

HIGHER EDUCATION

Other options

If you can't find a suitable course via Clearing, it's time to consider other options:

- **Re-sit your qualifications and re-apply for HE** next year. Do research this carefully though and talk to admissions tutors at your chosen universities about your plans – sometimes a significant increase in grades is expected after re-takes.
- **If your grades are good, re-applying early for the following year is a sound strategy** – you are a 'sure thing' for the universities. With an unconditional offer under your belt, and your place confirmed, you are free to spend the rest of your year how you please...travelling, working, earning, learning and so on.
- **A carefully planned gap year**, perhaps doing voluntary work or gaining experience relevant to your proposed degree might improve your chances when re-applying.

If your grades were very poor, or if you didn't enjoy your advanced-level studies, you may need to think carefully about whether full-time higher education is your best option right now. You might want to consider some other training, study or employment opportunities.

For Instance...

Management-training schemes, Advanced Apprenticeships and Vocational further education courses

These can all lead to professional qualifications, and often to higher education.

Part-time study

Can be undertaken while working, and can lead to a foundation degree, an HNC or a professional qualification.

Open University degree

You can study an Open University degree in your spare time and it won't have set entry qualifications.

Work experience

Being clearer about your long-term goals can make you more motivated and increase your chances of getting into higher education as a mature student.

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PROBLEMS WE HAVEN'T MENTIONED?

For help on getting into higher education and to discuss any other issues:
talk to a Connexions or school/college adviser
Contact UCAS – PO Box 28, Cheltenham, GL52 3ZA.
Tel: 0870 1122211 www.ucas.com Visit www.aimhigher.ac.uk

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Getting into HIGHER EDUCATION

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What to do if things go wrong

Getting a place in higher education is a complex process at the best of times; if things start to go wrong, it can seem overwhelmingly daunting.

There are lots of people and organisations that can help you though, and there are steps that you can take to help yourself. Read on to find out more about what can go wrong, and what to do about it.

Applied ... but had no offers?

You've chosen your courses, carefully completed your application and waited for the offers to come rolling in. Only they haven't!

First of all, you need to think about why no-one offered you a place.

- Perhaps your application didn't make it clear that you were really suited to the course?
- Did your reference or personal statement paint a negative picture of you?
- Were all your choices for highly popular courses and places?
- Did you have the wrong subjects, or were your GCSE and AS grades not strong enough?
- If you had an interview, did you prepare fully and read the prospectus beforehand?

Feedback

It's a good idea to get feedback from admissions tutors, if you can – a Connexions Personal Adviser or your school/college adviser might help if you're not confident about telephoning admissions tutors yourself.

Once you understand why you've had no offers, you can decide what to do about it.

UCAS Extra

If you've applied to inappropriate places, or left something unexplained that may have worried admissions tutors (like poor GCSEs), you can get a second bite at the cherry through UCAS 'Extra' (see alongside). Just don't make the same mistakes again!

If your predicted grades are much lower than needed for the places you want, you might have difficulty getting an offer through UCAS Extra. Think seriously about whether you are being realistic.

If you are sure that you can do better than your teachers are predicting, all is not lost – you can enter the Clearing system in August (see following) or re-apply for the following year, with every chance of success. If you know in your heart of hearts though, that your teachers are right – maybe you should adjust your sights, when deciding where to send your UCAS Extra application.

higher education

You can choose to refuse offers

Even the most carefully researched application can spring some surprises; the course you found attractive when reading the prospectus might not have the same appeal after a personal visit. If the only offers you have are for places you no longer want, you can decline them and try again through UCAS Extra.

UCAS Extra

UCAS Extra operates from mid-March to the end of June, for candidates who have no offers, for whatever reason (whether they have not received any or declined them) and who have used all six course choices.

Eligible applicants will be able to refer themselves automatically, using the **ucastrack** service on the UCAS website. UCAS offer alternative arrangements for those without Internet access. Via UCAS Extra, applicants can apply for one course at a time, from the list of vacancies on the UCAS website.

Students who did not originally make six course choices can add to their choices during this period, making their total up to six. If unsuccessful, they can then move on to the 'one-at-a-time' approach.

Talk to institutions first

UCAS advises students to talk to institutions about their vacancies, before applying through UCAS Extra.

You will need to find out whether the institution might be interested in you – otherwise an application will waste time and delay the process of finding a place. Talking to admissions tutors first gives you a chance to market yourself and address any problems or issues with your application.

Results time .. grades not good enough?

Every year, students are made offers for university places dependent on their gaining certain grades or tariff points. Every August, when the results come out, a number of those students miss the target – some by only one grade, others by a mile. If this happens to you, don't panic – you still have a number of options.

Check with the institution(s) where you hold an offer

Once the results are out, the institution might find it still has empty places on your chosen course. It might decide to confirm your offer, even if you haven't quite got the stipulated grades. Or, they might offer you a place on an alternative course – a related degree perhaps, or an HND or Foundation degree which you can convert or top-up to a degree later on.

If you have good reasons for not doing as well as expected in your exams you can try explaining to them, although they would normally expect you to have done this before results day.

It can be very difficult to contact universities by phone in the busy post-results period, but you can follow the progress of your application and see what decisions have been made on any offers you are holding by using the **ucastrack** service on the UCAS website www.ucas.com

Help is available

Schools, colleges and the Connexions Service all offer help at this time, so you should get plenty of support if you are having problems.

Clearing

If neither your first-choice or insurance university offers you a place, you can enter 'clearing'. You can also ask for your exams to be re-marked, if you're convinced there's been an error – but remember, re-grades can go down as well as up, so take expert advice from your teachers before going down this path.

Better grades?

Sometimes, students achieve much better grades than expected. If they are holding no offers, they too can enter Clearing to look for a place – or they can re-apply for the following year if the places available in the Clearing system are not to their liking.

Students holding offers, however, are expected to take up their confirmed place - or withdraw from the scheme completely and apply again for the following year. These students are not eligible for Clearing.

The Clearing System explained

The UCAS-administered post-results Clearing system operates in August & September each year. UCAS sends details automatically to all eligible students ie. those who applied through UCAS and are not holding any confirmed offers, for whatever reason.

UCAS sends all eligible students a Clearing Entry Form (CEF) and detailed instructions for completion.

From mid-August, selected newspapers and the UCAS website publish lists of unfilled higher education places, for which candidates can apply.

Check that you meet the entry requirements of any courses that interest you and that the course and the institution are what you want.

Your CEF can only be considered by one institution at one time, so only send it to a university or college if you are sure you want them to make you an offer, and if you have talked to the admissions tutor to make sure that they are interested in you.

Take care with choices

Talk to your tutor and/or personal or careers adviser about the most suitable courses to apply for, bearing in mind your interests and preferences, as well as your results.

Consider...for instance:

- Institutions offering the same course, but requiring lower entry grades
- Slightly lower level courses eg. a two-year HND in Business Studies requires fewer tariff points than a BA Business Studies – but you can convert it or top it up to a degree with a further one or two years study
- Slightly different, but related courses at the same institution or elsewhere (Law & American Studies, for instance, instead of Law & English)

In all cases, check out the course content and the institution thoroughly, to make sure you really want to study there. A hasty, ill-advised choice at this stage can lead to three or four unhappy years – or even worse, dropping out part way through your course.

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Information, advice & guidance for higher education