

Applying to university is an exciting and important milestone for your child. As a parent or guardian your support and guidance can make a significant difference during this process. This guide outlines how you can help your child navigate their UCAS application effectively and make well-informed decisions.

UCAS

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) is the application system for undergraduate courses at universities and colleges in the UK. It allows students to apply to multiple institutions through a single online application.

Students complete their application form online at www.ucas.com

Only one application can be completed in each annual cycle.

Key Deadlines

- College deadline for applications: 1st December 2025

(Meeting this deadline is crucial to ensure your child's application is processed on time.)

- UCAS equal consideration deadline for most courses: Wednesday 14th January 2026

Cost

The UCAS application fee is £28.50 for up to five choices. Students must pay for this using a card once the form is complete. If your child can demonstrate that they have been in receipt of government-funded free school meals at some point during the last six years they are eligible to have the application fee waived. Students must complete a Waiver Form and have it signed and stamped at their previous school. A copy of the form can be found at the end of this document. It can also be collected from a member of the college's Careers Team. This should be done by 24th October 2025.

Helping your Child Choose the Right Course and University

Talk to your child about selecting a course that they will enjoy and that aligns with their career goals. Use UCAS and university websites to research. Make sure they are likely to meet the entry requirements, including both Level 2 (GCSE) and higher qualifications. You may want to use the Discover Uni website to compare undergraduate courses – www.discoveruni.gov.uk

When thinking about universities consider their location, campus type, accommodation and accessibility. Attend open days and information events when possible. Your child can apply for up to 5 courses.

Support Available

The college provides support for students throughout the application process:

- College Tutors offer guidance during class time. They will provide a reference and predicted grade for your child.
- The Careers Team delivers workshops on 'Your Higher Education Options', 'UCAS Apply' and 'UCAS Personal Statements'.
- To make an appointment with a college careers adviser to discuss course choices, university selection, application writing and/or personal statements email careers@nrc.ac.uk.
- Your child can access a range of resources on the 'UCAS & Higher Education' section on Canvas.

Writing the Personal Statement

The personal statement is a structured piece of writing that consists of three distinct sections, each with a specific question to answer:

1. **Why do you want to study this course or subject?**
2. **How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course or subject?**
3. **What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?**

Each section must have a minimum of 350 characters and the total character limit across all sections is 4,000 characters (including spaces).

College careers advisers will proof read statements before they are added to the application form. Students should email their draft to their campus adviser by 1st December. Getting this done early allows time for feedback and improvements.

You'll find lots of helpful resources on the UCAS website - www.ucas.com/applying/applying-to-university/writing-your-personal-statement

Completing and Submitting the UCAS Form

Once the application form is complete, students should notify their tutor who will check the form, provide predicted grades and write a reference. The careers team will then conduct a final review before sending it off to UCAS. This collaborative approach helps ensure the form is accurate.

What Happens After Submitting a UCAS Application?

Once your child's UCAS application is submitted, it is sent directly to the chosen universities and colleges for review. These institutions will assess the application and may invite your child to an interview, audition or aptitude test before making a decision on whether to offer a place.

Interviews, Auditions and Aptitude Tests

If your child is invited to a university interview encourage them to contact the careers team for one-to-one guidance, support or a mock interview. The careers team also runs workshops tailored to the courses students have applied for, typically held in February or March each year.

Types of Offers and How to Respond

Your child may receive different types of offers, and these can arrive at different times, so it's important not to worry if some take longer than others.

- A conditional offer means that your child still needs to meet the requirements – usually exam results.
- An unconditional offer means they've got a place, although there might still be a few things to arrange.
- An unsuccessful or withdrawn choice removes that option, but they could add more.

Adding an Extra Choice

If your child does not receive any offers from their original choices, they may have the option to add an Extra choice through UCAS. This can help increase their chances of securing a place at university.

Clearing

UCAS Clearing is a system that helps students find a university place if they haven't secured one through their initial applications. It's used if your child didn't receive any offers or didn't meet the conditions of their offers. It may also be used if they applied after the June 30th deadline or if they declined all their offers or decided to look for a different course. Clearing typically runs from July to October. Please contact the careers team in the college if you or your child would like support in navigating the Clearing system.

Keeping Contact Details Updated

Encourage your child to keep their contact information on UCAS up to date to ensure they don't miss any important notifications or updates.

Financial Considerations

University education can come with significant financial commitments. Apply for a student loan on time, if your child needs one. The college's Student Finance Team is available to help answer any questions—email studentfinance@nrc.ac.uk. You can also contact Student Finance NI, which provides grants and loans for students from Northern Ireland. Student Finance NI can also provide finance to support students with additional learning needs. More information can be found on their website – www.studentfinanceni.co.uk

Accommodation Arrangements

If your child plans to live at university, securing suitable accommodation is essential. Normally this is once they have received offers and have made their final decisions. Please check accommodation arrangements on individual provider's websites.

Contact Details

College Careers Team - careers@nrc.ac.uk

College Student Finance Team - studentfinance@nrc.ac.uk

UCAS - 0371 468 0 468

Student Finance NI – 0300 100 0077

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UCAS Free School Meal Entitlement

Student Information: Please ask your previous school to complete this form to allow you to demonstrate your entitlement for the UCAS fee waiver.

School information: Students who are currently enrolled at school or college and have been in receipt of free school meals at some point during the last six years (i.e. during their secondary education) up until the end of their final year, will be eligible to have their UCAS application fee waived for the 2026 cycle.

Can you please complete the following to evidence this student has been in receipt of free school meals at any time since Sept 2019?

Student Details

Name:

DOB:

Has this student been in receipt of free school meals at any time since Sept 2019?

Yes ☐

No ☐

School stamp

Signed:

Position:

Date: