
CHOOSING THE RIGHT COURSE

Applications

United Kingdom (UK) schools, colleges and universities take pride in helping international students to find the best course for them. Your local British Council office will have all the information you need to consult first, including college and university prospectuses. Staff will also offer guidance and help you to fill in and submit application forms.

1 Always get a prospectus

Always get a copy of the prospectus for the course you are interested in, if possible. If not, get a copy of the prospectus for the school, college or university. A good prospectus should answer all your questions about the course, the institutions, the area, and the application process. Most universities and colleges have online prospectuses which can be accessed via www.educationuk.org. Some British Council offices also hold copies of prospectuses.

2 How to apply

New ways of applying

Many UK schools, colleges and universities have now made it possible to apply over the Internet. Applications for first degree courses and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) can be made online to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). See their website www.ucas.com for more information. For schools, career-based training and other courses, such as masters degrees, check institution websites for online application forms. Your local British Council office can help with this and on the www.educationuk.org website you can find a list of institutions that offer postgraduate and further education online applications. (Go to 'Course Search' and 'How to apply online') If you cannot apply online you will have to complete an application form and send it in by post. Remember to allow extra time for postal applications.

UCAS update

A UCAS news release in June 2004 confirmed that UCAS intends to move fully to electronic applications by entry 2006.

This means that 2005 entry materials will be the last year of paper application forms. Go to www.ucas.com for further information.

3 Getting the timing right

When should I apply?

You should apply as early as you can. The best time to apply for further and higher education courses is usually the summer, a whole year before the autumn term when your chosen course starts. However, different courses have different application deadlines so check the prospectus. The key dates for applying for degree courses can be found later in this sheet.

Why do I have to apply so far in advance?

Competition for places on some courses can be fierce so applying early gives you the best chance of getting on to the course you want. Admissions tutors will assess each application in detail in order to make a fair judgement and this requires time.

After you have been offered a place you will have many other details to sort out, such as Immigration issues, travel and accommodation. This takes time and is another reason why it is best to apply well in advance.

4 English language courses

When should I apply for English language courses?

Institutions may offer a student a place on a course but require them to take English classes before the course starts to raise their level of English. These are called Pre-sessional English courses. Check the application details in the prospectus for the main course you will go on to attend. Other English language courses can start at any time of the year, but many will have specific start dates. Check www.educationuk.org/english or individual prospectuses for details. For more information, refer to *Learn English in the United Kingdom* in this series.

Checklist: How do I apply for an English language course?

- 1 Contact the school of your choice and ask for a prospectus and application form
- 2 Complete the application form and return it to the school, or, if possible, apply online. You should receive a reply within two weeks. If you are offered a place the school may also ask you to confirm accommodation requirements and ask for a deposit
- 3 Confirm you will accept the place and send off the deposit (or confirm credit card payment)
- 4 The school will send you a letter confirming your place. Use this letter to help you obtain your visa, if you need one.

5 School level courses – GCSEs, A-levels, Scottish Highers and equivalents

GCSEs, A-levels, Scottish Highers, International Baccalaureate Diplomas and other school-level qualifications can be taken at independent schools, tutorial colleges and colleges of further education. In most cases you should apply directly to the institution.

Some independent schools will ask you to apply up to a year before you want to start. Others will accept applications at any time. Courses at tutorial colleges and further education colleges usually start in September. You should apply well in advance of this, although tutorial colleges often run the same course at different times throughout the academic year and can be more flexible about applications.

6 Career-based courses

There is no closing date for applications to the majority of these courses, but leave enough time to apply for a visa, make travel arrangements and find accommodation. Remember that the course will have a specific start date, usually around the beginning of the academic year, which is in September. For more information, refer to *Choosing a career-based training course* in this series

Checklist: How do I apply for a career-based course?

(See below if you are applying to train as a teacher, nurse, midwife or social worker)

- 1 Contact the institution of your choice and ask for a prospectus and application form, or check their website to see if they offer online applications.
- 2 Complete the form and send it direct to the institution. The admissions officer will assess your application, looking at your background, interests and abilities. Each applicant is treated on his/her merits.
- 3 If the institution offers you a place you should write back to confirm that you accept it.
- 4 The institution will send you a letter to confirm your place on the course.

If you want to qualify in the UK as a teacher, nurse, midwife or social worker you should apply through centralised application services:

- To train as a teacher, apply through the Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR). For application forms and more information see www.gttr.ac.uk/apply.htm.
- To train as a nurse or midwife you should apply through the Nursing and Midwifery Admissions System (NMAS). Check their website for application information, forms and guidance for international students www.nmas.ac.uk/apply.html#8.
- To train as a social worker you should apply through the Social Work Admissions System (SWAS). See www.ucas.com/getting/before/swas.html for further information.

In all cases, make sure the vocational qualification you decide to train for is recognised in the country in which you want to work. You may have to pass additional examinations when you return home in order to work.

7 Degree, HND and DipHE courses

For full-time Bachelor degrees (also called undergraduate or first degrees), Foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas (HND) and Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) courses, you should make a single application through a centralised service called the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). This system means you can apply for up to six courses at different universities or colleges on a single form. You can get this form from your British Council office, or order it from the UCAS website. UCAS also offers an online application service. See www.ucas.com/studyuk/applying.html for more information.

The centralised system means the application process is simpler and quicker, but with 45,000 courses to deal with, UCAS needs time to process all the applications. For this reason the application period for popular courses and courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge begins in the September of the year before the course starts. For more information, refer to *Choosing your degree course and institution* in this series.

Checklist: How do I apply for a full-time undergraduate course through UCAS?

- 1 Check the minimum entry requirements for each course you want to apply for. There is no point making an application if you do not have them. (Bear in mind that the institution could ask for more than these minimum requirements if there is competition to join the course).
- 2 Apply in one of four ways:
 - online, using 'Apply', a web-based application system available through your school, college or local British Council office, if they have registered with UCAS
 - online, using 'International Apply', a web-based application system for international applicants who are not currently at school or college
 - online, using the 'Electronic Application System' (EAS) available through your school, college or careers office
 - by post, using the printed application form available from UCAS or from your local British Council office.

There is a charge for all applications through UCAS – see www.ucas.com or contact your local British Council office for details of current charges and how to pay.

Points to remember:

- You may apply for up to six courses on one application form. If you are applying for medicine, dentistry or veterinary sciences/medicine you may only apply for four courses.
- You can only make one application per academic year through the UCAS system.
- Start thinking about this early – over a year before you want to start your course!

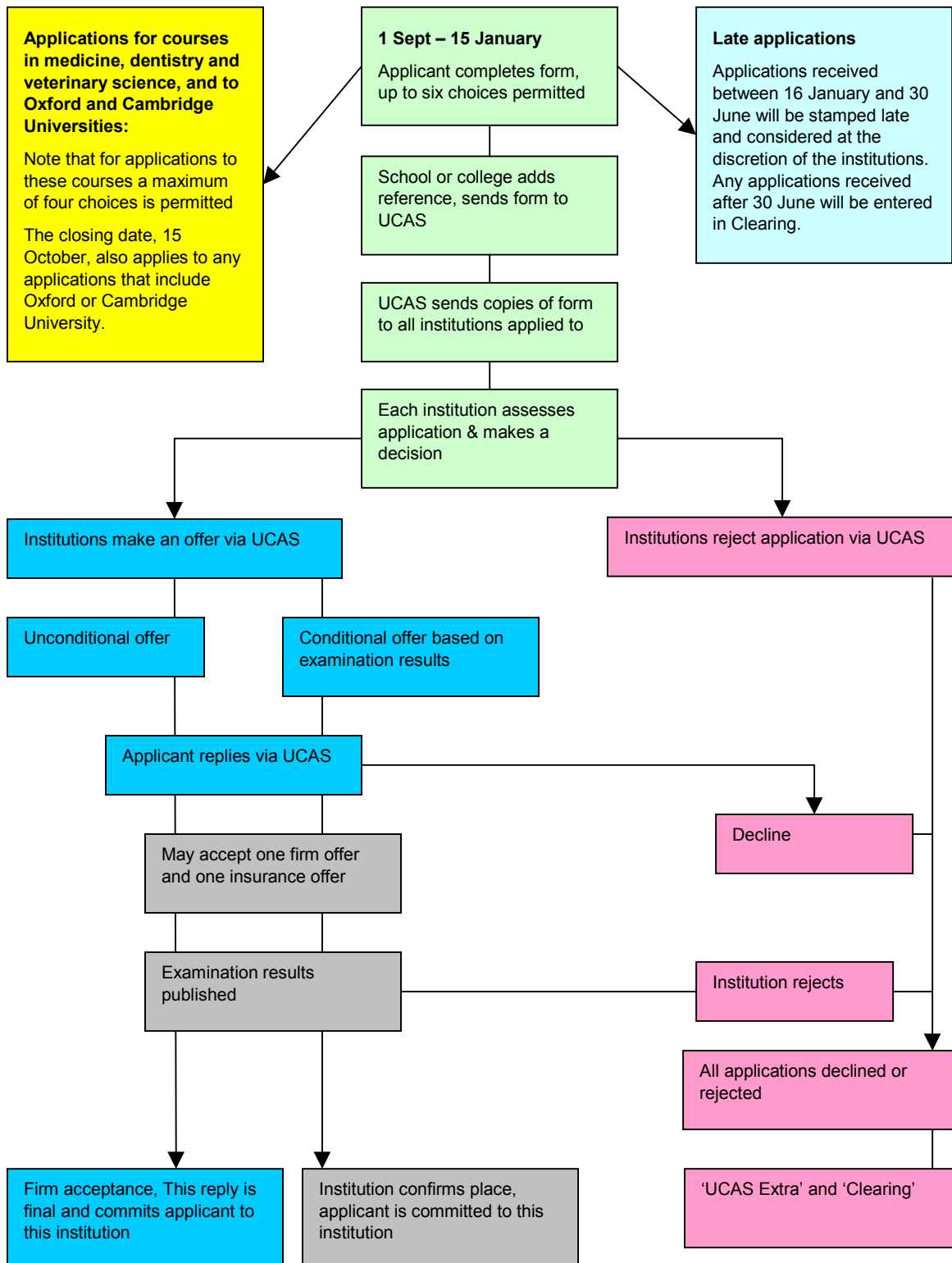
Key dates:

- 1 September (the year before the course starts) – all applications open
- 15 October – closing date for applications to courses in medicine, dentistry or veterinary sciences/medicine and to Oxford and Cambridge Universities
- 15 January – closing date for UK students
- 15 January – closing date for route A art and design applications
- 1 January – 5 March – application period for route B art and design applications (See *Art and Design* in this series)
- 30 June – closing date for international students (unless you are applying to Oxford or Cambridge or for medicine, dentistry, veterinary science/medicine or route B art and design courses). Please note: popular courses will have been filled by this date so UCAS advise you to apply earlier if you can.

Checklist: What happens to your UCAS application?

- 1 UCAS receives your application. (Meeting the deadlines will ensure that your application is considered with other candidates).
- 2 UCAS sends a copy to each of your chosen institutions.
- 3 Each institution considers your application and makes a decision.
- 4 Each institution notifies UCAS of its decision.
- 5 UCAS forwards the decisions to you. In each case the decision will be either:
 - an unconditional offer (you are assured a place, starting in the next academic year);
 - a conditional offer (you need certain exam results to secure a place);
 - a rejection.
- 6 UCAS will ask you to reply to your offers. You may accept no more than two offers – a firm acceptance and an insurance acceptance. If your firm acceptance is unconditional, you cannot also hold an insurance offer.
- 7 The institutions will be notified of your examination results.
- 8 The institutions will confirm or withdraw their offers.
- 9 If you are left without a place on any course you can go through 'UCAS Extra' or Clearing.

UCAS Applications Flowchart



What do the terms 'UCAS Extra' and 'Clearing' mean?

'UCAS Extra' and 'Clearing' are processes designed to help students who have not been able to find a place through the usual UCAS route.

'UCAS Extra' operates from mid-March to the end of June. You will be eligible for 'Extra' if:

- You have used all six of your choices and have been unsuccessful
- You have cancelled your choices and hold no offers
- You have received replies from all six choices and have declined all offers

'Extra' enables you to have one additional choice and means that you do not have to wait until 'Clearing' to continue to find a place. See www.ucas.com/getting/after/extra.html for more information.

'Clearing' operates in August and September. If you do not secure a place through 'Extra' you will be eligible if your application to UCAS is made after 30 June of the year you intend to start (or 12 June for art and design courses). See www.ucas.com/clearing/index.html for more information.

What happens if I only want to apply to one university?

International students who want to apply to one institution only and who meet the entrance requirements can now apply at any time. You should contact UCAS or your intended college first for advice as you may have to fill in an alternative application form called the Record of Prior Acceptance.

8 Postgraduate courses

There is no restriction on the number of different postgraduate courses you can apply to in any one year and there is no centralised system so you must apply directly to institutions. For more information, refer to *Choosing your research topic and institution* and *Choosing your taught postgraduate course and institution* in this series.

How do I apply for a postgraduate course?**Checklist: Steps in the application process for a postgraduate course**

- 1 Contact the institution of your choice and ask for a prospectus and application form.
- 2 Make sure that you meet the requirements (e.g. academic, English language skills) of the course you wish to apply for. Visa nationals will also need to think about immigration requirements.
- 3 Check the details of the application procedure, which can be different for different institutions.
- 4 Complete the application form as instructed. Apply directly to the college or university that runs the course you want to do. Many institutions now accept applications over the Internet, which is faster. Some British Council offices will have the facilities for you to do this. See the 'How to apply online' section of www.educationuk.org
- 5 The college or university will let you know whether your application has been successful.

9 International Qualifications

Most UK institutions will have specific course entrance requirements. These requirements will usually be written in terms of UK qualifications. For example degree courses will ask for A-levels/Scottish Highers or the equivalent. Your local British Council office will be able to inform you of what your qualifications are equivalent to in the UK system. There is a brief guide to international qualification equivalencies on the UCAS website at www.ucas.com/candq/inter/index.html

If you require more detailed equivalency information about your qualifications you may want to contact UK NARIC (the National Academic Recognition Information Centre) This is a national agency under contract to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). UK NARIC is the official source of information on the comparability of international qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide with those in the UK. (See 'Where can I find more information?').

9 Where can I find more information?

British Council Education Information

Website www.educationuk.org

For further information, you can find details of your nearest office at www.britishcouncil.org/home-contact-worldwide.htm which includes links to all our country web pages and a worldwide address book giving contact details for all offices.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

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Great Smith Street
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Telephone +44 (0) 870 000 2288
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Email info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
Website www.dfes.gov.uk

Department of Education Northern Ireland

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Bangor
County Down BT19 7PR

Telephone +44 (0) 2891 279279
Fax +44 (0) 2891 279100
Email mail@deni.gov.uk
Website www.deni.gov.uk

Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0) 0870 1122205 (enquiries)
Website www.gttr.ac.uk

Independent Schools Council

Grosvenor Gardens House
35 – 37 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0BS

Telephone +44 (0) 20 7798 1500
Fax +44 (0) 20 7798 1591
Email isc@iscis.uk.net
Website www.iscis.uk.net

National Assembly for Wales Training and Education Department

National Assembly for Wales
Cathays Park
Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Telephone +44 (0) 292 082 5111
Fax +44 (0) 292 089 8630
Website www.learning.wales.gov.uk

Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service (NMAS)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ

Telephone +44 (0) 0870 1122206 (enquiries)
Telephone +44 (0) 0870 1122200 (application materials)
Website www.nmas.ac.uk

Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)

21 Melville Street
Edinburgh EH3 7PE

Telephone +44 (0) 131 220 2106
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Email information@scis.org.uk
Website www.scis.org.uk

Scottish English Teaching in Consortium (SELTIC)

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Telephone +44 (0) 131 557 9200
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EducationUK Scotland

Website www.educationukscotland.org

Scottish Executive Education Department

Victoria Quay
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Telephone +44 (0) 131 556 8400 or +44 (0) 845 774 1741
Fax +44 (0) 131 244 8240
Email ceu@scotland.gov.uk
Website www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Departments/ED

Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department (ETLLD)

Meridian Court
Cadogan Street
Glasgow G2 6AT
Telephone +44 (0) 141 248 4774
Email ceu@scotland.gov.uk
Website www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/?pageID=448

National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC)

Oriel House
Oriel Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL50 1XP
Telephone +44 (0) 870 990 4088
Fax +44 (0) 1242 288 611
Email info@naric.org.uk
Website www.naric.org.uk

Social Work Admissions Service (SWAS)

Rosehill
New Barn Lane
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 3LZ
Telephone +44 (0) 870 1122207 (order forms)
Website www.ucas.com/getting/before/swas.html

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

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Email enquiries@ucas.ac.uk
Website www.ucas.com

Other useful resources

How to Complete Your UCAS Form 2005 Entry (Higgins, T (ed.); Trotman ISBN 0 8566 08874) – comprehensive information about the UCAS application system and useful tips on how to fill in the form.

NB. Please note this book may not be available at your local British Council office.

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct and up to date, the British Council accepts no legal liability for its accuracy, currency or completeness.

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