## *Where to study – Choosing a University*

**Good introduction to Choosing a University :** [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/widening-participation/sites/widening-participation/files/choosing\\_uni.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/widening-participation/sites/widening-participation/files/choosing_uni.pdf)

### **Oxford and Cambridge (or ‘Oxbridge’)**

These are the two oldest, wealthiest, and most competitive Universities in the country. They are also different to other Universities in a number of ways. They are ‘college’ based (you live and study in a college within the University), and they have a shorter 8-week term and more intensive teaching. You have to be a high-flier to think of applying to Oxbridge. It’s a more demanding application process, often involving other tests and exams, and always a face-to-face interview at the University. Both Universities are striving to make access to their Universities easier and more attractive to state-school applicants. Do not just assume that Oxford and Cambridge are stuffed with private school people and ‘I wont fit in’. Every year Frome students apply to Oxbridge and many succeed. So could you.

More information about Applying to Oxford and Cambridge here:  
[https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/applying\\_to\\_oxbridge](https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/applying_to_oxbridge)

### **Russell Group Universities**

- You will hear this term used to describe 24 of the most established Universities : University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, Leeds, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queen Mary London, Queen’s Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, Warwick and York.
- The origins of the Russell Group go back to 1994, when the then Polytechnics were given University status and allowed to award their own degrees. A group of the existing ‘top’ Universities formed themselves into a group called ‘The Russell Group’ (because they met at a hotel in Russell Square – yes, really), to make themselves distinctive from ‘the other Universities’ who they worried would now be in direct competition with them for applicants.
- There is some snobbery attached to this demarcation, and the idea that these Universities are ‘better’ still exists. They do provide more ‘academic intensive’ courses – and that suits some people. However, many of the ‘newer’ Universities have higher graduate employment rates, so clearly they have plus points too. Just don’t get carried away with the idea that if you don’t get into a Russell Group University that that equals a ‘failure’. It certainly doesn’t.
- You will notice that some Universities that you might think of as ‘top Universities’ – St Andrews, Bath etc, are not on the list. This just shows you that ‘Russell Group’ is a bit of a meaningless way of classifying Universities.

- Just because a University is asking for higher grades than others does not make it 'better'. Look carefully at the course content and what the course actually covers. Is it the right course at the right University for *you*?
- The Russell Group (and other Universities) are keen to increase the number of State School students applying to them. For instance, for *Bristol*, all applicants from Frome College who are made an offer, are eligible for a 'Contextual Offer' – typically 2 grades lower than the normal offer. For *Aberystwyth*, all applicants from Frome College who are made an offer, are eligible for a 'Contextual Offer' – typically 1 grade lower than the normal offer. *Durham* will automatically make you a Contextual offer if you match the entry requirements. If you want to study in an environment that is demanding and will push you further academically, then look at this sort of University for at least a couple of your choices, maybe all 5.

### **Course Choices – how many?**

You can make up to **5 choices** on your UCAS application. There is no preference order and your Universities/Colleges won't see where else you've applied until after you reply to any offers you get. You can apply for more than one course at a University if you want to.

You can apply for five all at once – this is what most people do – or you can decide to apply for some courses straight away (ie. to meet the Oxbridge deadline in October), and then add other course choices later, so long as they are all added to UCAS Track before the 15 January UCAS deadline.

Once you have submitted your application to UCAS you have a 14 day 'cooling off period' when you can change your Uni/course choices. After the 14 days are up, you cannot change the Universities you have applied to. You may still be able to switch to a different course at the same University – you need to contact the individual University to see if that is possible.

**You can only write one Personal Statement.** Therefore, do not apply for lots of different courses – it will be obvious to each University that you are not committed to 'their' subject. Some Universities may allow you to submit a separate Personal Statement for one unusual course choice – contact each University to clarify this *before* you apply.

### **IMPORTANT:**

***Your 5 UCAS choices should cover a range of entry requirements:***

- **Two** courses that requires one grade slightly *higher* than your predicted grades – known as Aspirational choices. They may still make you an offer so worth applying.
- **Two** courses with entry requirements *the same* as your predicted grades.
- **One** course with entry requirements *lower* than your predicted grades.

## Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science, Nursing or Paramedic courses?

For these subjects you can only apply to a maximum of **four** courses in any one of Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science. Your other course choice must be in another subject – typically Biochemistry, Biomedical Science, Vet Nursing etc. It won't matter that your PS is all about Medicine or whatever. Universities know that all 'professional' course applicants will also apply for other science courses. Remember – there is an earlier October closing date for these courses, and you need to be well prepared for making this sort of application before the Summer holidays.

**Please see the 'BIG GUIDE TO APPLYING TO MEDICINE, VETERINARY, DENTISTRY & HEALTHCARE COURSES' for more information**

## Applying to the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge?

You can only apply to one course at **either** the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge, not both. Remember – there is an earlier October closing date for these courses. You need to be well prepared for making an Oxbridge application before the Summer holidays.

## Are you applying for deferred entry?

This means you would enter University in Autumn 2022, not 2021. You would then have a planned Gap Year doing 'other things' before you go to University. You can either enter this on your UCAS application now (on each course choice) or some Universities will allow you to change your 'year of entry' later for instance when you decide on your Firm choice. Some courses are not keen on deferred entry – especially Maths and Medicine – so always check that the University are okay about 'deferred entry' for the course you have chosen.

## Applying for LLB Law courses

Law courses with the prefix 'LLB' are what are called 'qualifying Law degrees'. They qualify you to work in the legal profession. They are intensive degree courses that enable you to work in an interesting and stimulating career area. They are also considered to be a good training for other areas of work – anything to do with human rights, politics, journalism, or civil service roles in central or local government as just some examples.

The **UCAS Law deadline is in January**, however, if you're applying to study law at Oxford or Cambridge you'll need to submit your application by the **October UCAS deadline**.

Law courses at top Universities require very high grades – As and A\*s. At other Universities they will have lower entry requirements. Remember that at some of the top Universities you may be eligible for a lower grade Contextual offer, so don't be put off if you are not expecting top grades. Surprisingly, Law does not have any specific *subject* requirements. You could be doing 3 science subjects or 3 creative subjects, it wouldn't matter. An essay-based subject (English, Sociology, History etc) is considered useful but is not in any way essential.

If you're applying to study **Law at Cambridge**, you'll need to take the Cambridge Law Test. Full details here <https://www.ba.law.cam.ac.uk/applying/cambridge-law-test> More information about the format of the Cambridge test here : <https://www.thelawyerportal.com/free-guides/law-at-oxbridge/cambridge-law-test>

Other Universities require you to sit the **LNAT aptitude test** (<https://lnat.ac.uk/>) as part of your application – these are :

- University of Bristol
- Durham University
- University of Glasgow
- King's College London
- University of Nottingham
- University of Oxford
- SOAS, University of London
- University College London

Be aware that you can submit your UCAS application before taking your LNAT, but you should register and book to take your test date as soon as possible. These spaces fill up quickly and if you leave it too late you may simply not be able to find a slot to take the test.

You can register for LNAT from August. For Oxford applications you must register before 15 September, and sit the test before or on 15 October. For other Universities you must register and book a date to take your test before or on 20 January 2021. There is a fee to take LNAT but bursaries are available – see the LNAT website for details.

The LNAT test consists of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) based on a short written passages that test your verbal reasoning and overall academic ability. They do not rely on any legal knowledge or prior study, so you cannot revise for them. However, being familiar with the format can help your self-confidence so its worth doing some practice papers. These are available on the LNAT website. The second part of the test is a short essay question - you are only expected to write about half a page in response to a question that usually involves considering some sort of moral argument. This is designed to see if you are aware that there are two sides to every argument, and that you can answer the question in clear and sensible English. Again, it doesn't rely on any prior knowledge. Claire Connor has a book about taking LNAT, with practice papers, for anyone to borrow.

This is the information from the University of Bristol's website about LNAT and what part it plays in the assessment of a Law application at that University :  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/law/study/ugdegrees/faq/>

General Information about applying for Law : <https://www.thelawyerportal.com/free-guides/studying-law-at-university-types-of-law-degrees/ucas-law/>

**Law options** – Law degrees are available at many UK Universities, and Law is often offered in combination (joint honours) with other subjects – Law and Criminology, Law with Psychology, Law and Politics etc.

You can also take Law with a language, or at some Universities you can do a degree that also includes the study of Law from another European country – Germany, France etc. These are usually 4 year degrees that include study abroad.

**Information about Careers in Law and Legal** : <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/law-careers>

## Looking to study Acting, Theatre, Dance, Music or other Performing Arts?

As well as University courses, you can also choose to study at a UK **Conservatoire or Drama School**. These courses are more performance-based than the academic degrees you would study at a University and are designed to prepare you for a career. Whilst Music is the most common course available, a few Conservatoires also offer courses in Dance, Drama, and Musical Theatre.

**Drama Schools** offer degree courses in *Acting, Stage Management, Technical Theatre, Costume Making, Directing and other theatre-based roles*. The nearest one to Frome is the prestigious Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Whilst they will have academic entry requirements, the colleges are more interested in your potential as a theatre professional.

Drama Schools and Conservatoires all run **short courses during school holidays** – these are worth considering if you are really interested in these career areas. They improve your skills, and give you an insight into what those courses involve. Look on their websites for details.

### *Conservatoire examples*

**Leeds Conservatoire** (<https://Leedsconservatoire.ac.uk>) Courses include Music Technology, Music Business, Classical, Film Music, Folk, Jazz, Popular, Production, Song Writing, Musical Theatre, Acting and Actor Musician. Students may also choose to combine two pathways. There are also Foundation courses available if you are not expecting high grades.

**London Contemporary Dance School**. Based at The Place Theatre in central London. (<https://www.lcds.ac.uk>) Degree level courses in Contemporary Dance,

**Royal Birmingham Conservatoire** - (<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire>) Part of Birmingham City University. Courses in Acting, Applied Theatre (Education and Community), Music (Jazz), Music (Instrumental or Vocal Performance), Music (Composition), Music Technology, and Stage Management.

**Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester** - <https://www.rncm.ac.uk/> World famous music school. Music – courses in Composition or Instrument/Performance, Popular Music – Vocals, Keyboard, Drumming or Guitar.

### *Drama School examples*

**Bristol Old Vic Theatre School** - <https://www.oldvic.ac.uk/> is attached to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre in Bristol. It offers degree courses in Acting, Theatre Production (Stage & Screen), and Costume for Theatre, Film and TV.

**Guildford School of Acting, Surrey** <http://gsauk.org> is part of the University of Surrey. It runs professional degree courses in Acting, Musical Theatre, Applied & Contemporary Theatre, Dance, and Theatre Production.

**Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA), London** - <https://www.rada.ac.uk/>. In central London, RADA offers courses in Acting, and Technical Theatre and Stage Management.

**Manchester School of Theatre** – <https://www.theatre.mmu.ac.uk/> based at Manchester Met University with an excellent reputation for training professional actors. Courses in Acting, Drama & Contemporary Performance.

### ***Applying for Art and Design courses***

This can include subjects as diverse as Textile Design, Photography, Book Illustration, Jewellery Design, Graphic Art, Sculpture, Advertising, or Fashion Brand Management. A qualification in art and design isn't just about pencils and pictures, you'll also learn all about the business and management side of the industry, which is vital to succeeding in a very competitive job market.

If you are applying for a degree course in any area of Art and Design you must be taking a relevant subject in Sixth Form. The only exception to this is are 'Foundation in Art and Design' courses available at a local college.

### **Examples of specialist Art and Design Schools and Universities :**

**UAL (University of the Arts London)** combines many different Art Schools and Colleges across London – courses include Ceramic Design, Jewellery Design, Furniture Design, Fine Art, Sculpture, Illustration, Photography, Advertising, Magazine Journalism, Media, Creative Technical Theatre, Animation/Film, Fashion Styling etc etc

**Falmouth University** – specialist Creative Arts University. Courses in Art/Design, Performance, Theatre and Music, Business/Marketing and Events, Journalism/Writing, Advertising, Film/Television/Animation, Photography etc etc.

**Glasgow School of Art** – world famous Art School. Courses in 3D Modelling, Printmaking, Interior Design, Architecture, Product Design, Sculpture, Textile Design, Photography, Games/VI, Silversmithing and Jewellery Making etc etc

Good art and design students are inquisitive, imaginative, driven and are totally focussed on being creative. **You must show in your Personal Statement that you do more than just study this subject at school.** For Theatre design, what theatre have you seen recently, what did you think about the design elements etc? Have you been to a Photography exhibition, have you entered any national or local competitions? Have you helped out on any community projects that show your dedication, interest and commitment? **WHY** do you enjoy this subject - and what else have you done that shows this enthusiasm?

**What do you know about the theory of these subjects?** Can you use examples of your deeper, *academic* knowledge of these subjects? For photography, what professional photographer's work do you admire? What artists or artistic movements have you researched – can you say anything about how this relates to your own work? It is not enough to simply state that you 'enjoy' Art or Textiles (etc). **WHY** do you enjoy them, what else have you done that shows this enthusiasm?

You will be required to submit a **PORTFOLIO** of your work, either online or at an interview. There is lots of help on University websites about what this is, what needs to be in it, and how to make it look good. A portfolio is a collection of your work, which shows how your skills and ideas have developed over a period of time. It demonstrates your creativity, personality, abilities and commitment, and helps Universities and Art Schools evaluate your potential.

Ask relevant teachers for help and advice, but here are some websites to get you started :

UAL - <https://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/apply/portfolio-advice>

UCA : <https://www.uca.ac.uk/study/portfolio-advice/> (video)

## ***Writing your Personal Statement***

When Admissions staff look at your personal statement, they want to answer these questions:

- Does this student *really* want to study this subject at University?
- Where is the evidence of this?
- What have they done outside the A level or BTEC syllabus that shows this?
- Are they the sort of person this course/subject/University would suit – and would they make a ‘good student’?

In order to answer this, they will look for evidence like this :

- Do they have a genuine, *evidence-based* interest in the subject and a demonstrated desire to learn more about it beyond A level or BTEC?
- What areas of this course or subject are they really interested in – can they explain this well, using relevant academic examples to back this up?
- Will the student cope with the demands of the course (can they cope with pressure? do they have self-discipline? do they enjoy a challenge? do they just give up when things get difficult?).
- If it's a vocational course (Nursing, Teaching, Medicine, Law etc) does the student understand the reality of the career that the course leads to?
- What else do they do outside school that shows other positive things about them?

Before you start, do some homework. Look carefully at the content of each course for your potential course choices on each University website. This will give you clues about what to mention in your PS that shows you understand what the course is about, what it covers and what it doesn't. *Pick out the phrases, skills or elements that pop up frequently (then show you understand these)*. Remember, you are not applying to do more A level or BTEC level study. This is a step up, and you have to show that you are now ready for University level study.

### **Start Writing – stop putting it off, just sit down and do it**

**Introduction** – make it interesting. You need to provide a brief but convincing explanation as to why you want to study your subject at University. It needs to be interesting – not just ‘I really want to study Physics’ (so does everyone else applying for Physics).

One good way of doing this is to think about the moment when you first decided it was *that* subject that you want to study at University, *that* career path you want to follow. What was the ‘personal trigger’ that got you interested? It may have been book, a museum trip, a science fair, an online lecture, an A level or BTEC topic or assignment, your work experience, etc. Explain this in a couple of lines. *‘I realised I wanted to train as a Nurse*

when...’, ‘When I was at a science fair in Year 9 I saw....’. This only needs to be a short paragraph.

**Paragraphs 2 and 3.** This is where you demonstrate your real interest in the subject and why you want to study this course or subject at University. This section should make up the majority of your personal statement – around 75% according to some careers experts – but this might vary depending on where/what you’re applying to (ie. Oxbridge) and what else you have to talk about. For instance, a Teaching or Medicine applicant may want to invest more time talking about relevant experience they have accumulated.

Pick something in ‘your’ subject that really intrigues you and explain why. ‘I am particularly interested in the Romantic Poets. Having studied .... I have discovered/realised that .....,’ ‘The areas of Physics that I am most interested in are ..... because .....,’

Don’t just make a long list of ‘why I like this subject’; pick one or two key examples and focus on these. It’s quality over quantity. Pick out one or two key ideas and write an interesting paragraph about them. What did you realise from this experience that you didn’t realise before? What else did this lead you to look at, read about, consider? Expand on the idea.

**Final section.** Depending on the subject you are applying for you can use short paragraph about ‘extracurricular activities’ that demonstrate key transferable skills that are relevant to the degree. Or you can use them to show your good personal qualities. For instance, being captain of a sports team shows you can work with others, communicate clearly, lead and motivate others.

Don’t just list hobbies - think ‘what do these show about me’ – explain why you do them, and what you get out of doing them. ‘I am a volunteer helper with a local Brownie Pack, and what I enjoy about this is ....’, ‘Working in a Care Home at weekends, I have developed good communication skills and now have more confidence when dealing with older people’.

Pick a couple of activities that you can use to show the good things about you, and positive aspects like greater maturity, determination, and your attitude towards learning new skills. This paragraph needs to be fairly concise, don’t ramble on, you don’t have much more space at this stage.

**Conclusion.** This should give your statement a satisfying sense of closure. Don’t just stop writing. The final paragraph is like your final bow to your audience – you need to round it off nicely. ‘I look forward to the challenges of studying this subject at a much higher level and I hope that .....,’ or whatever. Just a couple of lines that give a good conclusion. Don’t beg for a place, don’t mention any University by name.

**Applying for dual subject degrees.** If you are applying for a joint subject degree (‘Politics and History’, ‘Media with Communication Studies’, ‘Physics and Philosophy’ etc) then you need to cover both subjects in your PS. For paragraphs 2 and 3, you can either write a paragraph about each subject, or you can try and weave them both together. You must make a convincing case for why you want to study these subjects *together* (not just ‘I like them both’). What connects the two subjects? Or if one is a language, what do you hope to do with this extra skill after you leave University?

**Fixing problems.** Maybe at this stage its simply too long. Where have you repeated ideas? Where have you rambled on without making a clear point? What can you leave out

completely? Is it too short? Look at the middle paragraphs. Can you include another idea, event, concept?

Overall, is there a good balance between the subject and 'academics', and details about you. It shouldn't read like a 'brag sheet' or like a hefty academic essay. Common mistakes - cliché phrases: things like 'Since I've been a child', 'I've always wanted to do a degree in ...', and 'passion', can find themselves in your personal statement all too easily.

Famous quotes: admissions staff want to see what **you** think, not Nelson Mandela or Maya Angelou. Unless it's a lesser-known quote that beautifully illustrates your point, try not to use them.

Complicated vocabulary: if you can say something in five simple words rather than ten, do that. Use shorter sentences. They have more impact.

Humour: your statement is a formal essay with a lot riding on it, and you want to show that you are taking your UCAS application seriously. The reader may not share your sense of humour or it may just make you look immature or a bit flippant.

Don't include 'book reviews' as an attempt to impress— the admissions staff have read those books and they probably understand them better than you do. A better approach is 'I then read .....by ..... and was intrigued by his ideas on .....', or similar. Concentrate on the ideas, not the book.

**Many Universities – especially Russell Group Universities, and Oxford and Cambridge**, stress the need to see evidence of wider reading beyond the A level syllabus, and what are called Super-curriculars. These are academic activities that students undertake outside of their mainstream lessons and which are related to the course or subject area they are looking to apply for. They enable students to go beyond the curriculum and encourage them to explore their specific interests, and to 'think deeper'. For example :

- Read relevant books and journal articles
- Watch documentaries/films
- Listen to an educational podcast or BBC Radio program
- Do an online course such as a MOOC
- Enter a competition/Olympiad
- Visit museums, galleries, science fairs, and exhibitions.
- Undertake an independent academic research project such as an EPQ.

Here are some specific ideas about Supercurriculars from Cambridge, listed by subject – they are equally relevant for applying to any University :

[https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular\\_suggestions\\_1.pdf](https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular_suggestions_1.pdf)

Another useful site to look at is Gresham College, which has an extensive list of podcast lectures by University lecturers and other leading experts in their field, with a good search facility. Each will deal with a specific topic/argument and provides you with an accessible way of grasping more complicated concepts that you can use in a Personal Statement to show 'subject interest' and 'subject extension': <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch/>

## Personal statement language

Try using these phrases to avoid repeating yourself. Or, if you find yourself using the same word frequently ('challenge', 'I enjoy' etc) use google to find other words that mean the same thing.

### Useful phrases :

'Furthermore..' 'has enabled me to...' 'In addition..'  
'..used my initiative..' '..cope well under pressure...' ...'strengthen...'  
'... explore my interests...' '...enhanced...' '...skills I have gained...'  
'...the opportunity..' '.....participated in...' ...as well as...' '...I learned from....'  
'...reinforced...' 'This has furthered my...' 'Further to this...' '...commitment...'  
'...taking part in...' '...creatively..'  
'...using my initiative...' 'I undertook....' 'In addition...'  
'...responsibility...' '...efficiently...' '...conscientiously...'  
'...benefit...' '...I decided to...' '...broadening my interests...'  
'I aspire to...' 'I particularly enjoyed...' 'This genuine interest in...'  
'...rewarding...' 'I continue to develop...'  
'Combining ... with .... has taught me...' 'Through attending...'  
'This has expanded my knowledge of...' 'I have acquired skills in...'  
'I was determined to...' 'Involvement with...' '...enriching...'  
'...challenging...' '...verbal and non-verbal communication skills....'  
'..confidence..' '...incorporated...'...motivation...' '...stimulating...'  
'...potential...' '....opened my eyes...'  
'.. academic skills/intellectual capacity/entrepreneurial drive/curiosity/strengths..'

***Do not use the word 'passionate', or say that 'I have always been interested in...' !!***

**If you are not sure about the style of writing needed**, there are lots of examples of Personal Statements online that you can read to get an idea of the language and style to use. Just make sure that you **DO NOT COPY** any parts of PS available online – or each others – UCAS have software that's spots this sort of plagiarism. They regard this as **fraud** – and they do cancel application because of it.

**Word length.** UCAS limits your PS to 4,000 characters – that’s not just ‘letters’, it includes spaces and punctuation. It also limits you to 47 lines of text (including spaces and blank lines). The quickest way to check if you are over the limit is to cut-and-paste your statement into your Personal Statement page on Track. It will tell you if you are over the limit. Don’t waste time on formatting, indenting paragraphs or other visual niceties. The UCAS system will just lose all of these, and what goes to the Universities will be unformatted text. It’s the words you’ve written that matter, not the visual appearance.

**Spelling, punctuation, grammar.** This matters. Firstly, it shows that you can write properly, secondly it shows you care about detail and ‘getting it right’. A PS littered with spelling mistakes and wobbly English tells a University that you are not taking this application very seriously and have a poor attitude towards your work.

### ***Checking your Personal Statement***

***You MUST get your Personal Statement checked by Claire Connor – she has years of experience of working in University Admissions and understands what Universities want to see – and do not want to see.*** Email her an early draft and she will make corrections, and offer advice about what else you need to include etc.

You should also talk to a relevant subject teacher about what examples of your interest in that subject to include in your Personal Statement – especially for STEM subjects, Art & Design, or Economics/Business.

**Be positive and open to help** – remember that any comments they make are not ‘criticism’, this is about people offering you advice on how to make your PS better. Take some notice of what they are saying, think about it, and do another draft.

After two or three attempts it will start to come together. At this stage you need to show it to someone to check for ‘good English’ – Miss Wells is a good person at school to do this for you, or maybe one of your parents is good at spotting typos, dodgy punctuation, or bits that don’t make sense or are using overly fancy language.

## ***PURPLE FORMS- IMPORTANT!***

These are the forms used at Frome to gather together the information needed your UCAS application, in particular your predicted grades for each subject. You can pick up a Purple Form from Claire at the Front Office desk. There are clear instructions on the back about what you have to do.

**Predicted grades** are what your subject teachers think you will achieve if you keep working at the same level as you are now. These grades are important – they give the Universities an indication of whether or not you are likely to meet their entry requirements. If your predicted grades are too low, they will not ‘take a chance’ and may well just reject you. Some Universities will consider applications that are one grade below their requirements – and they may still make you an offer.

**Your 5 Choices** – where you are applying and for what course. You also need to record the entry requirements. This is so that we can check that you have made sensible choices given your predicted grades.

**Personal Statement checked** – you need to get your Personal Statement checked by Claire Connor. She may also suggest you get it checked by Miss Wells if your written English is weak, and a specialist teacher to check accuracy of technical examples.

**Check everything.** Once you have ALL of this information on your form, and your Personal Statement has been approved, then you need to **double-check** everything on your UCAS application (GCSEs, personal details, email address, fee code etc etc.). Make sure that your current courses (A level, BTEC etc) are correctly listed – the exact title of the qualification, the exact subject, the correct Exam Board and the date you are taking it. If this isn't accurate it can hold up 'results matching' in August – so it's worth getting it right now. These are listed as 'pending qualifications'.

**Finally – pay for your application** (directly to UCAS using a debit or credit card) and submit your application. Well done – you did it!

(Once your UCAS application is submitted to UCAS, it comes to the School and we add your predicted grades and your school reference.)

**Then, bring your Purple Form to Claire Connor.** This tells us that your application is ready for predicted grades and your reference. Once we have done that (usually the same day) we will finally submit it to UCAS for you.

## ***EXAMS – AND RESULTS DAY***

2021 - AS, A level and GCSE exams - 7 June to 2 July for most subjects. That is about 3 weeks later than a normal year.

A level Results Day will now be **Tuesday 24 August**, and Friday 27 August for GCSEs.

## ***IF YOU NEED HELP, ADVICE or MORE INFORMATION***

Look on the UCAS Website for the answer – UCAS.com

Or talk to ....

- Claire Connor – Sixth Form front desk
- Louise Friend – Careers and Employability
- Your Tutor
- Your subject teachers

## Offers and Rejections

Once your application has been submitted to UCAS, the Universities will be sent an online copy of your application by UCAS. They will usually each send you an acknowledgement email to tell you they have received it.

They will then analyse your application, 'score' the various sections (GCSE profile, A level/BTEC predictions, your PS and your reference) to give you an overall application score, and possible rank your application alongside others they have received.

You may receive a response within days, or you may have to wait several months for a decision. This depends on the University and the course you have applied for. Just because a University doesn't make you an immediate offer doesn't mean they don't want you – have patience, they will get to your application in time.

Universities can make three types of decision:

- A **Conditional offer** means you still need to meet the required usually exam grades.
- An **Unconditional offer** means you've got a place regardless of your exam results – these have been criticised and many Universities no longer make them.
- An **Unsuccessful or Rejection** decision. Sorry, you are not going to that University for that degree.

If your application *is* successful you are most likely to be given a **Conditional offer**. The conditional offer can be expressed as specific grade requirements or UCAS Tariff points depending on which that University uses. These are the 'conditions' you need to achieve to 'meet the terms of your Offer' and to go to that University.

Examples :

- 1) 'Must achieve 120 UCAS points, to include 1 A level'
- 2) 'Pass BTEC Extended Certificates grade D, WJEC Diploma grade B, and A level Geography grade B'
- 3) 'ABB at A level including A in either English or History'

If you receive an Offer that doesn't seem to make sense or mentions subjects or qualifications you are not taking, email the University immediately. They will then correct the offer and resend it to you. If you don't understand why you have been rejected, email the University and ask for feedback.

## **Replying to Offers – Making Firm and Insurance Choices**

### **What are Firm and Insurance choices?**

Once you've submitted your application and received all of your 'decisions' (offers or rejections) on UCAS Track, you then need to pick your top two University options: these are your Firm choice and your Insurance choice.

Your **Firm** choice is your preferred university and course, while your Insurance choice is there as back-up in case you don't get the grades you need for your Firm choice in the summer. Your **Insurance** choice should still be a University and course that you would like to go to, but the offer has lower grades that you are more confident of achieving. Be aware that if you miss the grades needed for both your Firm and Insurance, your only option will be to find a course in Clearing (or reapply next year) – make sure you have two sensible choices.

The exception to this is if you have an Unconditional offer as your Firm choice, in which case that will be your only choice because you don't need an Insurance choice.

Once you've chosen your Firm and Insurance and entered this onto UCAS Track, all your other offers will automatically disappear. You can't get them back once you have done this so it's important to be absolutely sure of your choices *before* you confirm them on Track.

### **When do I have to decide?**

The specific deadline that you'll need to respond by will depend on when all your decisions come through, but it probably won't be before May at the earliest. For most 2020 applicants, the deadline is 18 June.

Don't feel rushed into choosing right away – even if you think you're sure about your choices, it's a good idea to leave replying to your offers on Track until April or May. Your feelings about your firm and insurance choices may flip back and forth during the spring term, and might also depend on how your studies are going.

There is NO advantage in confirming your Firm/Insurance choices early. This isn't a race. If you realise you have made the wrong choices later you will have no way to change this. By giving yourself a bit of time to think properly about your decision, you're less likely to be in this situation – someone who waits until March or April to tell UCAS their Firm/Insurance choice will probably make a far better decision than someone who decided in January.

### **Picking your Firm choice**

Your Firm choice University/course is the one that you most want to go to - and that's realistic given your expected grades. On Results Day, if you meet the grades for your Firm choice then that is where you'll be going to University.

Here are a few things to think about when you're deciding your Firm choice:

- Make sure you read everything you can about the course content – is it really the course you want to study for the next three years, or are you just being swept along by the idea of going to that University?
- Look at the current course structure on the University website and read the detailed descriptions for all of the optional units you could be taking. What is compulsory, what is optional? Think about which units you would choose if you went there, and *why*.
- Are there any extras like the possibility of study abroad or a work placement?
- Do you know what the University looks like? Look for Campus Tour films on the University's own website, or on YouTube.
- Don't base your decision purely on 'reputation', 'prestige' or league table 'rankings' Remember its still possible to totally miserable at a University because you choose the wrong one, even if its 'top of the list' on all league tables. Being happy with your course and university will help you to perform well academically and get the most out of student life.
- Choose for *you* – not what your parents or anyone else wants you to do. You are the one who has to do this course every day for the next three years – not them.
- Finally, think about cost. London and other major cities tend to be more expensive, which could affect your budget and how much you can do. It's not just the rent for first year University accommodation: look at the cost of second and third year private housing, public transport, food, social life, and the cost to travel home for the weekend.

### **Picking your Insurance choice**

Your Insurance choice is your back-up University. This means that if you miss your Firm choice you still have a chance of going to University this year – and most importantly, to one you want to go to.

A few things to think about when you're deciding on your insurance choice:

- Make sure it's sensible in terms of the difference in offer conditions from your Firm. If the grade conditions are too close, you could potentially lose out on both your Firm and Insurance if you miss your grades on results day.
- Remember, your Insurance only comes into play if your Firm rejects you. If your Firm accepts you (even with lower grades than the offer conditions), you cannot at that point decide that you'd rather go to your Insurance.

### **Do I have to choose an Insurance choice?**

If you only have one offer that you think you'd be happy going to, then don't feel pressured into picking an Insurance – it is optional. You can select just a Firm and decline all your other choices. This might be better than picking an Insurance that you never wanted to go to anyway, and then have to ask to release you on Results Day.

Just remember that if you do not have an Insurance choice, and you don't make your Firm offer on results day, you'll be automatically entered into Clearing. You cannot pick up any of your 'old offers' – they are long gone.

### **Understanding your offer and what is expected of you**

It is essential that you understand exactly what all your offers mean before you make this choice. Is the wording clear and do you understand exactly what the conditions are? If in any doubt, email the University to clarify the details. You don't want to find yourself in the position of not being able to meet your Firm offer because you misread or misunderstood its terms.

One of the biggest factors to take into account when making your Firm and Insurance choice is how likely you think it is that you will fulfil the conditions of that offer. If you have been asked for AAB in the offer, for example, and you already realise that you will not achieve it, then it isn't a safe choice for a Firm. Never, ever rely on the University being lenient on Results Day. Yes, it does happen that a University still accepts someone who just missed their grades, but that is not guaranteed. You could find yourself without a place at your dream University because you just assumed they'd take you anyway.

If you decide to pick a Firm choice with an offer that will be tricky to reach, make sure you are mentally and emotionally prepared for the possibility that you might not get in. Minimise stress by having a great insurance choice that you know you'll be happy with – then whatever happens on Results Day, you will have a place somewhere.

### **Disadvantages of choosing an Unconditional offer as your Firm choice**

An Unconditional place regardless of your results might seem like a dream offer, but be aware that there are some disadvantages to accepting this as your Firm:

- If you choose an unconditional firm you cannot, by definition, have an Insurance choice. You are therefore locked in to going to that University/course, and only that.
- If you accept an Unconditional offer with unknown A-level grades as your Firm you are committed to going to that University, whatever grades you get on Results Day. Since the offer is Unconditional you are not eligible for Adjustment even if you exceed the grades normally required for that course.
- If you change your mind once you have firmed an unconditional place, you then have no alternative other than to ask to be released from that choice and wait for Clearing. This can be risky, as the course you want may not be available in Clearing.
- A-level results will still matter. Many graduate recruitment schemes use high UCAS points or grades as selection criteria so it's really important that you work hard to achieve the best grades possible regardless of not needing specific grades.

Many of the Universities making unconditional offers to A-level candidates do this only if you accept their offer as your Firm – the offer will be withdrawn if you make it your Insurance. You should therefore check very carefully the exact terms of any Unconditional offer when making this decision.

## **I'm still struggling to choose. Any tips?**

Write the name of each University and the course title at the top of a separate piece of paper, along with the exact wording of the offer. Divide the page into two columns, one for the plus points of that course and University, and one for its negatives.

The kind of plus points you might use are:

- It's the course I most want to do
- It has the possibility of a year abroad
- I'd prefer a campus university
- All first year accommodation is on campus/in a nice area etc

Negatives could include:

- The course is a bit of a compromise, half of it doesn't really interest me
- I don't like the town it's in
- The accommodation is too expensive.

Stick the pieces of paper somewhere you can easily see them and add other points as you think of them. Writing things down is a very good way of clarifying your thoughts and seeing it all in black and white can often make you realise which are your most important preferences, and that you might be hanging onto one choice for all the wrong reasons.

By the end of March, you should have been able to eliminate some offers. Then keep taking down the pieces of paper as you make a decision against a University and course. Even if you think you do know which offer(s) you're going to choose, it's worth writing that down, posting it on the wall and forgetting all thoughts of picking a university for a few weeks. If you come back to your decision after a few weeks have passed and you're still happy with it, you can be confident that it's the right choice(s) for you.

Remember – choosing your firm and insurance isn't a race. If it takes you until April or May to make this choice, that is fine. Waiting will help you to make a more informed decision than if you rush to get it done in January.

## ***EXAM DATES AND RESULTS DAY DATE in 2020/21***

On 12 October the government announced that because of the impact of the pandemic on the school year, this year the summer exam series will **start on 7 June and end on 2 July** for almost all AS and A levels and GCSEs. This is about 3 weeks later than a normal year.

A level Results Day will now be **Tuesday 24 August**, and Friday 27 August for GCSEs.

More information : <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/students-to-be-given-more-time-to-prepare-for-2021-exams>

### ***What happens on Results Day?***

UCAS will be sent your A level and BTEC results by the Exam Boards about a week before Results Day, and they will pass this information onto the Universities. UCAS Track closes during this period so that Universities can make their decisions and enter them on Track so that you can see them when Track reopens as you wake up on Results Day morning.

If your results meet or exceed your Firm choice offer, your Track will change to say UF – unconditional firm against that choice. This may still happen even if you don't quite hit your grades and the University accepts you as a 'near miss'. Remember that there is no way of predicting this and highly competitive courses are unlikely to budge on their offer.

If you don't meet your offer and your Firm choice declines (rejects) you, this is when your Insurance choice comes into play. If your Insurance choice accepts you, Track will update to reflect this and you'll see UF appear beside this University choice. Even if both your Firm and Insurance accept you (UF against both choices) you CANNOT swap them round at this point – you are going to your Firm choice.

If you miss your grades and both your Firm and Insurance choices decline you ('R' for 'rejected'), then you will be automatically entered into Clearing (see below).

You may see that, instead of rejecting you, your Firm choice have offered you an alternative course – this is called a 'changed course offer'. You don't have to accept this – can still opt to go into Clearing – but you MUST accept or decline this offer on Track. Be certain that you are happy with this alternative – or, would it be a better strategy to resit your qualifications and reapply next year to the course you originally wanted to do?

### **How does Clearing work?**

You can use Clearing if you didn't receive any offers (or none you wanted to accept) or didn't meet the conditions of your offers and have now been rejected. This system allows you to see what courses still have vacancies and who might accept you with the grades you have.

The idea is you identify courses (with vacancies) that interest you and PHONE the Universities on Results Day morning to see if they will offer you a place. You need to act fast. You are now in direct competition with every other unplaced applicant – and there will be a limited number of vacancies.

You'll know you're in Clearing if your Track status says 'You are in Clearing' or 'Clearing has started'. If Track doesn't say either of these yet, it might just be waiting for your results to update. Get in touch with the University if it's taking a while – they might still be considering you, even if your results are a bit lower than required.

Here is an online page with more information about Clearing – its worth reading it even if you don't expect this to happen. Being prepared makes that eventuality easier to cope with when it does. <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/final-choice/guide-to-ucas-clearing>

## **USEFUL WEBSITES AND OTHER RESOURCES**

**UCAS** - <https://www.ucas.com/>

Phone numbers and other ways to contact UCAS - <https://www.ucas.com/contact-us>

*Remember – if you contact UCAS, you will need your UCAS id number*

**UCAS Course Search** - <https://digital.ucas.com/search> - is the easiest/quickest way to search for 'which Unis offers which subjects'.

**UCAS Parents Guide** - <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-advice-parents-and-guardians>

**University Open Day calendar** - <https://www.opendays.com/calendar/> - with links to the relevant page on each University website

**The University Guide** - <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/courses> – also has a good search tool, where you can enter your predicted subjects/grades and see which Universities might accept you. *ALWAYS double check the entry requirements on the Universities own website before you apply!*

**The Student Room** - <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/> - a big site with chat-boards, information/guidance about all things 'University', and other areas of teen life.

**Thinking about a Gap Year** - <https://www.studential.com/gap-year>

**33 Useful Websites for Students** - <https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/33-useful-websites-students>

**Student Finance** - <https://www.gov.uk/get-undergraduate-student-loan> - includes step-by-step guide to see if you are eligible and how much you could borrow.

**Gresham College** – <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/watch/> - podcast lectures on a very wide range of subjects.

**Cambridge 'supercurriculars'** and other enrichment ideas listed by subject - [https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular\\_suggestions.pdf](https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/super-curricular_suggestions.pdf)

**Oxford University** – suggested reading list etc by subject - <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/suggested-subject-resources>

**Abe Books** - <https://www.abebooks.co.uk/> - second-hand and new books

**Alibris** - <https://www.alibris.co.uk/> - more second-hand and ex-University library books

