



**Year 12**

**Applying To  
Higher Education**

**June 2024**



# Applying to Higher Education

## Undergraduate Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree (BSc, BA, BEd, BPhil, etc.). This generally takes three years to complete.
- Higher National Diploma (HND). An HND takes less time to complete (generally two years) and is often designed to prepare students for a specific career.
- Foundation Year/Degree (FdA, FdSc, FdEng, etc.). This is generally a one or two year course designed to lead onto a Bachelor's Degree. Students may choose this route if they think they may not obtain the grades or subjects needed for a Bachelor's Degree or did not study a required A Level subject.
- In some cases, students can also apply for a four year Master's Degree (MA, MSc). This includes the postgraduate Master's qualification in the fourth year.

## Making Applications

Nearly all the courses at universities, colleges and institutes of higher education are part of UCAS (*Universities and Colleges Admissions Service*). There is a single online application form which is usually submitted in the autumn/winter of Year 13. The applicant is given up to five choices and at the time of application makes no preference between them. However, by May/June of Year 13, the student must reduce the offers received to a maximum of two.

- (a) Colleges of art and design can be applied to via UCAS, however, nearly all students who go on to such colleges follow an art foundation degree course first. Most of these foundation degrees (available via FE colleges) have their own separate application procedures.
- (b) Some colleges of music and drama schools have a separate online application system called **UCAS Conservatoires** ([www.ucas.com/conservatoires](http://www.ucas.com/conservatoires)). Here students have up to six choices, the deadlines tend to be earlier than the standard UCAS system and students need two references – school and practical. Unlike the standard system the schools can see who else has been applied for but there is no order of preference.
- (c) There are also private institutions, which will have their own application systems.

## Typical Offers

The following are examples of offers made by universities for 2024 entry. It's important to note that high entry grades do not necessarily guarantee quality as on popular courses they are often used as a way of 'sifting' high numbers of applicants.

- BSc Accountancy (Cardiff University): AAB from any 3 A levels or 2 A Levels plus a Distinction in CTEC Business. Applicants with grade A in the EPQ will typically receive an offer one grade lower than the standard offer.
- BA History (Bristol University): AAA, including History A Level.
- BA Business and Management (UWE Bristol): 112 UCAS Tariff points. GCSE Level 4 in Maths and English Language also required.
- BSc Environmental Science (University of South Wales): BCC-CDD to include a Science (including Geography and Maths) or 104-80 UCAS Tariff points.
- BEng Civil Engineering (Exeter University): AAB-ABB: including A Level Maths and a Science (both Grade B).

# Specific University/Course Information

## Teaching:

There are two main ways of qualifying to teach via Higher Education institutions:

Route 1            BEd degree – sometimes also called BA(QTS).

Route 2            Subject degree (a ‘substantial part’ of which must be in the subject(s) taught in the school curriculum), followed by one year of post-graduate training (PGCE).

Both routes require a grade 4 in English and Maths at GCSE and applicants training to be primary school teachers must also have a 4 in Science. Those planning to take Route 1 into primary teaching are advised to have at least one, preferably two, of their A levels in National Curriculum subjects.

## Art/Music/Dance:

The quality of portfolio/audition and interview may count more than A level grades/tariff points.

## Oxford/Cambridge:

Applicants must either choose to apply to a specific college or make an ‘open application’. Colleges usually make offers in terms of A level grades and often have pre-interview exams and/or ask for samples of work to be submitted. Nearly all colleges will interview applicants.

## Entry Deadlines

Course	Deadline
Conservatoires (music courses)	2 October 2024
Foundation degrees, Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre Schools	See the course websites. Could be any time from September 2024 onwards.
Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science	15 October 2024
Oxford and Cambridge	15 October 2024
Equal consideration for all other undergraduate courses via the UCAS system	29 January 2025

## Extra Tests/Exams

Some universities now require applicants for certain subjects to take additional tests, many of which incur charges.

- Applicants for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science may be required to take the UCAT (University Clinical Aptitude Test), which is sat at regional centres between July and September 2024. Applicants will need to register for the UCAT themselves. This test is extremely rigorous and students are recommended to seek advice from the assessment website on how to revise.
- Applicants for Law at some universities are required to take the LNAT (National Aptitude Test for Law). Registration for the test opens in August 2024 and the test can be taken from September 2024. Oxford and Cambridge candidates will have an earlier deadline of 15 October 2024 for completion of the test than those applying to other universities.
- Highly selective universities may have additional entry tests for certain subjects, such as the HAT (History Aptitude Test), MAT (Maths Aptitude Test) and PAT (Physics Aptitude Test). Students need to book these tests at private test centres – they can no longer be taken through Backwell School.

**For more information on tests go to**

[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/admissions-tests)

## Deferring Entry/Taking A Gap Year:

Deferred entry (i.e. applying for 2026 entry) is possible for most university courses. There is no list of these courses so it's best to call the universities to check. Students apply via UCAS as normal in Year 13 and select '2026' entry on the UCAS application. Many universities allow students to defer their entry after the deadline.

An increasingly common way to take a gap year is to apply instead in the next application cycle (from September 2026). This method has the advantages of allowing the student longer to decide what to apply for and to target universities in the knowledge of grades achieved. The student would still apply via the school who would write their reference. If the course has interviews/auditions, it's important that the student is around during the application period.

Students choose to spend their gap years in a variety of ways including work experience, volunteering, further study and travel, and they will be supported in school to gather ideas and make applications.

# Making An Application

Students make their application via the UCAS Hub at <https://www.ucas.com/>, selecting 'Sign In'. Then select 'Students' and 'Create account' within the 2025-entry option. They need to create a password and make a note of this.

We will provide students with a "buzzword", which will be entered during the registration process. This will link the application to the school so that we can check the application and write the reference for the student. **All students are given a UCAS Guide during Future Plans Week which explains in detail how to complete the application form.**

## Making Choices

We advise students to apply to institutions with a range of entry requirements, both aspirational, realistic and insurance in terms of their predicted grades. This will give them the most flexible options when they come to choose their firm and insurance choices.

Students should research their choices as thoroughly as possible. This could be through online prospectuses, higher education fairs, open days and/or taster courses.

Students can find and compare information on degree courses on the UCAS website. Discover Uni (<https://discoveruni.gov.uk>) is also very useful. As well as entry requirements students might like to compare optional modules available, the mix of exams and coursework and contact hours as well as the opportunity for a work placement or year abroad. All institutions are required to give details of graduate destinations so this would also be useful to research.

## Personal Statement

Once the student has filled in personal, education and choice details, they will be required to write a 4000 character personal statement. This is the student's opportunity to tell the course admissions department why they have chosen the subject and why the institution should want them as a student. It is very important that the applicant takes time to prepare this.

Once the student has completed the whole application and paid the fee to UCAS (£28.50) it will be checked by a member of the sixth form team who will then compile and upload their school reference (written by their subject teachers and tutor). The school will then send the application to UCAS. See last page for timings/deadlines.

## What happens next?

The student will then receive an email from UCAS to state that the application has been received and sent onto the universities. The student can then access the system to see details of any offers made. Invitations to interviews and applicant open days will be sent directly to the student, so it is important that they regularly check the email address given on their application.

Each institution will consider the application against their own admissions criteria so the students will hear from them at different times - they may be contacted within a very short period of time after applying or it may be some months before they hear anything. Once they have heard from all their choices, they will need to choose one 'firm' choice and one 'insurance' choice. The deadline for this is June 2025.

### **UCAS Extra**

If all the student's choices are declined, or if they decide to withdraw their application from those choices, they can take up 'UCAS Extra'. This allows them to apply to one more course (as long as it has spaces left).

## **Offers**

### **Conditional Offers**

Most universities are likely to make the student a conditional offer based on the A level/CTEC results they are predicted to achieve at the end of Year 13. They choose whether to make an offer in terms of grades or tariff points. See the table on the next page for tariff points. The benefit of points is that they also take into account AS results, EPQ, and music/dance/lifeguarding awards (however, not all university departments will allow students to include such points, so it is necessary to check).

### **Unconditional Offers**

An unconditional offer means that the institution is sure that the student will be successful on the course or that they have passed the interview/audition/portfolio requirements and therefore specific exam results are not necessary. Despite this, we advise students as to the importance of continuing to do their best in their exams as many graduate employers look at A Level/CTEC results as well as degree results.

In some cases, the institution may make an unconditional offer only if the student agrees to make that course their 'firm' (i.e. first choice). In this case it is important that the student speaks to one of the sixth form team to talk it through.

### **CTEC Subjects**

Many courses asking for grades do not specify on their websites whether they accept CTEC subjects as part of their offer. Although in our experience the vast majority do, it is always best to contact the university admissions department to check.

# Tariff Points

A Level	
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

AS Level	
A	20
B	16
C	12
D	10
E	6

Extended Project	
A*	28
A	24
B	20
C	16
D	12
E	8

OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate		Business Studies
OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate		Health and Social Care
OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate		Performing Arts
D*	56	
D	48	
M	32	
P	16	

Music Performance				Music Theory			
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8		Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
D	12	16	30	D	6	8	10
M	10	14	24	M	5	7	9
P	8	12	18	P	4	6	8

National Pool Lifeguard Qualification	
NPLQ	8 points



# Student Finances

Tuition fees can vary even for similar courses, so it is important to check this on the course information webpages. The maximum fees for courses starting in 2025 is £9,250 per year.

## Tuition Fee Loans

There is a loan available from Student Finance England to cover each year's tuition fees. Students will need to apply for this loan by end of May in the year before they start the course (i.e. May 2025 for September 2025 start). The loan will be paid directly to the institution, and students are required to pay it back (plus interest) only when they are earning above a certain level. See [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance) for details.

## Maintenance Loans

Students may also qualify for an additional Maintenance Loan to help with living costs. This loan is paid directly to the student at the start of each term (or monthly if they study in Scotland) and students are required to pay it back (plus interest) only when they are earning above a certain level. See [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance) for details.

## Additional Funding

Further financial support is available in the form of bursaries, scholarships and other support which usually does not need to be paid back. Amounts vary across different courses and locations and can be offered for a variety of reasons, including course type, applicant background, academic/creative ability, or exam results. See <https://www.thescholarshipclub.org.uk> for details.

# Applying To Non-UK Institutions

The Higher Education sector can differ widely from country to country in terms of entry requirements, how offers are made and visa requirements/timescales, so the student will need start researching this as soon as possible. For specific advice, see **Unifrog** to search and shortlist US, European and Canadian universities, as well as numerous 'Know-How' guides to studying in these and other countries, including those in Asia and Australia. If transcripts and school references are required, the student will need to let the Sixth Form Team know as soon as possible as these applications can be complex.

## What Next...

- Start to fill in the online application forms for UCAS, UCAS Conservatoires or private institutions.
- Speak to teachers re predicted grades. Be realistic – they have experience of predicting grades so listen to their advice.
- Research courses and institutions. Narrow down to one subject (or two for joint honour degrees) and look at a range of course entry requirements.
- Investigate the financial implications of Higher Education.
- Start to put together a personal statement. Read around your subject and, if applying to a vocational (career specific) course, start to gain relevant work experience.
- Speak to the sixth form team if you are unsure about any aspects of applying to Higher Education.
- Remember that you can apply to apprenticeships at the same time as university. See the Post-18 (non HE) booklet for details.

# HE Application Cycle – Summary

	Action	Timings						
1	Applications are submitted. For the vast majority of HE courses, students use the <b>standard UCAS</b> application system where they apply for up to 5 courses. In addition, they can apply for up to 6 conservatoire (specialist music/performing arts) courses via the <b>UCAS Conservatoire</b> system. In addition to this, they can apply to <b>universities abroad</b> and/or any number of <b>private institutions</b> or non UCAS HE courses (such as foundation degrees and private drama/music schools).	The <u>final deadline</u> for applications via <b>UCAS Conservatoires</b> is 2 October 2024 so students will need to discuss their application/references with school as soon as possible and definitely by the start of Year 13. For the <b>standard UCAS</b> system the deadline to submit the application to school is 23/30 September 2024 for ‘early application’ courses (medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, Oxford, Cambridge) and 1/8 November 2024 for all other courses. The <u>final deadline</u> to send to UCAS is 15 October 2024 for ‘early application’ courses and 29 January 2025 for all other courses. Universities abroad and private institutions have their own deadlines.						
2	Interviews/auditions/exams take place (if required)	Extra tests/exams needed for a few courses (e.g. medicine) take place in August 2024, but the vast majority of these, interviews and auditions take place between September 2024 and January 2025. See course websites for details.						
3	The institutions either make an offer or decline the application	Any time after the application is made. Most will have replied by the end of March 2025, but some may not reply until the end of May 2025.						
4	If all UCAS choices are declined, the applicant can use ‘UCAS Extra’ to make one more choice	‘UCAS Extra’ opens on 26 February 2025 and runs until 4 July 2025.						
5	When all the UCAS choices have replied, the applicant decides whether to keep: <table border="1" data-bbox="199 1444 758 1780"> <tr> <td>a</td> <td>a single unconditional firm offer, <b>or</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>b</td> <td>one conditional firm offer and one conditional insurance offer, <b>or</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>c</td> <td>decline them all and apply for a new choice via ‘UCAS Extra’ or later via ‘Clearing’</td> </tr> </table>	a	a single unconditional firm offer, <b>or</b>	b	one conditional firm offer and one conditional insurance offer, <b>or</b>	c	decline them all and apply for a new choice via ‘UCAS Extra’ or later via ‘Clearing’	<p>If all courses have replied by March 2025, this needs to be done by May 2025.</p> <p>If all choices have replied by May 2025, this needs to be done by June/July 2025.</p> <p>The deadline to apply for up to 5 choices is the end of June 2025. After this application will go into Clearing and can only apply to one course at a time.</p>
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c	decline them all and apply for a new choice via ‘UCAS Extra’ or later via ‘Clearing’							
6	Exam Results are published	August 2025						
7	The place is confirmed depending on the conditions of the offer. If the applicant is unsuccessful in both firm and insurance choices, they can apply for a new choice via ‘Clearing’.	‘Clearing’ runs up until the end of September 2025.						