



Q&A with university and college admissions teams

We asked some admissions teams the key questions young people have about applying through UCAS to higher education. Here are the top ten things they want to share with you.

1. What are the top things you check when looking at a UCAS application?

- Qualifications.
- Content of written personal statement displaying passion for the subject area, while demonstrating motivation, enthusiasm, and the skills and experiences that will enable them to succeed at university.
- Quality and content of reference.
- Knowledge of and commitment to subject discipline.
- Good attitude to learning and personal development.
- Ability to articulate themselves fluently and accurately in writing – it is a sign of what is to come for tutors.

2. What do you consider when deciding whether or not to make an offer?

- Grades or likelihood of an applicant achieving the entry requirements.
- Experience and skills that will help them succeed at university.
- Enthusiasm for the subject area.
- The reference.
- Likelihood of success on the course
- Is it the right course and course provider for this student?
- Ultimately, whether the applicant can succeed on the course they have applied for.



3. What are the key features and aptitudes of successful applicants?

‘The applicant’s passion, commitment, and understanding of the course they are applying for – hopefully, this will come through in the way they write their personal statement.’

‘Are they are conscientious and hard-working? Do they have the right attitude to embrace higher education and all it has to offer? We’ll see what the reference says.’

‘Sufficient educational ability – an applicant’s qualifications indicate to us whether or not the applicant is capable of succeeding on the course they have applied for’.

4. How would you describe the students who get the most out of university?

'The students who get the most out of university are those students who are enthusiastic, eager to engage, learn, and develop while being open to all opportunities and being willing to try new opportunities and get involved in all aspects of student life while having fun.'

'They have a responsible attitude to their own learning and development, they've come prepared for the challenges of 'stepping up a gear', and they are able to find the right balance between study, work, and having fun!'

5. What advice would you give to someone who thinks they want to go on to higher education but who is just not sure?

'Attend university open days – they will give you a real insight into university. Consult a careers adviser, talk to people and get their advice – friends, family, teachers, current university students, and lecturers.'

'Consider what alternatives are available and also spend time thinking about what your short and medium term goals might be – try to keep as many options open for as long as possible.'

'Think about taking time out to get work experience, think, and reflect. Better to take a gap year than rush into a programme or course provider that isn't right, as today's funding arrangements make it more difficult to change track and admissions tutors may look less favourably on students who don't seem to have a clear sense of direction.'

6. What do you wish more applicants would find out before they apply?

'Much more detail about what university-level study involves – academically, personally, and professionally – and where it will or will not take them.'

'They need to fully understand the course and the subject area that they are applying for, and fully research their university choices. Ideally, they should go to an open day and if an interview is required, make sure they are fully prepared for it.'

7. What can applicants contact you to ask about?

'Anything! We want to support applicants throughout their journey of applying to university and love hearing from them. Just call, email, or tweet – send us a message. If we don't know the answer straight away, we will find out for you.'

8. How much do admissions teams know about international qualifications?

'We have a highly experienced team who have worked with thousands of students in countries across the world and have supported these students in applying to university – we therefore have a strong understanding of qualifications and the education system for different countries.'

'As well as the knowledge and experience we have built up internally over many years, we also call on the support of membership of bodies such as UKNARIC and UCAS who have teams that can advise on equivalencies, and we also have contacts in countries overseas which include the British Council, UKTI, partner course providers, and Ministries of Education who we can contact if need be.'



'We would undertake research into any unknown or unfamiliar qualifications and discuss with students and awarding bodies as needed.'

9. Increasing numbers of UK students are applying for courses with BTECs or combinations of qualifications. What do these applicants need to consider when making their choices?

'They definitely need to find out what the differences are in the way programmes at degree level can be delivered and assessed and what is expected of them – for instance, they may be sitting exams again after completing coursework only programmes.'

Do you consider these applications differently?

'No. We have largely the same approach, although we do look closely at GCSE results to assure ourselves that the academic fundamentals are in place.'

Is there anything different you are looking for in their applications?

'No, everything is the same and all these applicants are all processed in exactly the same way.'

10. What is your top tip to young people thinking about applying to university?

'Go for it! It is a fantastic, life changing experience which you cannot miss out on. There are so many opportunities out there, so be open minded and explore the options available to you. Research is vital!'

'Research the course, research the university, research accommodation, and research funding / fees. Then choose the course and university that you will love!'

'Make sure that it is the right thing for you and that it will help you get where you want to go.'