University of Reading

Introduction to the UCAS Process 2026



Key Dates

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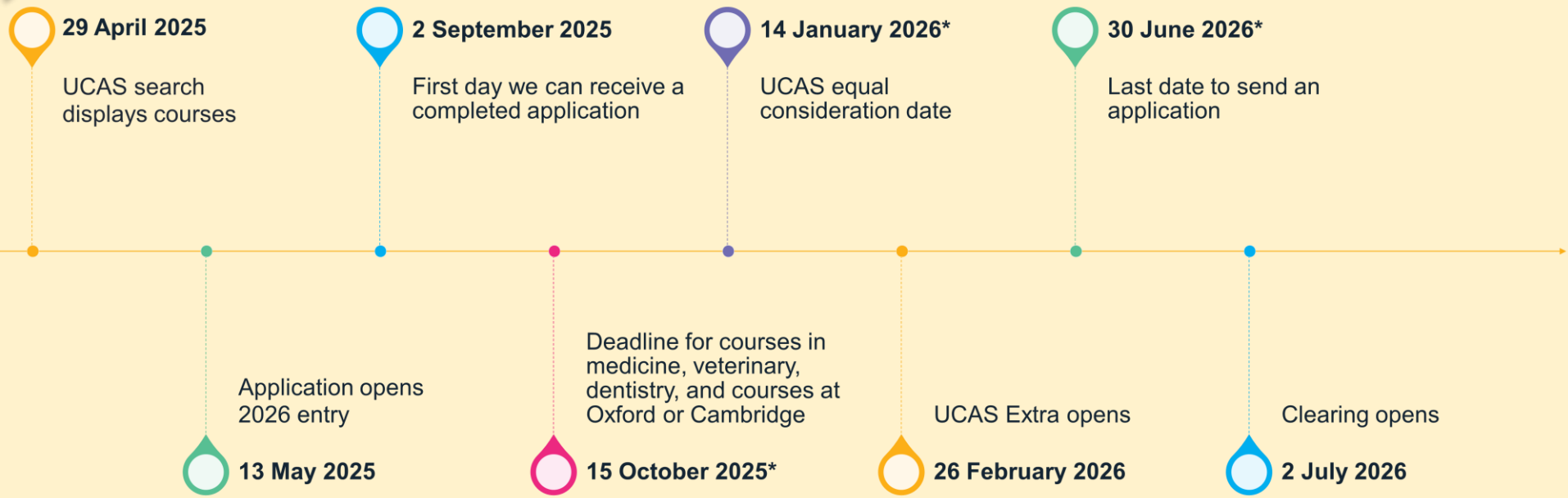
Overview of the 2026 cycle:



* 18:00 UK time

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Applying



Key Facts

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- Invisibility - Universities and colleges **can't see** your other choices
- Apply by the relevant **equal consideration date**.
- **Five choices**, with some restrictions (medicine, veterinary, dentistry, Oxford and Cambridge).
- **Research** is key to a successful application.
- **Applying** costs £28.95.

Applying

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Student registers for a UCAS Hub account to carry out research and start an application.



Student completes all sections of the application and sends it to their school/college.



Teacher or adviser reviews the application and adds reference and predicted grades.



Applications are sent to UCAS by the school of college on behalf of the student.



Universities and colleges make their decisions on the application.

Applying

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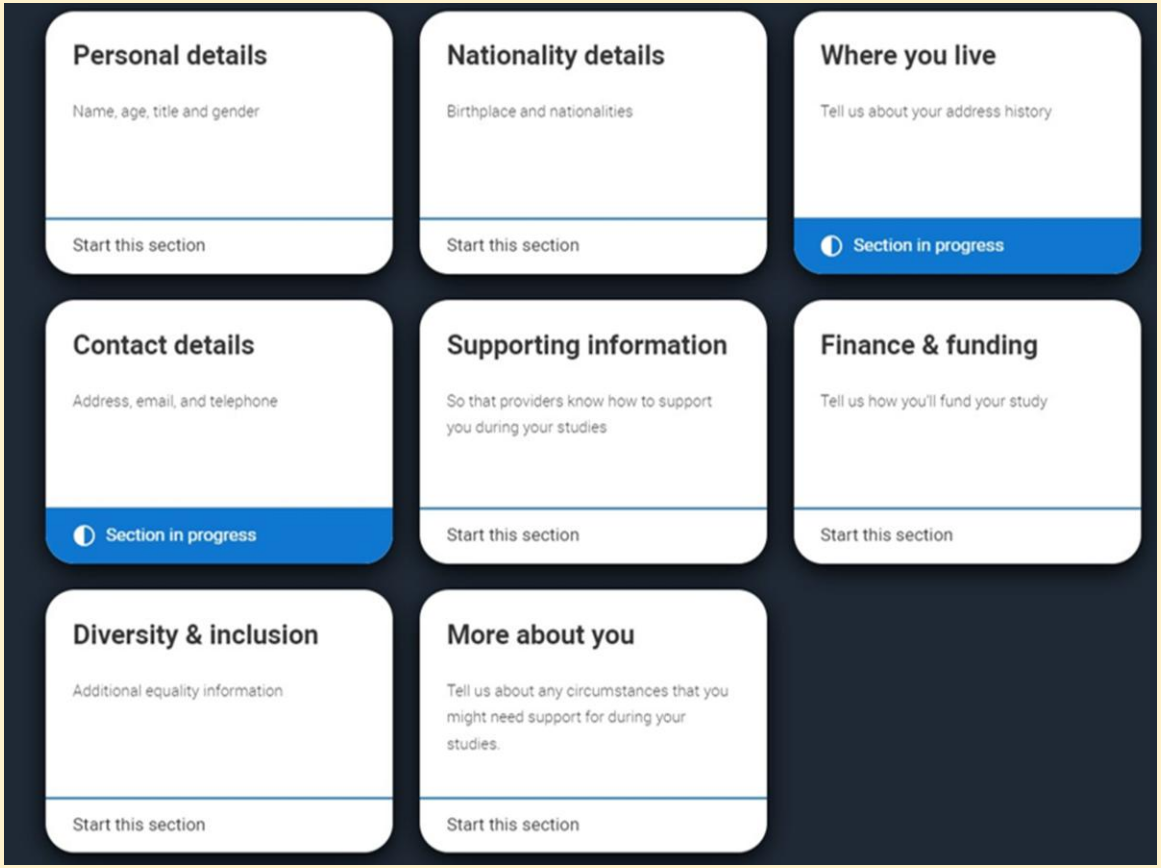
Application: Profile

- Personal details
- Nationality details
- Where you live
- Contact details
- Supporting information
- Finance and funding
- Diversity and inclusion*
- More about you



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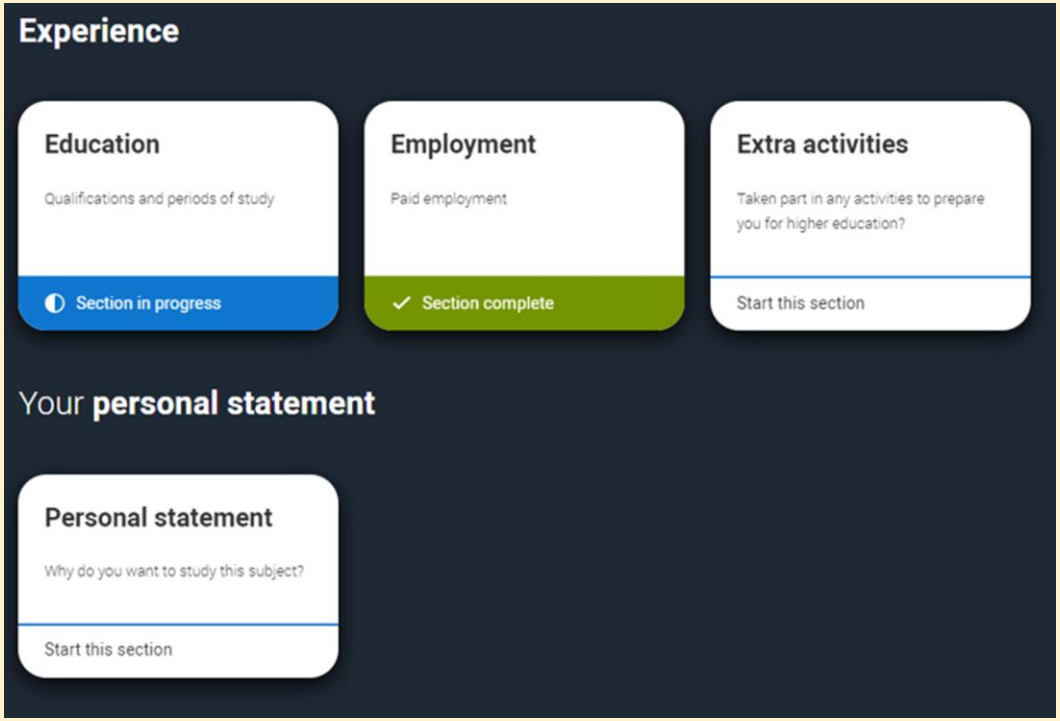
Application: Experiences

- Education
- Employment
- Extra activities*
- Personal statement
- Reference**



Applying

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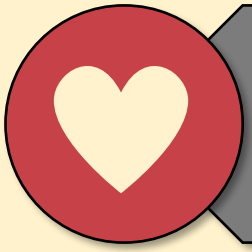
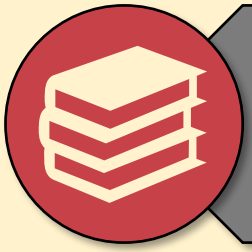
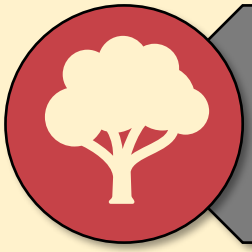
Personal Statement



(1) Why do you want to study this course or subject?



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



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

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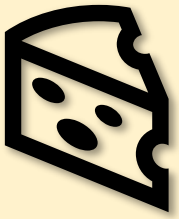

Cheesy Clichés



The word ‘passion’ or ‘passionate’



Humour or sarcasm





Negativity



Irrelevant information



Mentioning specific universities



Plagiarism

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Offers & Decisions



Decisions

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Universities and colleges will review the whole application including:

- Qualifications
- Personal statement
- Reference

They may also require :

- Admissions test
- Interview
- Portfolio / audition

Tracking

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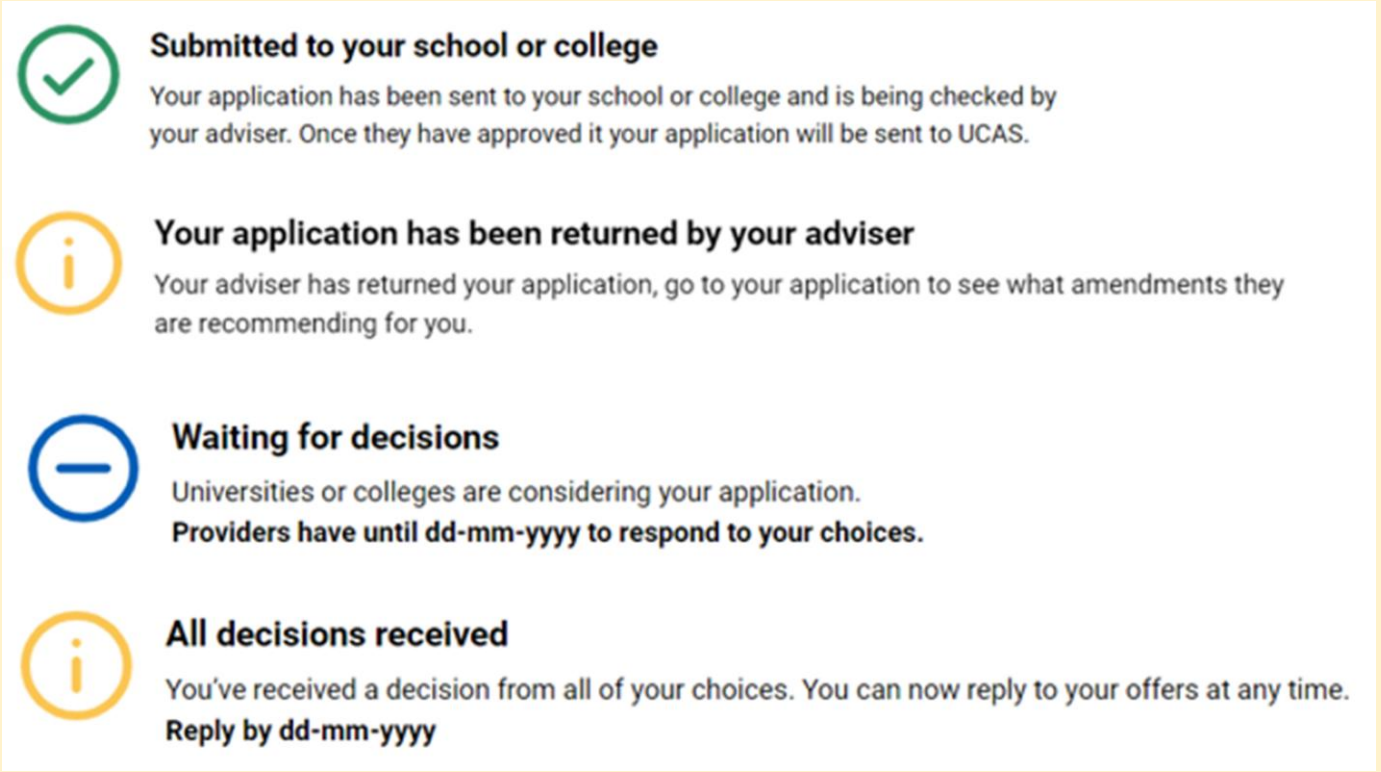

Follow your application to:

- check progress
- see your choices
- update contact information
- view and reply to your offers

One of three decisions:

- unconditional offer
- conditional offer
- unsuccessful

Replying

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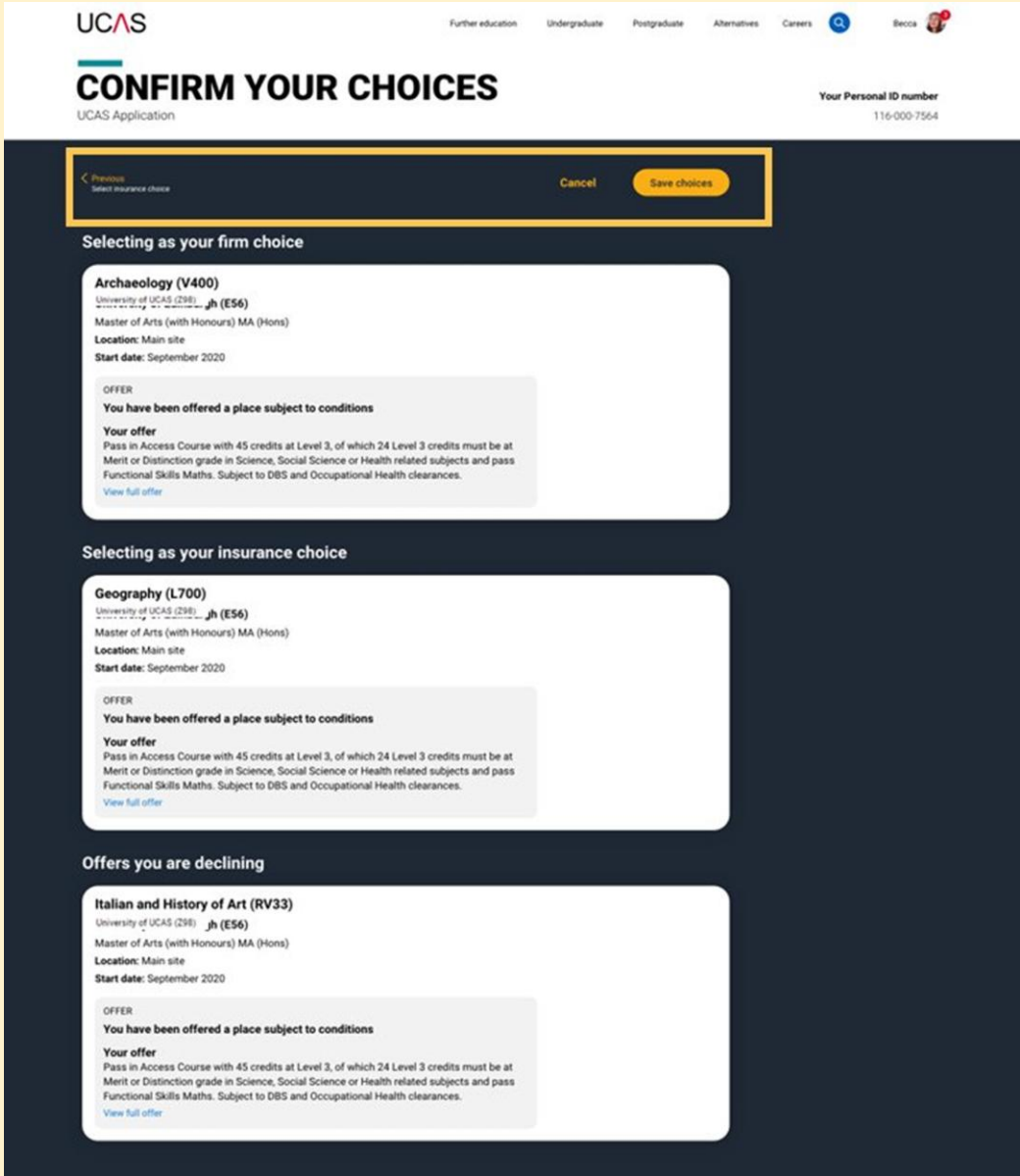
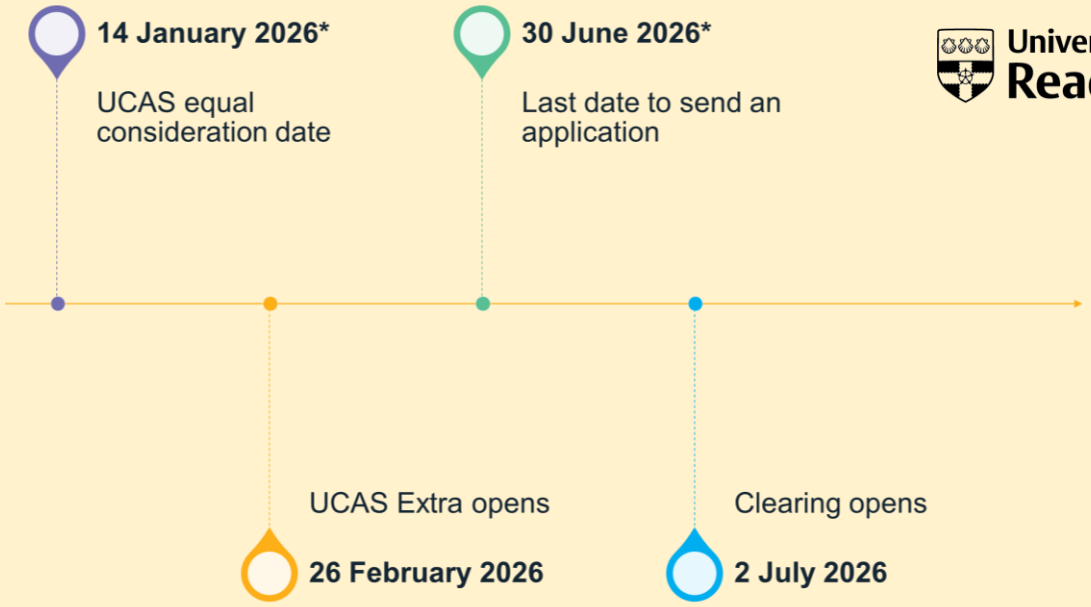
- Once you've made your decisions, choose a 'firm' and 'insurance' choice.
- Decline any remaining offers.
- The deadline for you to reply is shown in your application.
- If you're not holding an offer, use Extra or Clearing to find available places.



Extra



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- If you included 5 choices on your application and either were not accepted or declined the offers you received
- Open: 26 Feb – 1 July 2026

- If you didn't use all 5 choices on your application, you can just sign in to your application and add another choice
- Deadline: 30 June 2026

Results

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Results Day: 14 August 2026

- Your firm and insurance choice universities will be notified of your results.
- They will then make decisions about your place and your application status will be updated.
- Make sure you read your status carefully so that you are very clear on where you have been placed.
- You can add a Clearing choice in your UCAS Hub from 1pm on Results Day

Status

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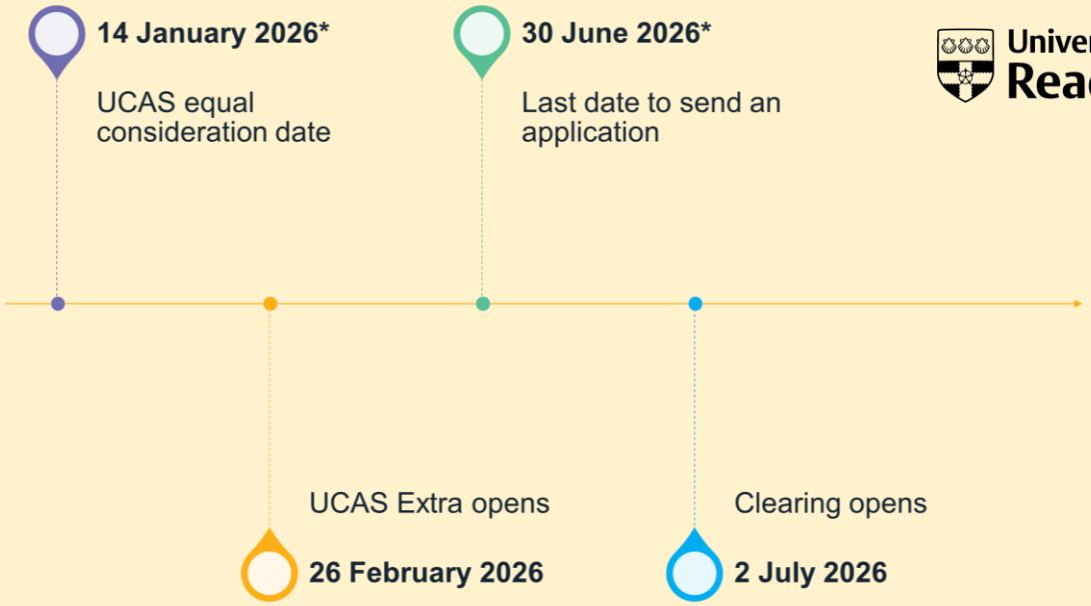
What is my status?	What does it mean?	What do I do?
Waiting for confirmation	Your university hasn't let UCAS know if you have been accepted yet	Look out for further updates or requests to send your results directly
Congratulations – you've been placed at your firm choice [uni] to study [course]	You have been firmly accepted at the university shown	Look out for details from your new university about what to do next
Congratulations – you've been placed at your insurance choice [uni] to study [course]	You didn't meet conditions for firm choice but have a place at your insurance choice	Accept the place OR Decline the place (can then use Clearing)
You've not been placed at your firm or insurance choices	You didn't meet the conditions for the offers that you received	Apply for courses available through Clearing

Clearing



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You can use Clearing if:

- You are applying after 30 June
- You didn't receive any offers (or none you wanted to accept)
- You didn't meet the conditions of your offers
- You've declined your place in your application

Clearing is open from 2 July 2026 – 20 October 2026

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Next Steps



Preparation

- research, research, research
- attend open days and events
- independent learning
- work experience
- volunteering
- focus on this year's studies



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIVING AT UNIVERSITY

Learn how to prepare for university life and how to make the most of your time as a student. Staff and current students give you an insight into the expectations vs reality, what support will be available, and answer common questions about what's ahead.

For those thinking about going to university, there are likely to be lots of questions about what to expect: from choosing accommodation, how to budget, being independent and building personal, professional and academic relationships. This brief course will explain what you can do to prepare for the best possible start.

Options

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Traditional Subjects

English Literature
Mathematics
Geography

Vocational Subjects

Teaching
Pharmacy
Speech & Lang. Therapy

Unusual Courses

Consumer Marketing
Meteorology
Baking Science

Combined Courses

Art & Psychology
French & History
Maths & Computer Sci.

Options

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Over 35,000 different undergraduate courses in the UK

Variety

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Research

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- Attend open days at a range of universities
- Try free subject taster days to help narrow down choices

Supporters



A PARENT AND SUPPORTERS GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY ENTRY

Completing university applications can be confusing for young people, their parents and supporters. University Smart will help you to support your young person through each step of the application process.

UCAS

PARENT, GUARDIAN AND CARER GUIDE 2026

Everything you need to support your child with their higher education choices