

**SUN** DISCOVER  
YOUR  
FUTURE

# FUTURE STEPS

*It's not too late*



# FUTURE STEPS

## *It's not too late*

You might think you've missed your chance to apply for higher education this year but that's not the case! Even after the application deadline in January (**see page 9**), many universities still have places available for students just like you. There are more university places being offered than ever and universities are keen to fill spaces on their courses, so you're in a good position to apply.

You still need to research your options carefully, as higher education is a big commitment, but this booklet will help you start thinking about what you need to do in order to choose your next steps and apply.

You can also access our online chat by following this link: [bit.ly/SUN-NTL](https://bit.ly/SUN-NTL)



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# HOW DO I CHOOSE A COURSE?

There are a few factors you might want to consider when deciding which course is right for you:

## WHAT INTERESTS YOU?

If you are going to study a subject in detail, it should be something you are passionate about. Choose a subject you enjoy to help you reach your goals.



## WHAT TYPE OF COURSE DO YOU WANT TO STUDY?

You may have heard of a bachelor's degree (BA/BSc/BEng), as this is the most common type of undergraduate higher education qualification. However, there are several types of university courses available to you so take some time to research and explore the different options. Some courses are also available for part-time study.



## DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC CAREER IN MIND?

If so, you might want to consider if your ideal career requires a particular degree subject. Websites such as [prospect.ac.uk](https://prospect.ac.uk) can help you with this.



## TOP TIP

DON'T FORGET TO LOOK AT THE UNITS/MODULES YOU WILL STUDY ON EACH OF THE COURSES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN, AS DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES WILL OFFER THE SAME COURSE TITLE WITH VARYING UNITS/MODULES. CHOOSE SOMETHING THAT FITS WITH YOUR INTERESTS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS.

# HOW DO I CHOOSE A UNIVERSITY?

Your chosen subject will probably be offered at several different universities, as well as some colleges and other specialist institutions. How do you choose? Again, you'll need to ask yourself a few questions about where you'd feel most comfortable studying:

## DO YOU WANT TO BE CLOSE TO HOME?

Maybe you want to stay local, or perhaps you are excited to explore a new town or city. Either way, think about how often you'll want to travel home and travel costs. Remember, you don't always have to move away from home to go to university.



## WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY?

Do you want to take part in a particular sport or society? Or perhaps you want to know if there are facilities related to your course e.g. photography studios or science labs.



## CAMPUS OR CITY CENTRE?

Some universities are located in the middle of cities, some in more suburban areas, and others on leafy, out-of-town campuses, with students living and studying on the same site. There are advantages for both but consider what appeals to you the most.



## TOP TIP

**BOTH VIRTUAL AND FACE-TO-FACE OPEN DAYS ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE UNIVERSITIES, AND CAN HELP YOU WITH MAKING IMPORTANT DECISIONS ABOUT UNIVERSITY!**

[BIT.LY/UCASTOURS](https://bit.ly/UCASTOURS)

# WHAT DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

Although the application process may be slightly different for you if you are applying late, in Extra or Clearing (see the jargon buster on page 14 if you're not sure), your initial UCAS application will always ask for the same information.

THERE ARE  
**SEVEN SECTIONS**  
TO COMPLETE:



- 1 **PERSONAL DETAILS**
- 2 **COURSE CHOICES**
- 3 **EDUCATION DETAILS**  
Your GCSE, A Level/BTEC results or predicted grades
- 4 **EMPLOYMENT & VOLUNTEERING**  
If applicable
- 5 **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**
- 6 **PERSONAL STATEMENT** .....
- 7 **REFeree DETAILS**  
Usually a teacher or college tutor

# PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is one of the most important parts of your application. It's an opportunity to tell your chosen university why you're interested in this particular course and why they should choose you. There is no magic formula for writing a personal statement, as it will be unique to you, but you might find the following tips useful:

1

**Explain what excites you about the course** and why you want to study it. Be genuine and avoid clichés. Show that you understand the course you're applying for and that you are passionate about it.

2

**What skills and experience do you have** that show you would succeed on this course? Highlight any work experience or skills you've gained through school or college.  
**If you're stuck, think of ABC:**

**A**  
**Activity**  
What have you done?

3

**Finish by showing what makes you unique.**  
What hobbies, interests or experiences make you stand out from the crowd?

**B**  
**Benefit**

What skills have you gained from doing this?

**C**  
**Course**

How has this prepared you for your chosen course?

**DON'T FORGET TO PROOFREAD YOUR WORK CAREFULLY!  
ASK FRIENDS OR FAMILY TO CHECK IT FOR YOU TOO.**

## TOP TIP

YOU'LL FIND LOTS MORE ADVICE ON SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION AND WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT ON THE UCAS WEBSITE: [WWW.UCAS.COM](http://WWW.UCAS.COM)

# CHOOSING ACCOMMODATION

## UNIVERSITY HALLS OF RESIDENCE

This is a popular option for first-year students and a great way to meet lots of people. Halls are usually very convenient as they are often on or near campus and students are usually expected to pay one monthly payment, including bills.

But if you miss out on a place at university halls, don't panic!

## PRIVATE HALLS OF RESIDENCE

Similar to halls run by universities, but owned and run by private companies.

## PRIVATE RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

A good option if you have applied late in the year and halls are no longer available. Private accommodation is also great if you like your independence.

## LIVING AT HOME

If you are studying locally this could be a very convenient and affordable option.

"I wanted to go into halls, but there were no places left. My university set up a Facebook group and I met five other girls in the same position. We got on really well, so decided to get a house."

*Nura*



**WHY NOT LOG ONTO FUTURE STEPS AND ASK CURRENT STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR ACCOMMODATION?**

## TOP TIP

**YOUR UNIVERSITY MAY HAVE A LIST OF APPROVED LANDLORDS LETTING AGENTS, OR MAY HAVE A PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIVATE HALLS. THEY CAN HELP WITH FINDING ACCOMMODATION, EVEN IF YOU'RE APPLYING LATE IN THE YEAR, SO GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM.**



# WHAT IS THE APPLICATION TIMELINE?



## OCTOBER

**Ultra-competitive course applications close.** Such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary courses and applications to Oxford and Cambridge.



## JANUARY

**UCAS Application deadline for undergraduate courses.** Your college or sixth form deadline might close before January, check with your careers department for any internal deadlines.



## FEBRUARY

**UCAS Extra opens.**



## JULY

**UCAS Extra deadline and Clearing opens.**



## AUGUST

**Results! Good luck.**



## SEPTEMBER

**Final deadline for undergraduate applications.**

**CHECK OUT THE NOT TOO LATE WEBSITE [BIT.LY/SUN-NTL](http://BIT.LY/SUN-NTL) FOR THE EXACT DATES FOR THIS YEAR'S APPLICATION CYCLE.**



# WHAT IF I WANT TO GO TO UNIVERSITY NOW THAT I'VE GOT MY RESULTS?

If you get the results you want in the summer, congratulations! Your hard work has paid off and you got your grades. You may find yourself wishing you had applied to university, but the good news is, it isn't too late. You can apply through Clearing up to five days after you've received your grades.

Before you access Clearing, it would be useful to do some research into which universities you would like to apply for.

You can contact your sixth form/ college careers department to get support on where to go, but ultimately the choice is yours. You can also speak to current university students about how they prepared for university via **Future Steps**<sup>3</sup>.

Once you've confirmed your place at a university through Clearing, it is then time to apply for student finance and accommodation.

**If this all seems a bit rushed for you, why not take some extra time to do your research and apply to go to university next academic year? You can still get the same experience, but you will also have the chance to take a gap year.**

**SEE PAGE 13 FOR INFORMATION ON WHAT TO DO NEXT IF YOU'RE STILL UNSURE.**

# WHAT IF I DIDN'T GET THE GRADES?

**If you collect your results and they don't meet the minimum requirements of your firm or insurance choices – don't worry!**

This is a surprisingly common situation to be in. Lots of students who didn't get the grades they wanted, have still gone on to university through the Clearing process.

If your results aren't too far off what you had hoped, it's always worth contacting your firm or insurance choices to see if they are able to still accept you. You can do this by calling the university's admissions teams and discussing your options with them. They may even suggest a different course at their institution.

If you are not able to get your firm or insurance choices, there are still other options.

**Clearing is a great opportunity to look at other courses at different institutions, there will be lots of options to consider.**

If you decide to go through the Clearing process there will be plenty of advice available from your school/college, or on the live chat on **Future Steps**<sup>4</sup>, to guide you through. There are usually thousands of places available, so you should be able to find a course and a university that suits you.

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CLEARING ON PAGE 12.**



# WHAT IS CLEARING?

Each year there are around **30,000 undergraduate courses at universities with places which, when August comes around, haven't been filled.**

**Clearing is used by universities and colleges to fill places which are still available on their courses.** If you haven't met the entry requirements for your original choices, didn't receive an offer you are happy with, or if you haven't yet applied, you can use Clearing to find a place on a course at university.

Whilst it might seem a bit daunting, gaining a place at university through Clearing is becoming increasingly normal. **In 2020 over 52,000 students gained a place at university through Clearing.**

Universities have a lot of support in place for students making a late application. Many will run virtual open days, **chat sessions with current students**, and one-to-one calls with academics as part of the process.

If you are not already set up on UCAS, you will need to register to make an application through Clearing. The **UCAS website** has lots of information and support if you are thinking about going to university through Clearing.

**You can also look at Clearing Plus which launched in 2020!**



# WHAT IF I'M STILL NOT SURE WHAT TO DO?

If you are still struggling to decide what to do next, here are a few things to think about that might help:

## **Tackle your future in small chunks.**

You don't have to decide what you want to do for the rest of your life, just the next step.

Contact your school/college and ask if they can arrange for you to speak to a Careers Adviser who can provide impartial advice and help you think about which options are best for you.

It might help to talk to family and friends about their education and career paths. If you have an interest in any professions or job areas, you could contact someone doing the job to ask about their career journey.

You could consider looking for **voluntary work, work experience** or an **internship** as a way to experience a career area you are interested in. **Do It** allows you to search for volunteering vacancies in your area. For work experience and internships, you will need to contact individual companies, explaining to them why you want to gain experience with them. **Remember, work experience and some internships are usually unpaid.**



# JARGON BUSTER

## ADJUSTMENT

Is when you can 'trade up' from your current UCAS choices. This can happen when you've achieved better grades at sixth form/college than predicted and means you could apply for a university with higher entry requirements.

## BSC OR BA

There are different degree titles, but many subjects fall under BSc (Bachelor of Science), BA (Bachelor of Arts) or BEng (Bachelor of Engineering). Other common titles are BM (Bachelor of Medicine) and LLB (Bachelor of Laws). Some subjects, such as psychology or geography, are available as BA and BSc courses. The BSc is likely to have more scientific or technical content while the BA will focus more on human or social aspects of the subject.

## CLEARING

If you didn't get the grades you needed, didn't receive offers, declined your offers or have not previously applied via UCAS, Clearing allows you to apply for courses at universities that still have places available.

## CLEARING PLUS

Clearing Plus was new in 2020 and it tailors the Clearing process for you. Clearing Plus suggests course matches for you, which still have available spaces, based on your choices and application. You are only eligible for Clearing Plus if you are unsuccessful with your application or are applying for the first time through Clearing.

## EXTRA

If none of the choices you included in your application were accepted, or you declined the offers you received, you will be able to use UCAS Extra. Extra runs from March until June and students can make one application at a time.

## MASTER'S DEGREE

This is a type of postgraduate degree. Typical titles include MA (Master of Arts), MSc (Master of Sciences) and MRes (Master of Research).

## PHD

This is a type of postgraduate degree. A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is the highest level of degree you can achieve. You independently conduct original and significant research within a specific subject.

## POSTGRADUATE DEGREE

Postgraduate study generally refers to the range of courses usually available to students who have completed undergraduate studies.

## UCAS

Stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. This is the organisation that handles nearly all university applications and provides general advice and guidance.

## UCAS TRACK

UCAS Track is on the UCAS website and it allows you to keep up to date with your applications. Here, you can check to see if you've received any offers and respond to them.

## UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE

A three-year or four-year course you can complete after finishing school or college, which specialises in one or two subjects.



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[WWW.SUNOUTREACH.ORG](http://WWW.SUNOUTREACH.ORG)

