

UCAS ESSENTIALS

YORK COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY CENTRE GUIDE
TO UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS & UCAS



2026 ENTRY

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WHO CAN HELP ME?

Every year, several hundred York College students successfully apply to university. We go through the process every year and we are all here to share our expertise to help you succeed too.

This guide will help you understand what you need to do. It is difficult to cover every possible situation though, so please remember that there are lots of people here in college who can advise you. This guide covers all the basics to get you started.

PROGRESS COACHES – Progress Coaches will normally be your first port of call for support with your UCAS application and will normally write your UCAS reference, based on the academic references supplied by your tutors. They will also be able to provide support with your student loan application.

TUTORS – Tutors will often be able to give more specific insight or advice around aspects of your application, such as university choices and entry requirements. Both tutors and progress coaches have a lot of experience with UCAS.

FUNDING TEAM – The Funding Team have detailed knowledge of the student loan application and student finance process.

CAREERS SERVICE – The college careers service can provide advice and support around all aspects of your application and can also deal with technical issues in the UCAS system. Progress coaches will normally refer you onwards if you need more specialist help, but you can also book a careers discussion to review your choice of course or university, career ideas or your personal statement.

We recommend these resources as good initial sources of information:

UCAS helpline	0371 468 0 468
Conservatoire helpline	0371 468 0 470
The UCAS website	www.ucas.com
UCAS FAQs	www.ucas.com/search/frequently-asked-questions
Chat to students	www.ucas.com/chat-to-students



IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

There are several deadlines that you must not miss over the coming year. The main ones are listed here.

You can open your 2024 UCAS hub account from **6th May 2025**, and the first applications can be sent from **2nd September 2025**. Most applications go to UCAS between October and December. For a very few courses, there are different dates, so you should double check.

UCAS's deadline for 2026 applications is **14th January 2026**.

You need to allow plenty of time before the deadline for the college to write your reference and insert your predicted grades. We also thoroughly check every application and send them back to you to make changes if needed. This can all take a lot of time.

The UCAS deadline is for York College to submit your completed application to UCAS, not for you to send your part to college.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Instead of one deadline, the college aims to work to the following:

- Applications submitted by the end of September should be sent by the end of October
- Applications submitted by the end of October should be sent by the end of November
- Applications submitted by the end of November should be sent by the end of December

Universities will look at applications and make offers from September 2025. All applications (except Art & Design) should be submitted before the Christmas break.

CONSERVATOIRE COURSES

These are specialist institutions for performing arts degrees. Applications run to a different timetable and process to UCAS because of the need for two references (for academic and practical instrumental ability) instead of just one. Check the dates and talk to your tutors and progress coach to ensure you can meet them, and also discuss referencing. For a full explanation of the UCAS conservatoire process, see the UCAS guide:

[Filling In Your Application For UK Conservatoires via UCAS](#)

If you are only applying to conservatoires, you need to complete UCAS Conservatoires Application. If you need to apply to other universities as well, you will need to complete a second, 'normal' UCAS application as well. Both applications will be connected to your main UCAS hub account and you can take full advantage of:

- Up to six conservatoire choices
- Up to 5 non-conservatoire choices

You will need to pay the UCAS fee for each application, so you should plan accordingly.

In practice, most conservatoire students only complete the conservatoire application.

ART, DESIGN & FASHION COURSES

To give art, design and fashion students the most time and support to prepare their portfolios, the Art & Design team at York College send these applications closer to the January deadline, usually in December and January. You should work on your application and complete your personal statement, doing research and preparation in the same way as other students, whilst you are working on your portfolio.

REPLYING TO OFFERS

Universities will start to make decisions from September, with the majority falling between February to May, after your application. You do not have to make any decisions until you receive your last reply. UCAS will then give you a Reply to Offer Deadline (usually about two weeks after you receive your last reply).

LATE APPLICATIONS

UCAS will continue to accept applications after their January 14th deadline, but these will be considered **late applications**. Universities are under no obligation to consider your application and this is likely to be an issue if you are considering courses or universities that tend to be over-subscribed with applicants.

You can also apply directly into clearing, towards the end of the UCAS cycle. Again, this could limit your choices but allows you more time to consider if you want to go to university.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

You have 14 days after your application goes to UCAS to change your university or course choices. After this, you need to withdraw your application or choice. This is not advisable, so make your choices carefully. Spend the summer months researching courses and universities, and doing anything else you want to do to support your application.

DEFERRING YOUR APPLICATION

There is an option within UCAS to specify the academic year for which you are applying. You may want to take a year out and apply for the succeeding academic year. This has the advantage of sorting out your university application while in college and then knowing that at the end of your year off, your university place is 'in the bag'. This is a deferred application.

If you plan to do this, you need to research and check with destination universities. There is no automatic entitlement to defer, and different courses, departments and universities will have different views on this. Science-oriented subjects are likely to be interested in how you will keep your skills and knowledge 'up-to-scratch' in your year off.

See the section '**Taking a year out**', later in this guide.

UCAS
application
deadline
11th January
2026

UCAS APPLICATION TIMELINE — KEY DATES

29th April 2025	UCAS search tool displays 2026 courses.
6th May 2025	The college UCAS portal set up for 2026 applications to link to the college.
13th May 2025	Undergraduate applications open for September 2026 entry. Students can start applications and send them to the college for review, approval and references.
10th July 2025	Conservatoire applications open for 2026 entry. Applicants can register, pay, and send their applications.
2nd September 2025	Completed undergraduate applications can be submitted to UCAS.
UCAS Application Deadlines	30th September 2025 - Deadline for applications to be sent by the end of October.
	31st October 2025 - Deadline for applications to be sent by the end of November.
	28th November 2025 - Deadline for applications to be sent by the end of December.
	19th December 2025 - Final deadline for all UCAS applications.
2nd October 2024 (18:00 UK time)	Application deadline for conservatoire music applications. Applications for dance, drama, and musical theatre courses may have a different deadline – check conservatoires' websites for information.
15th October 2026 (18:00 UK time)	Submission deadline for completed applications to Oxford and Cambridge, and most courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine/science.
14th January 2026 (18:00 UK time)	Equal consideration submission date for completed applications for most undergraduate courses. Reference must be completed before the application can be sent. Deadline for most conservatoire undergraduate dance, drama or musical theatre courses. Check on the specific course to be sure.
26th February 2026	UCAS Extra opens. Applicants who have used all five choices and are not holding any offers may be able to add another choice in their application.
30th June 2026 (18:00 UK time)	Late applications received by this deadline will be sent to universities and colleges. After this time, applications are automatically entered into Clearing.
4th July 2026	Last day for applicants to add an Extra choice in their application.
5th July 2026	Clearing opens
19th October 2026	Final date for Clearing choices

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-when-apply

www.discoveruni.gov.uk

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

www.whatuni.com

UCAS POINTS

Most Level 3 courses like A levels, T Levels and BTEC diplomas have UCAS points, based on the amount of academic content and the grades you get. This is a manageable way for universities to compare different courses and qualifications and also student applications.

It is important that you work out what your UCAS points are likely to be, based on your predicted grades. Tutors and progress coaches can help with this.

The York College guide to UCAS points illustrates what UCAS points look like for your qualification and different grades you might get. There is more information on picking your courses and universities and how they connect to UCAS points and predicted grades in the 'Making Decisions' section on page 8.

You can also visit the UCAS guide and points calculator: [UCAS Tariff Points - what are they and how do they work?](#)

GCE A LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS

Grade	Tariff Points
A*	56
A	48
B	40
C	32
D	24
E	16

BTEC QUALIFICATIONS

Grade	Tariff Points
D*	56
D	48
M	32
P	16

T LEVEL QUALIFICATIONS

Grade	Tariff Points
D*	168
D	144
M	120
P (C+)	96
P (D or E)	72

BTEC EXTENDED DIPLOMA

Grade	Tariff Points
D*D*D*	168
D*D*D	160
D*DD	152
DDD	144
DDM	128
DMM	112
MMM	96
MMP	80
MPP	64
PPP	48

REDUCED GRADE OFFERS

Some universities offer the opportunity to attend summer schools or study programmes, which will support your UCAS application. It is often the case that if you attend one of these programmes and then apply to that university, they will make a guaranteed offer of a place, often with a reduction in the entry grade requirement

You should give some thought as to whether this route will benefit you and you will need to research both the university and the course you are interested in. Not all courses or departments offer them and some may have application criteria. They are often fully funded and free to attend.

Priority is often given to applicants who face additional barriers to accessing higher education (see contextual offers below)

This link should help: [Events and summer schools to prepare students for higher education | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

CONTEXTUAL OFFERS

Universities are doing a lot of work to improve access to higher education for students who face additional barriers, such as disabilities, coming from an under-represented ethnic group, carer responsibilities or being care experienced. There are a number of additional factors that can be considered such as where you live, whether your parents went to university or whether they were ever in the armed forces and you had to change school a lot. Each university will have their own widening participation criteria and not all courses or institutions make contextual offers.

Universities will often run summer study programmes to support these applicants, so there can be some overlap with reduced grade offers (see above). There are a number of different outcomes which might include things like a reduced grade offer, a guaranteed interview or the offer of an additional, foundation year to be more prepared for your main degree programme.

You will need to do some research and it is worth discussing this with your progress coach. You should also look at this link:

[Contextual admissions | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

FOUNDATION YEARS

You may have seen or heard the term 'foundation year' or noticed that some institutions and courses offer this option. A foundation year is for applicants who demonstrate the potential to complete a degree programme but who do not, for any number of reasons, meet the entry criteria. They have a much lower UCAS point requirement (typically 48 – 72 UCAS points). You can apply to go onto a foundation year or universities will sometimes offer them as an alternative, either at the offer stage, or after Results Day.

They usually have a separate UCAS course code, so would count as one of your 5 choices.

Foundation years are usually 'generic' to a particular study area, such as humanities, science etc. and will usually guarantee progression onto a group of related degree courses upon successful completion. Not all courses or institutions offer them, so you will need to do your research.

It is worth noting that, whilst they are designed for progression within a particular university in mind, there is nothing to stop you completing a foundation year with one university and then transferring to another with a degree that you prefer. Provided the destination university is happy with the content of the foundation year you have studied, you can apply to that university. You should discuss this with your progress coach, if you think a foundation year could be for you.

You should also check the cost of a foundation year. The government is introducing caps for the fees for foundation years, but these vary depending on the type of subject area. You could find that it will cost less than the other years of your main degree programme. Foundation years are covered by student finance applications.

APPLYING TO YORK COLLEGE

If you are only applying to study a degree at York College, you do not need to apply through UCAS and there will be no fee to pay. You can apply directly through York College and you can speak to your progress coach and tutors about an application.

If you are wanting to apply to other institutions as well as York College, you will need to complete a normal UCAS application, with York College as one of your options, and pay your UCAS application fee.



MAKING DECISIONS

You are going to live near your chosen university for at least 3 years, so visit in person if you possibly can. Universities list their open days on their websites. You can also find them on www.opendays.com

Get an idea of how to get the most from an open day with this short UCAS video www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/events-and-open-days

FIND OUT ABOUT:

- Entry requirements – these vary between courses and universities. Note that many courses have particular entry requirements e.g. a certain amount of prior laboratory time, a particular level or grade of maths, particular modules in chemistry. Some course or institutions do not accept EPQs or certain other qualifications (e.g. General Studies A level).
- Options for a foundation year, where you do not currently meet the entry requirements.
- Course content and structure.
- Facilities and resources.
- Student success rates.
- Employment data after the course.
- Accommodation types, prices, quality and availability.
- Bursaries, well-being and other support available.
- Contextual offers.
- Links to industry.
- Options for a work placement year as part of your degree.
- Options for study abroad for a term or a year, possibly as part of an exchange or partnership programme.
- Compare information like the amount of time you spend in lectures, tutorials and seminars. These vary between universities and courses.
- Consider things like mandatory trips or work placements. For example, some nursing degrees will have you on a ward after 6 months, others wait until your third year.

Shortlist courses and universities that appeal to you. You can start searching for 2026 courses from 29th April 2025. You will have a maximum of five choices to put on your application.

Discuss your application with your tutors and your progress coach. Consider whether you would benefit from a careers appointment. You should also read the **York College Guide to Choosing a University**, published by the careers service.

MAKING YOUR UNIVERSITY CHOICES

You can choose up to 5 universities or courses. It is not unusual to pick more than one course at the same institution.

As a rule of thumb, you should ideally aim to have a good 'spread' of options, looking something like this:

- One/two 'aspirational' choice(s) – this is like a 'best case scenario', where you get or exceed your predicted grades and will usually be your top choice(s).
- Two/Three 'achievable' choices – these will sit comfortably within or at your predicted grades and you should feel reasonably confident that you can obtain them.
- One 'back up' choice – this is the 'worst case scenario' where you do not get the grades you expected.

The exact profile of choices will vary between students, so get advice from tutors and progress coaches about your choices.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.discoveruni.gov.uk

www.ucas.com

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

www.theuniguide.co.uk

YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

The UCAS personal statement has changed from a free text format to three structured questions. This is to make it simpler and more focused.

The three questions are:

Why do you want to study this course or subject?

How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

WHAT SHOULD YOU WRITE ABOUT?

Many students struggle to get started with their personal statement. There are three things you can do to make your life easier:

- Read the **York College Guide to Writing a UCAS Personal Statement**, published by the careers service and available from your progress coach.

- You can access an online tool called OSCAR that helps you write your personal statement. OSCAR was developed in conjunction with university Admissions teams and focuses on bringing out skills relevant to the subject you are applying to study. Ask your progress coach about accessing OSCAR.
- Access the UCAS guide to writing your personal statement. The link is listed at the end of this section.
- The total character count remained 4000 (including spaces and punctuation). Each question requires a minimum of 350 characters.

Here are some additional ideas:

- Volunteer – www.do-it.life to find voluntary opportunities near you.
- Find a job – use www.indeed.co.uk or www.reed.co.uk among others.
- Find a work experience placement or short-term internship. Some courses expect you to have a minimum period of relevant work experience e.g. teaching, nursing, social care.
- Network – talk to friends, parents, your parents' friends, your friends' parents, relatives, neighbours to find out if they know of any opportunities.
- Develop a new interest, pastime or skill which relates to your future study and career plans.
- Approach an organisation/business/charity to offer your time freely in return for specific experience e.g. photographing items for a charity newsletter.
- Organise a day shadowing a professional in their workplace.
- Get involved in local community activities, organising a local event or charity fundraising.
- Get involved in local politics.
- Take part in college activities and events.
- Visit museums and art galleries to deepen your knowledge of an aspect of your current studies.
- Explore your career ideas in depth – find out what people do every day in their job.
- Think about aspects of your field of study. What interests you most and why? What have you done to follow up on this?
- Do plenty of additional reading and research. There are many useful online resources like expert blogs, YouTube specialist videos, and so on.

TOP TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

- It is essential that you read the **York College Guide to Writing a UCAS Personal Statement**, published by the Careers Service. Your progress coach has a copy, or one can be provided by the careers service.
- You only have 47 lines or 4,000 characters, including spaces (not words!), so you must get to the point quickly. It is about 650 words or roughly a side of A4.
- The UCAS form does not have a spell checker or any

formatting. Do not include web links.

- Write your first draft in Word – focus on content, not length – it can be edited later. Keep in mind that the more you go over count, the more editing you will need to do.
- Go through your personal statement with your tutors and your progress coach. They will have important advice.
- Then edit and redraft some more so that you don't go over the character or line count. You are likely to go through several drafts of your personal statement.
- Then spell check and proofread for any typos, spelling mistakes, poor grammar or unwieldy sentence structure. It may help to read it out loud.
- Your statement goes to all your 5 choices, so don't identify a particular course or establishment.
- Your statement will be easier to write if your choices are all in a similar field.
- It is possible to send additional information in support of your application directly to universities, once you have submitted your application. You should only do this, if you really need to do so.

WHAT HELP IS AVAILABLE?

- The personal statement tools and guides on UCAS are helpful and can be read in conjunction with the York College Guide to Personal Statements.
- Your tutors and progress coaches see scores of statements every year, they have lots of good advice.
- Universities publish a great deal of advice on personal statements and will be happy to discuss what they are looking for at open days, webinars or UCAS events etc.
- The Careers Service can also help with advice and information.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/personal-statements/writing-your-personal-statement

www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/getting-into-university/personal-statements-for-university-applications

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement

STUDENT FINANCE ESSENTIALS

Many students are put off the idea of university by the expense. Most universities charge £9,535 each year for their teaching and a standard 3-year degree costs nearly £30,000. Your course may be longer (so more fees), and you will have living costs to pay. Colleges that offer degrees tend to be cheaper than universities.

STUDENT LOANS

Almost all students get a government loan to cover their costs. The eligibility and repayment rules change from time to time, but for students starting their courses in 2026, they are:

- No tuition fees are paid upfront by the student.
- You can apply for a tuition fee loan of a maximum of £9,535 a year, which is paid straight to the university. You need to reapply every year of your course.
- You can also apply for a maintenance loan for your living costs. The amount varies depending upon your household income.
- Loans attract interest from the very start.
- Student loans are repaid over 40 years once you are earning £25,000 or more. After 40 years, the remaining amount is cancelled.
- You repay 9% of the amount you earn over £25,000 – so if you earn £26,000, you repay 9% of that additional £1,000, which is £90 over the year, or about £8 per month.
- The repayments come directly from your salary, the same as tax and national insurance.
- If your salary drops below £25,000, the repayments stop.

OTHER THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MONEY

- You will not be rich. Students must be good at budgeting. Almost everyone needs a part-time job to boost their income.
- All universities offer bursaries and hardship funds, so make sure you find out about them.
- There are grants and scholarships available, from a couple of hundred pounds (which will help with the cost of textbooks) to even funding the entire degree.
- Student loans usually open for applications in February and you should aim to apply before May.

For more information, go to the York College Guide to Student Finance, published by the Careers Service.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/student-life/getting-student-support/undergraduate-student-support

www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes

www.ucas.com/finance/additional-funding

www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company>

www.thescholarshiphub.org.uk

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Treat your UCAS application like a campaign. Gather all the information you need and keep it all in one place so you can refer to it easily.

- Make sure you have your GCSE results to hand: you will have to provide all the details on your application form. If you have qualifications from another country, talk to your progress coach or the Careers service about how to record this information in your application. You may need to contact UCAS.
- If you are from another country, make sure you understand your right to stay and your eligibility for student finance.
- Talk to your tutors and progress coach about what you are applying for, so they can refer to it in your reference and give you advice from their own experience.
- Plan your free time in the summer and into the autumn constructively so that you have things to cover in your personal statement. Many universities expect you to have attended a summer school, taster lectures or an open day.
- Make notes about all the additional things you do – sport, volunteering, hobbies, part time work, etc – that will support your application.
- Read around your subject – visit the library for professional journals, and research the latest developments in your field.
- Familiarise yourself with information on ucas.com; save the login page to your favourites.
- Spend time on the course search pages, varying your search criteria. New courses get added or changed occasionally so keep up-to-date.
- Make your own timetable to ensure you meet the college deadlines. Give your tutors and progress coach plenty of time to check your application.
- Use the UCAS points guide and calculator to find out how many UCAS tariff points you may be able to achieve.
- If you don't understand anything, or you have a question – ASK, DON'T GUESS. We return a lot of applications due to silly errors that would have taken just a minute to check.



STARTING YOUR APPLICATION

1. Applications for 2025 entry open on **13th May 2025**. You can create your UCAS account from this date, but you cannot submit your application before 3rd September.
2. Go to the UCAS Hub www.ucas.com/dashboard#/ and register with your name and email address. This does not have to be your college address, but make sure it is one you check regularly. Confirm the year that you want to start your studies and that you are an undergraduate. No one in college has access to your username and password. You will need them every time you log in to UCAS to work on your application. Make a note of your username and password.
3. It is especially important to enter your full name exactly as it is on official documents. There is a point later where you can indicate a preferred name, but your UCAS application **MUST** be in the same name as your ID and qualifications certificates.
4. You will be asked if you are applying with the help of a school or college, and if so, enter the buzzword. This simply links your application to us so that we can track it with you and attach your reference and predicted grades. This year, the buzzword is: **Minster2026**.
5. You must then allocate yourself to a group (this helps the college manage the UCAS process). There are groups for vocational, T level and A level students and you should choose based on what you are currently studying and the type of application you are doing. There are other groups for art/design/fashion applicants, ex-students, adult Access students (aged 19+) and early applications (Oxbridge, vets, dentists and medics).
6. Fill in all the information required. You cannot skip any sections marked as mandatory.
7. Fill in as much as you can about your personal circumstances. For example, if you have been in care, or if you have a learning need or disability. These factors can determine the strictness of the criteria the university uses. See contextual offers in the glossary.
8. Add your planned funding – for most students it will be a student loan, which is UK, ChI, IoM or EU Student Finance Services. Also add your local authority as the supporting organisation.
9. Add all your education and qualifications from age 11 (secondary school) onwards. There are hundreds of different qualifications to choose from, so check with your tutor that you have selected the right ones.
10. Add any jobs that you have had – full or part-time. Include the company names and addresses and the dates you worked there. Voluntary work should not go here – save that for your personal statement.
11. Select your course choices – be careful to choose the right ones.
12. Write your personal statement – see elsewhere in this guide and the **York College Guide to Writing a UCAS Personal Statement** for advice and information.
13. Submit and pay for your application. This does not send it to UCAS. It goes to the college side of the UCAS portal, where your tutors and progress coaches can review, complete referencing and predicted grades and check the application. UCAS charges £28.95 to process your application – there is no longer a discount for only one choice.
14. Your progress coach will usually deal with your reference and tutors / course leader will check your application. The college may need to return your application to you to make changes.
15. Once everyone is happy with the application, the college will send your application to UCAS. You will see your UCAS hub change from 'Apply' to 'Track'.

UCAS
applications
open
13th May
2025

USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/
applying-university/filling-your-ucas-
undergraduate-application](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application)

[www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--
Advice/Fees-and-Money/Home-or-
Overseas-fees-the-basics#layer-3831](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/Home-or-Overseas-fees-the-basics#layer-3831)

PAYING FOR YOUR UCAS APPLICATION

Most students will need to pay for their UCAS application by making a card payment. Once you have completed all sections on your application and you are ready to submit, you will be presented with two payment options:

- Pay by card.
- Invoice UCAS centre (this is York College)

Students **MUST** select 'pay by card' (including students whose application will be paid by the college bursary) **UNLESS** you receive free school meals (FSM) - see section below.

Students who receive bursary – if you receive a bursary, you will usually be entitled to have your UCAS application paid by the bursary. Please speak to the funding team if you need any help with this. You will normally pay by card and the cost will be reimbursed through the bursary. Entitlement to the bursary is assessed by the college.

Students in receipt of FSM – in 2025, UCAS introduced a fee waiver for students in receipt of free school meals. This is not the same as having your application paid by the bursary (see above). Not all students who receive a college-assessed bursary receive FSM because FSM entitlement is determined by the government, not by the college.

Where students receive FSM and can prove it, they are entitled to claim the fee waiver. To do this, at the point of payment, select 'Invoice UCAS centre'.

NOTE: it is important to get this right – UCAS will not process any corrections, once the application has been sent to them.

WHAT DOES YOUR FAMILY NEED TO DO?

You are not on your own. As well as the expert help available in college, parents and carers can also provide support. For example:

- Make sure your parents / carers are familiar with the parents' section of the UCAS website – there is lots of information in the Parents' Guide at: www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-advice-parents-and-guardians
- They can register for the monthly e-newsletter, which keeps them informed and helps them to support you.
- You may need to ask your parents and carers to take you to open days. If you go with a few friends, you can spread the cost and time between several parents.
- Ensure your parents / carers understand how the financial support system works, and what financial evidence they may need to provide later.
- Ensure they understand how Extra and Clearing work, and why you might need to use them.
- Make sure they know YOUR deadlines. They will talk to other parents and carers and information can get distorted. Keep them updated about your status on Track. Your 'Reply to Offer' deadline is triggered by the last university to respond to you.
- Ask their opinion about what you are interested in or good at, it might generate new course or career ideas.
- Discuss nominated access with your parents or carers. If you want them to be able to get into your application in your absence, you will need to give permission on your UCAS application and give them your log in details. You can do the same for your student finance application.
- Remember – the more your parents or carers know about the process, and where you are in it, the less they will worry! Keep them informed.

TAKING A YEAR OUT

If you are thinking of taking a gap year, you can either wait to apply next year (in which case, the college will write your reference, but not offer any other support), or you can apply this year and defer your entry until the next academic year. Before making this decision, find out if your university will accept deferred applications. Not all universities or departments accept deferrals and attitudes will vary widely, even down to different courses within the same department.

Also bear in mind that you will be applying under the conditions of the current year, and rules may change before you go (maybe for better, maybe for worse.) Sometimes a university will pull a course during the year, so you should be aware of this risk.

There are many organisations that offer Gap Year experiences. If you decide to go this route, make sure you go with a reputable and accredited organisation.

For more information on planning a gap year, you can speak to your progress coach or book a careers appointment. You should also read the [York College Guide to Planning a Dev Year](#), published by the Careers service and available from your progress coach.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.projects-abroad.co.uk/

www.i-to-i.com/

www.realgap.co.uk

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/

IS UNIVERSITY FOR ME?

Many students are unsure if university is the right option for them and it is difficult to compare university with other options, like apprenticeships. What should you be looking at and what should you be trying to compare? Where do you get this information?

Here are some points to consider:

- There are about 350 higher education providers in the UK, offering about 51,000 degree programmes, with a wide variety of specialisms, entry requirements and other options. There is a high likelihood that there will be something in there for most people.
- There are other higher education options available, such as Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), foundation degrees, Higher Apprenticeships (at Level 4) and degree apprenticeship programmes at Level 5-7, as well as a number of industry specific qualifications in things like accounting, human resources or marketing, usually running all the way from L2 introductory qualifications through to more substantial ones at degree level.
- There are options to study a degree part-time, while you work. It will take longer but can make finances and study more manageable.
- There are other ways to get a degree, for example through the Open University, where you can build up modules over time. You can also complete HTQs, like Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas or a foundation degree, then consider doing a one or two year Level 6 'Top Up'.

Do not forget that it is possible to submit a late application or apply directly into clearing. Consider if you will benefit from a year out.

You should also read the [York College Guide to Alternatives to University](#), published by the careers service and available from your progress coach. You should also discuss your ideas with your progress coach and consider whether a careers appointment would help explore your options.

APPLYING AS AN EX-STUDENT

If you decide to take a year out, you have two options:

- A deferred application (see the section above on deferred applications).
- An in-year application, after you have left college.

The benefit of a deferred application is that you can 'box off' your UCAS application whilst at college and have your place at university ready at the end of your year out. If you opt to leave your UCAS application until after you have finished college, we can still help you. You should also consider the logistics of managing your application, for example, if you are travelling abroad.

If you want to complete an 'in-year' application when you have left college, you can do this two ways:

- **Reference only** – this is where you arrange with a tutor or other member of staff for them to do your reference directly. In this situation, you do not need to insert the buzzword or connect to the college. You specify the name of the staff member in the application and insert their college e-mail address. UCAS will send a secure link for the reference to be uploaded directly. You should, obviously, discuss this with your referee. This is the fastest and simplest route.
- **Standard Application** – this is where you would insert the buzzword and connect your application to the college. We will then have to collate references and complete the normal checks. You should add yourself to the 'Ex Students' group, after inserting the buzzword. This route is slower and will take longer.

Do note that, if you are doing your UCAS application after you have left college, you cannot just roll forward any previous UCAS applications from a different academic year cycle. You will need to complete a fresh application, although you can re-use things like your personal statement. You will also need to insert the correct buzzword, so check that you have all the correct information.



GLOSSARY

Apply – the part of the UCAS online application where you make your application to university. It automatically changes to TRACK once your application is submitted.

Adjustment – this was when students who achieved better grades than expected could turn down their firm offer and negotiate an unfilled place on a better course. It has now been absorbed into the Clearing process.

Buzzword – this is a unique term that automatically links your application to the college, giving us permission to attach your reference, and view and manage your application. You need to insert the buzzword when you start your UCAS application (although you can do this later).

Clearing – on 30th June, universities open their unfilled places. Students not holding any offers can apply for these places one at a time. Some courses are too popular to ever have anything in clearing. It can be a great opportunity, opening you up to a choice that you had not considered. After results day in August, many students enter clearing because their grades did not meet their conditional offer. It is also possible to apply directly into clearing without being in the earlier stages of UCAS.

Conservatoire – a specialist institution, which trains students in music and performing arts. Conservatoires often have a practical focus with professional musical tuition, and bespoke facilities. There are 11 conservatoires in the UK. To find out more visit <https://conservatoiresuk.ac.uk>

Contextual offer – grades can be influenced by a range of factors, so to make the processes fairer, some universities offer contextual admissions. This is where the university considers any barriers you may face and will either reduce their grade requirements or give extra consideration when deciding whether to give you an offer.

Deferred application - applying for a degree that starts one year after you have left college whilst completing the application in your final year at college. Not all degree courses allow this, so you should check with destination universities and courses.

Equal Consideration Deadline – Often known as the 'UCAS deadline! Mid January deadline. UCAS guarantees a university will consider your application.

Extra – If a student who made 5 choices has had no offers, or has turned down all offers, by the end of February, they can add an extra choice, one at a time, until they are successful.

Foundation Year – one year course completed before you start the main part of your degree programme, offered by many universities to students whom they believe could progress onto a main degree but who do not currently meet entry requirements. If considering a foundation year, you should check cost, suitability and content and do your research: not all courses or universities offer them.

Reply to Offer deadline – when you have received your last reply from the universities to which you have applied, you will have two weeks to make your decisions. UCAS will give you a deadline to reply to any offers you have received.

Tariff – the points awarded to each grade of a qualification

to enable comparison across the many different types of qualifications and make it easier for universities to compare applications.

Track – the part of the UCAS application process once the application has been submitted. Students can monitor and manage their application here.

UCAS – the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

UCAS group – you will need to allocate yourself to a UCAS group after you have inserted your buzzword. The groups will come up in a list on the next screen. For most people, the group will be just based on what they are currently studying but there are special groups for Access students, Art & Design applicants, Early applicants etc. These groups are created to help the college manage UCAS applications. Check with your progress coach if you are not sure what group you should be in.



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