Why go to university? Myth busting and application timeline

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UCL Access and Widening Participation

Our aims:

- To ensure that all applicants have an equal chance of entering UCL, regardless of background, ethnicity, age or disability.

- To achieve this, we design programmes to help eliminate gaps in access between the most and least represented groups of students at UCL.

- The least represented students at UCL include (amongst others):

  - Students who attend non-selective state schools
  - Students whose parents did not attend university
  - Students who live in neighbourhoods with low progression rates to university.



Today's Session

- Why might your child apply to university?
- Applying to university – all about UCAS
- How to choose a course
- How you can support your young person

Timeline to Higher Education

Primary School:

- 5-11 years old
- SATs

Secondary School:

- 11-16 years old
- GCSEs

6th Form / College:

Further Education

- 16+ years old
- A Levels/ BTECs

University:

Higher Education

- 18+ years old
- Complete degree
- Employment, further study, etc.

Why might you go to university?

I want to study my favourite school subject in greater depth.

I want to gain transferrable skills and learn something completely new to me.

I want to meet new people and gain more independence.

I have a specific career in mind and university will help me to get there.

I want access to world-leading experts, cutting-edge research and state of the art facilities.

I want opportunities like years abroad and placement years.

I want to keep the door open to lots of career paths.

I want to become an expert in my subject area.



Why UCL?

- UCL is a world-leading institution
- +400 undergraduate degrees
- Most targeted university in London by graduate employers*
- Wellbeing and careers support
- Inclusive, global community
- Cutting-edge facilities and research which makes an impact

*High Fliers 2026

Who do you think has the most influence on students' university choices?

A. School/college teachers
B. Friends
C. Family
D. Career advisors

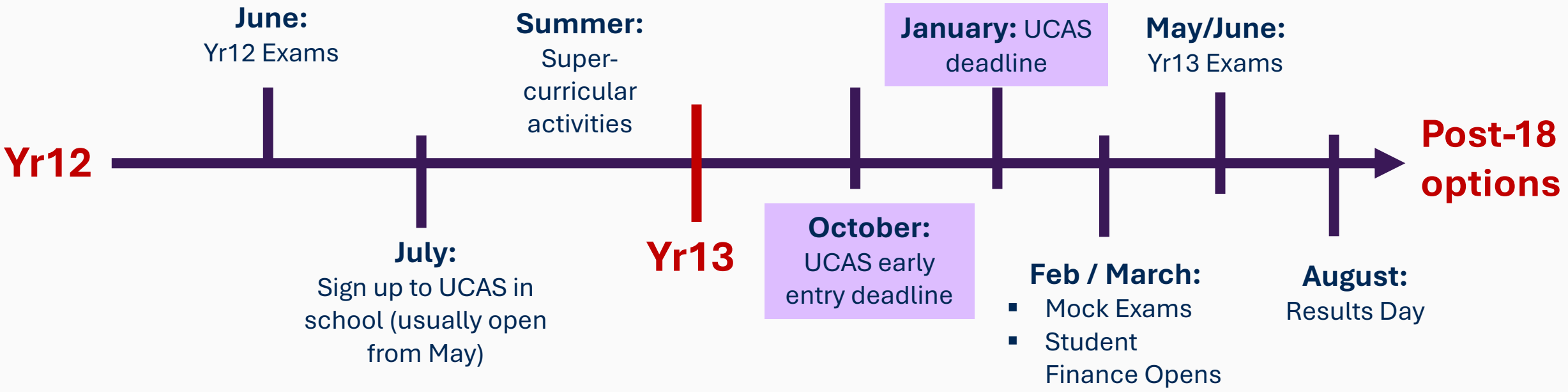
Who do you think has the most influence on students' university choices?

A. School/college teachers – 62%
B. Friends – 44%
C. Family – 74%
D. Career advisors – 50%

Applying to University



Timeline of Yr12 and Yr13*



*Please check the UCAS website for specific dates and deadlines. The specific October and January UCAS deadlines change slightly each year.

UCAS

- Universities & Colleges Admissions Service
- One application form which UCAS distributes to your university choices
- You have an option to apply to up to FIVE universities



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How does UCAS work?

- You can choose up to 5 different university courses through UCAS
- Only 1 application will be sent to all 5 universities
- Application deadlines are typically in the **January** of the year of entry
- Some courses/institutions will also set earlier deadlines for **October**, e.g., Medicine courses.
- UCAS then distributes the application to universities and monitors its progress
- Students can track their progress through ‘UCAS Track’

UCAS Hub

- UCAS Hub is a free service providing students with all the tools they need when applying to university:
- Explore subjects
- Personal statement builder
- Careers Quiz
- Virtual Work Experience
- CV builder

Personal Statements

- It forms part of the UCAS application
- **One** personal statement is sent to all 5 university choices
- A personal statement **supports an application** to study at a university or college:
- It is a chance for to share **why your child would like to study a particular course or subject**, and what **skills and experience** they have that show their passion for their chosen field

Personal Statements

- 3 questions – 350 characters to answer each question (4000 overall character limit including spaces)

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

What is the purpose?

- The student's chance to add personal context to their application – an integral aspect of applying!
- As parents, it's important to encourage your young person to take part in **super-curricular activities** to strengthen their application.

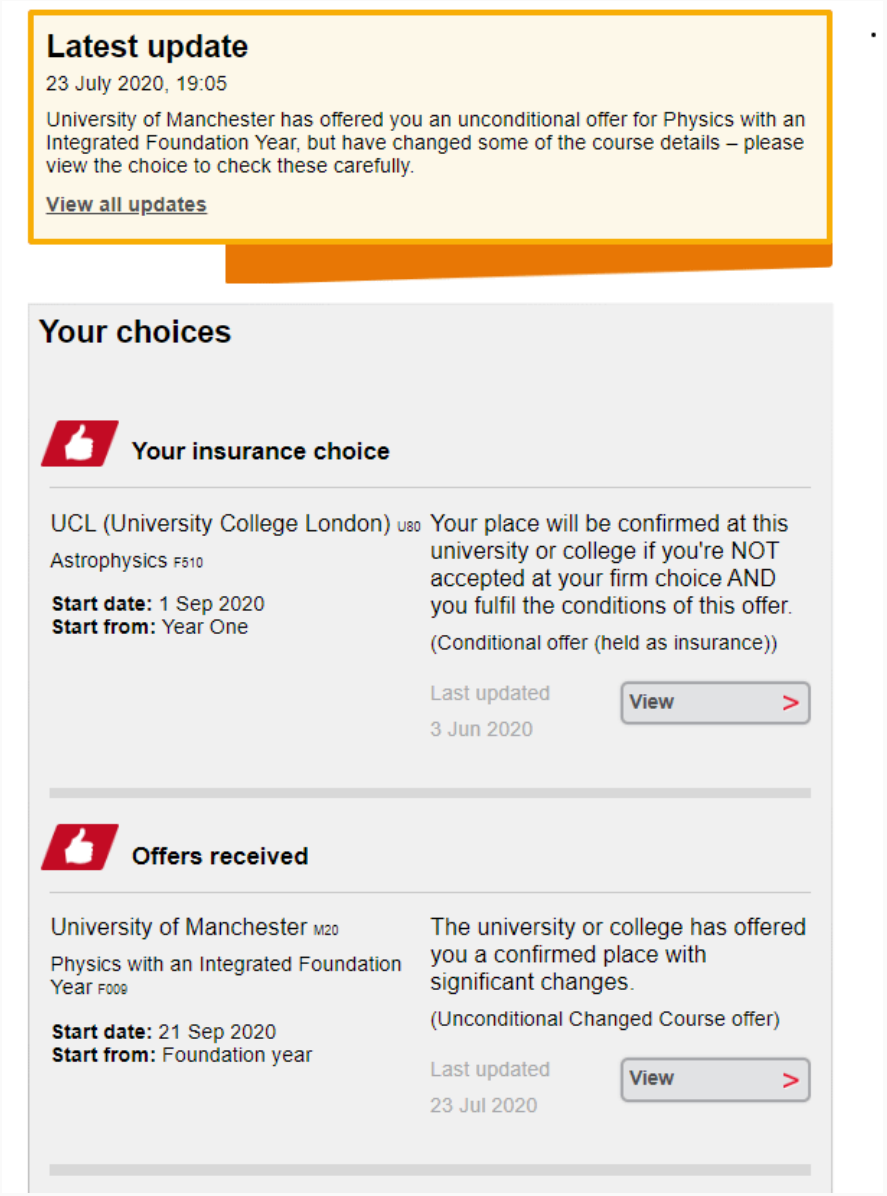
UCAS Responses

The University Response

- Conditional Offer
- Unconditional Offer
- Unsuccessful Application

Applicant's Response

- Firm: The student's first choice of university
- Insurance: The student's second choice of university

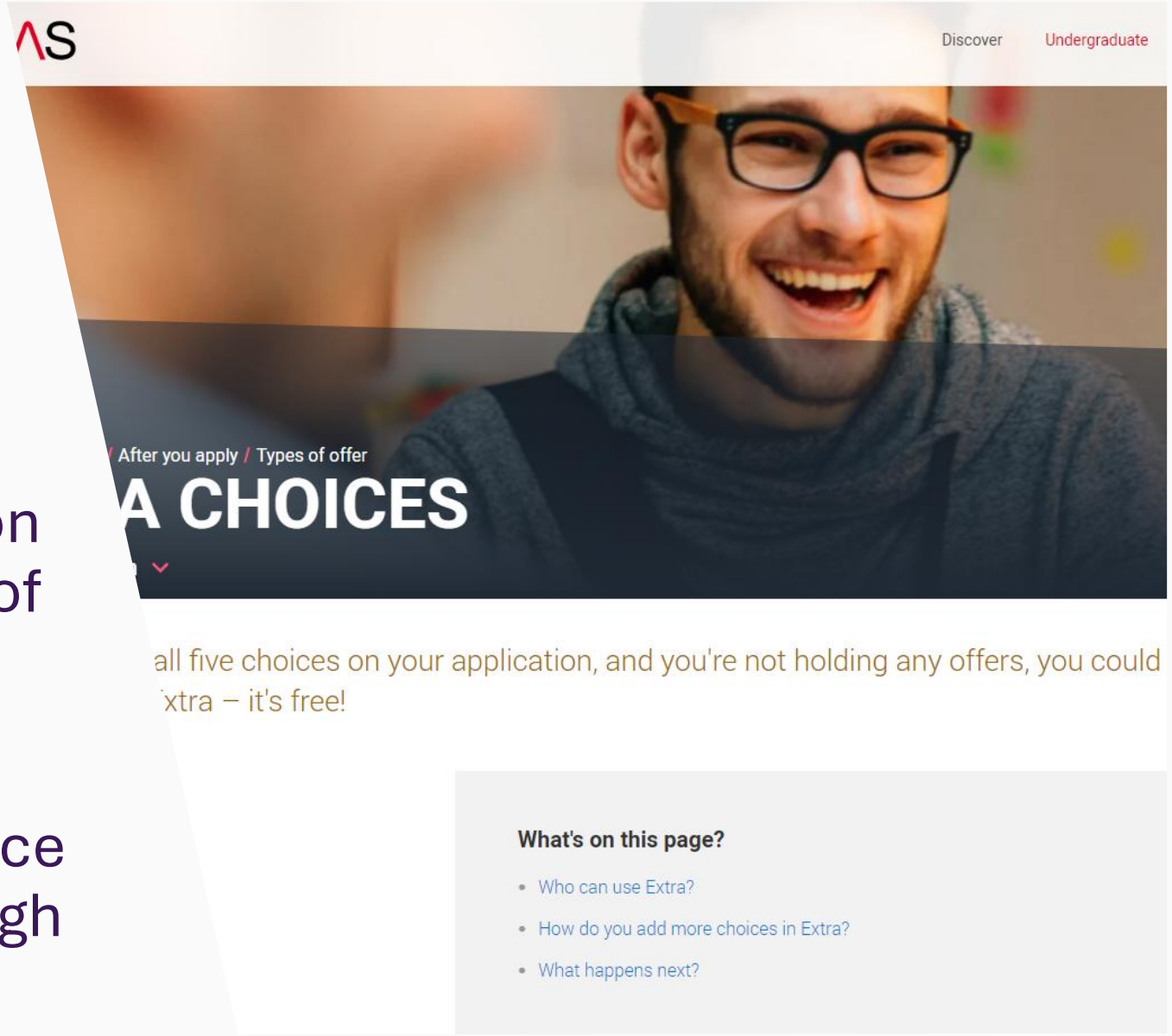


No offers?

UCAS Extra

- Allows you to add one more choice to your UCAS application if you reject/are rejected by all of your 5 initial choices

- Gives you a chance to get a place at university before going through Clearing

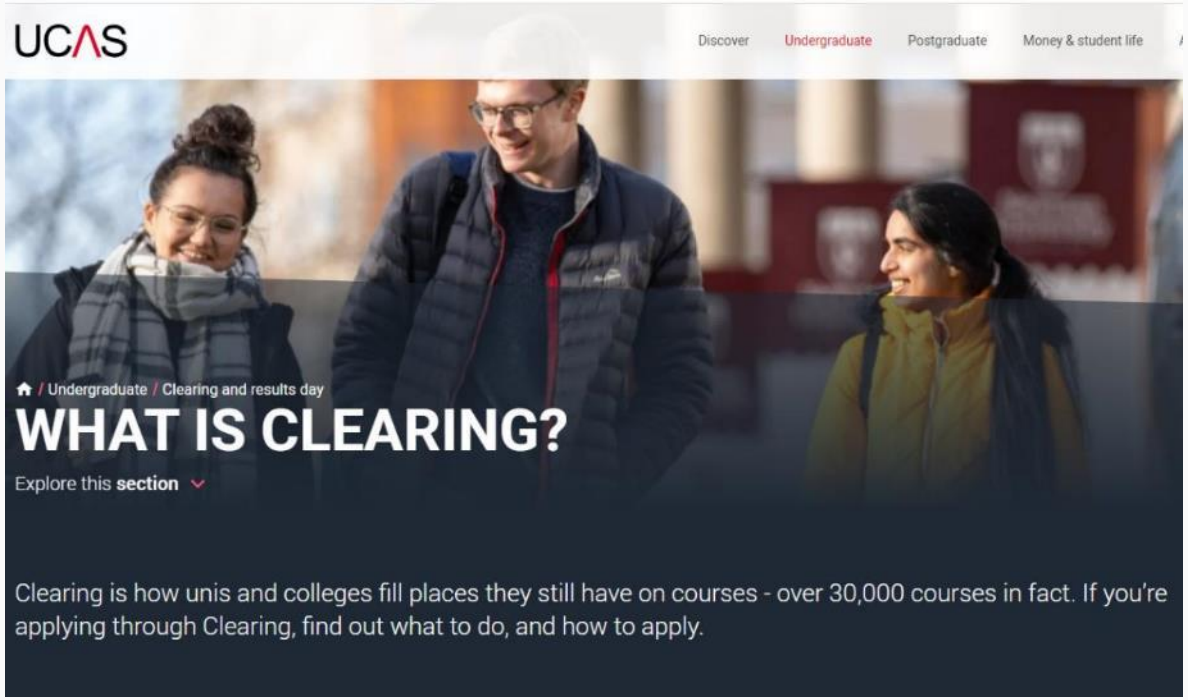


No offers?

Clearing

- Universities sometimes have vacancies that they need to fill, meaning that they might allow entry to someone who didn't meet the requirements

- UCL does not always participate in Clearing



What course to choose?



How many higher education institutions are there in the UK?

160+




UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
WARWICK
Canterbury Christ Church University
Queen Mary University of London
CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON
Queen's University Belfast
UEA University of East Anglia
Durham University
Kingston University London
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
University of Kent
MANCHESTER 1824
THE UNIVERSITY of York
University of Reading
University of Plymouth
CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD
uclan
LONDON metropolitan university
UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH
University of Brighton
Aston University
Sheffield Hallam University
Anglia Ruskin University
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
Manchester Metropolitan University
UNIVERSITY OF BATH
University of Portsmouth
University of Essex
University of Leicester
University of BRISTOL
PRIFYSGOL BANGOR UNIVERSITY
Coventry University
University of Hertfordshire
UH
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM
University of Southampton
REGENT'S UNIVERSITY LONDON
LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
The University of Nottingham
LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD
Brunel UNIVERSITY LONDON
UNIVERSITY OF Hull
BU Bournemouth University
University of Glasgow
ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY·ABERDEEN
Abertay University
LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY
UWS UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST of SCOTLAND
UCL
University of Sunderland
Y Drindod Dewi Sant Trinity Saint David
STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY
Imperial College London
Southampton Solent University
Newcastle University
University of Strathclyde Glasgow


UNIVERSITY OF EXETER
UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH
FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY
University of Essex
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
LBU LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
Leeds Trinity University
UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN
LEEDS ARTS UNIVERSITY 1846
The University of Law
Ravensbourne
UNIVERSITY of GREENWICH
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY
St Mary's University Twickenham London
LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY
RICHMOND UNIVERSITY
Newcastle University
LSTM LIVERPOOL SCHOOL OF TROPICAL MEDICINE
The University Of Sheffield.
Sheffield Hallam University
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Queen Mary University of London
University for the Creative Arts

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How many higher education institutions are there in London?

40



How many courses are there at UK universities in total?

50,000+



So how can you support your child in choosing where to go?

- How can they choose 5 institutions out of the 160+?
- Which are the best for them?

- What should they look for…?

What is important to them about a university?



What to consider when choosing a university...

- **The course**
- **Entry requirements / accreditation**
- Rankings/league tables
- Distance from home
- Campus/non-campus
- Facilities
- Employment prospects
- Whether your child likes the university!



What to consider when choosing a course...

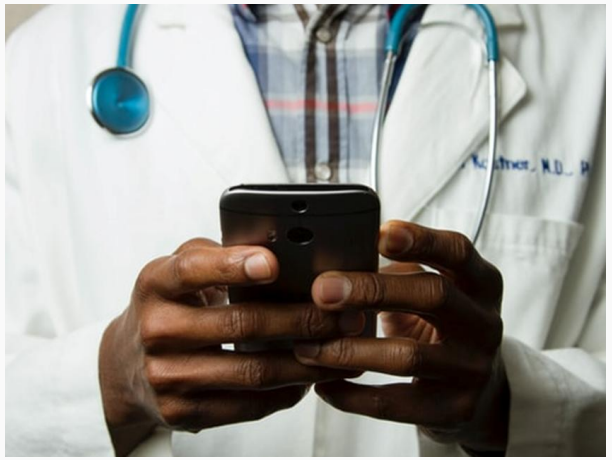
- Do they wish to work in a specific field/have a career in mind?
- Do they need a specific qualification? (e.g. Medicine > Doctor)
- How long is the course? (e.g. MEng = 4 years)
- What is the structure? Including work placements or year abroad
- What are the entry requirements? (Grades, exams, interviews, portfolios)
- What do they most enjoy?

Does the type of degree you do matter for all careers?

For some careers, YES.

Vocational degrees, such as:
Medicine;
Dentistry;
Radiography;
Nursing;
Social work;
Physiotherapy.

Law, engineering and accountancy can be accessed by other pathways.





For some careers, NO.

Most employers do not select according to degree subject.

It's not necessarily the **knowledge** you gained in your degree; it's the **skills**.

If you aren't certain what job you'd like to do, choosing a degree that gives you a range of transferrable skills is a good place to start.

How to learn more about a course

UCL Study

Prospective students | Current students | Accommodation | Careers | Doctoral School | Immigration and visas | Student Finances | Support and Wellbeing

- Access UCL Scheme
- Accommodation
- Disclaimer
- **Download the prospectus**
- Frequently asked questions
- Funding your studies
- How to apply

Undergraduate Prospectus for 2027 entry



Download the Undergraduate Prospectus for 2027 entry

Your guide to undergraduate degrees and student life at UCL.

- Key information
- Course structure
- Fees and funding
- What this course will give you
- How to apply
- Entry requirements
- Modules
- Why study at UCL?
- Professional accreditation
- Get in touch
- About this course
- Contact hours
- Discover Uni
- Open days and events

Grade and qualification requirements

Physics BSc

A levels | IB Diploma | Other qualifications

Grades	A*AA
Subjects	A*A in Mathematics and Physics required (in any order).
GCSEs	English Language and Mathematics at grade 4

Contextual offer

Grades	AAB
Subjects	AA in Mathematics and Physics
GCSEs	English Language and Mathematics at grade 4

At least two A level subjects should be taken from UCL's list of preferred A level subjects.

Typical offer

Required subjects

Contextualised offer

Exams and assessments: The importance of mocks

- Mocks are practice exams taken under real exam conditions, held before final exams
- Designed to mirror the format, timing, and expectations
- They inform predicted grades and help teachers adjust teaching focus
- They are a snapshot, not the final outcome
- They can help inform future choices for GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs and further study

Contextual Offer Schemes

Reduced offers (typically one or two grades below the standard entry requirements) to help:

- ✓ Widen participation at universities
- ✓ Students from underrepresented backgrounds access higher education

Access UCL

UCL's Contextual Offer Scheme

2027 entry

The information contained in the following slides is for 2027 entry only. Policies change each year so be sure to check the eligibility requirements in the year you are applying.



What is Access UCL?

Access UCL

2027 entry

Eligible applicants, if selected for an offer, receive a contextual offer that is lower than the standard offer for their chosen programme.

More information:

Further questions:

wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk

Visit our online prospectus to find individual programme requirements

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Access UCL

2027 entry

You might be eligible if you attend a UK state school for your A Levels/IB Diploma and meet one of the following criteria:

- **You live in an area of high financial, social or economic deprivation***
- **You live in an area of low progression to higher education†**
- **You have been registered for Free School Meals**
- **You are estranged from your parents**
- **Care experienced applicants may also be eligible if they have attended a UK state or independent school**

See full eligibility details and check your postcode:

* IMD Q1

† TUNDRA LSOA Q1

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What can you do to support your young person?



- ✓ Supporting them to do their best in their mock exams.
- ✓ Encouraging them to engage in **super-curricular activities** to support their personal statement.
- ✓ Talk to them about their post-18 options and encourage them to explore widely
- ✓ Budgeting and cooking!
- ✓ Encouraging them to sign up for student discounts like UNiDAYS, NUS card or a railcard

Access and Widening Participation

Year 12 opportunities at UCL – when do applications open?

September

Choices
Subject-specific online sessions to help you decide what you can study with your current A Levels.

Experience UCL
An opportunity for young people from our priority groups to visit UCL.

October

UCL Expand
Expand your learning beyond the curriculum.

November

Masterclasses
Online taster lectures with world-leading UCL academics.

Insights
Unsure what degree to study at university? Explore your options at Insights.

January

Summer Schools
Spend 4 days living and studying like a UCL student!

March

Subject Spotlights
Subject specific taster days.

April

Personal statement workshops

Discover
A summer school for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Get involved!

Scan our QR code to find out more about our events

and other activities run by UCL departments.

Apply to UCL Expand

Applications close Friday 20 November 2026

UCL Expand is an eight-week academic programme for Year 12 students from backgrounds underrepresented in higher education.

Find out more

Explore a subject you're passionate about, learn how to think, research, solve problems and communicate like a subject expert — and put your skills into practice by creating and presenting your own project.

Apply now!



Any questions?