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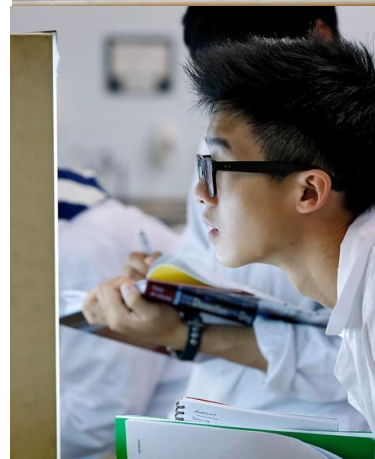
Higher education: making the right choice

Undergraduate Student Recruitment Team

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Employability

- Improve career prospects
- More likely to be in skilled employment and around half as likely to be unemployed as non graduates (DFE)
- Only route to some careers
- Changing jobs landscape
 - Competition
 - Automation
- Transferrable skills

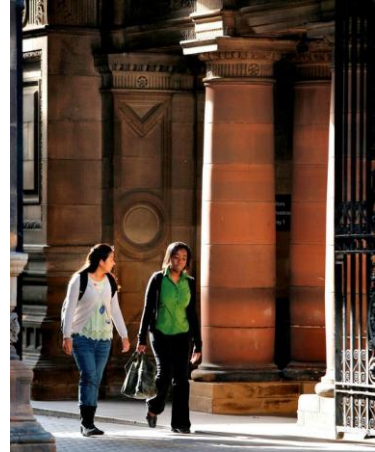


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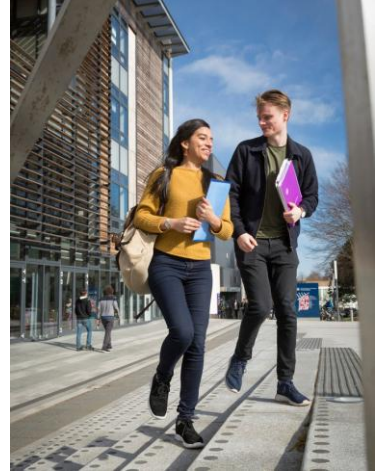
Earnings

- Graduates on average earn more than non graduates (ONS) - Graduate premium of £10,000 reported in 2018 (DoE)
- Average starting salary?
 - £24,000 (HESA 2023)



Why go?

- Study a subject you love
- Employability
 - Higher average life-time earnings
 - More likely to be in highly skilled employment
 - Only route to some careers
- Gain your independence
 - Move away from home?
 - Learn to work independently
 - Discover new talents
- Meet people from all over the world





***Study
something you
really enjoy***

Freedom and independence



Which subject?

Over 50,000 courses to choose from in the UK:

- Take a school subject to the next level?
- Related subjects?
- Something completely new?
- Vocational courses?

Try to choose a subject you enjoy!



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Which course?

Research:

- Course content
- Flexibility
- Teaching and assessment methods
- Quality of teaching and research
- Professional accreditation
- Placements / study abroad?
- Future career paths



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Which university?

What sort of environment will suit **you**?

- Location?
- Big or small?
- Campus or city?



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Scottish Universities

University of Aberdeen

University of Abertay University of
Dundee

University of Edinburgh

Edinburgh Napier University

University of Glasgow

Glasgow Caledonian University

Heriot-Watt University

University of Highlands & Islands

Queen Margaret University

Robert Gordon University

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

University of St Andrews

University of Stirling

University of Strathclyde

University of the West of Scotland

The Open University in Scotland



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Which university?

Consider university facilities:

- Academic facilities and resources
- Accommodation options
- Student support and welfare
- Scholarships or bursaries
- Social and sports facilities
- Societies and sports clubs



Look beyond the university

- Entertainment
- Study resources
- Possible places to work



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Research

Research chosen course(s) and key skills required

**University
prospectuses, course
leaflets, websites**

**Higher Education
Exhibitions**

**Work experience/
shadowing**

Careers library

Open Days

**Email universities with
questions if necessary**



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Entry requirements

Check entry requirements carefully...

Minimum requirements:

- Subject specific?
- General entry requirements?
- Vary whether taken by end of S5 or S4 – S6?

Advanced Highers required / recommended?

Level of competition? ('Typical' offer level?)

Work experience?

Additional tests or interviews?

If in doubt – **check with universities directly before applying**

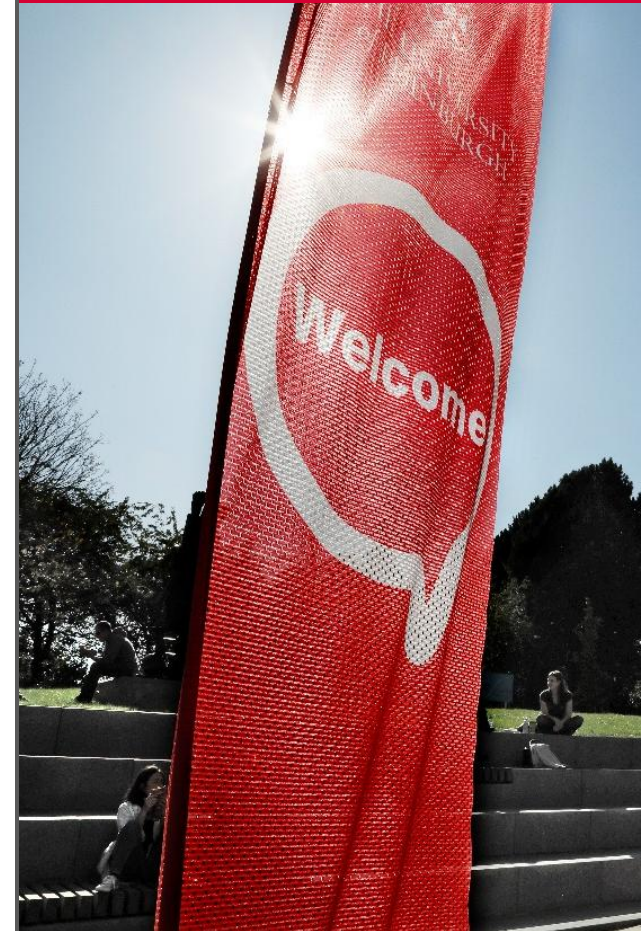


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Open Days

- Don't choose a university on the basis of a prospectus alone
- Opportunity to speak to staff and current students
- See if you would feel at home there
- Does it have the facilities and environment you want?



Getting started

- When is it?
- Where is it?
- Are the subjects and campuses I want to see available on the day?
- Do I need to book?
- How do I get there?



Top tips for the day

- Read the programme **in advance** to work out what to attend
- Plan your travel. Will you have to travel between campuses?
- Write down any questions and bring them along
- Don't be afraid to ask questions!
- Chat to student ambassadors



Things to avoid

- Randomly collecting every piece of paper within sight (you have to carry it!)
- Going to lectures you're not interested in, just because your friends want to go
- Missing the lectures you really want to go to
- Leaving after an hour to sample shopping, coffee shops, pubs etc...



Questions to ask

- What is the course structure? How flexible is it?
- How (and where) is the course taught?
- Does the University guarantee accommodation for first year? (What sort of accommodation? How much is it? Where is it? What happens after first year?)
- What sort of student support services are available?
- Are any bursaries / scholarships offered?



The UCAS system

Apply to:

- Universities
- Some college courses
- Conservatoires

One application, 5 choices

- Maximum 4 for medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine
- Back up choices

Deadlines:

15 October 2025

- Medicine
- Dentistry
- Veterinary Medicine
- Oxford/Cambridge

14 January 2026

- All other courses

Follow your school's deadlines!



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Your application

My profile

Personal details >

Name, age, title and gender

[Start this section](#)

Contact and residency details >

Address, email, telephone and where you live

[Start this section](#)

Education >

Qualifications and periods of study

[Start this section](#)

Employment >

Paid employment

[Start this section](#)

Nationality details >

Birthplace and nationalities

[Start this section](#)

Supporting information >

So that providers know how to support you during your studies

[Start this section](#)

English language skills >

Is English your first language?

[Start this section](#)

Finance and funding >

Tell us how you'll fund your study

[Start this section](#)



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Your application

UCAS

Further education

Undergraduate

Postgraduate

Apprenticeships

Careers



UCAS APPLICATION

2022 Undergraduate application

Your Personal ID number

🏠 / UCAS application

Application status

Centre information

You are not linked to a centre. Use the link below to link your application to your centre.

[Link to a school, college, or centre](#)

0/5

CHOICES

0%

PROFILE

NOT STARTED

PERSONAL
STATEMENT

NOT STARTED

REFERENCE

0%

Review and
submit

Your choices

Search for courses

🔍 Find courses and providers



Add choice



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Your application

English language skills



Is English your first language?

[Start this section](#)

Finance and funding



Tell us how you'll fund your study

[Start this section](#)

Your personal statement and references

Personal statement



Why do you want to study this subject?

[Start this section](#)

Reference



Provide details of your referees

[Start this section](#)



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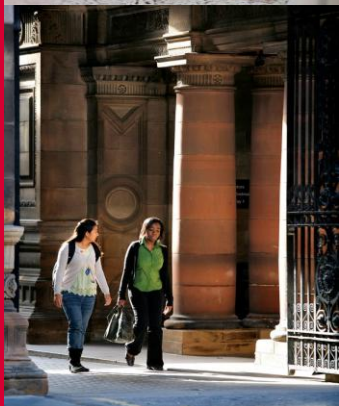


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UCAS: The next steps

- UCAS distributes applications to universities
- Monitor progress of application through 'UCAS Track'
- The University response:
 - Conditional offer
 - Unconditional offer
 - Unsuccessful application
- Universities can take varied lengths of time to respond
- Only have to respond after all offers have been made
 - Can hold a maximum of 2 conditional offers (Firm or Insurance)
 - Lots of thought required before responding to offers
 - insurance choice should be realistic



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Personal statement: **Why is it important?**

- Growing applicant numbers
- Competition for places
- Most options won't interview
- Your opportunity to tell us why you would be a great student

A good personal statement can be the difference between a successful and unsuccessful application.



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Personal statement: **The Basics**

- One personal statement for five choices
- All choices must have a common theme
 - No half-and-half statements
- Back up choices
- Three questions – character limits on total
 - Limit includes punctuation, spaces and blank lines
- Plagiarism check (Copycatch)



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Personal Statement

- Why the change? More structured
 - Q1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?
 - Q2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course or subject?
 - Q3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?
- Total character count remains the same



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Personal statement: What are universities looking for?

Academic achievement - and potential to do well at university

Evidence (via **personal statement**) of:

- strong interest in your chosen subject area.
- commitment, motivation and readiness for higher education
- suitability for your chosen degree programme (especially for vocational courses).

Supporting **school reference**



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Q1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Think about what motivates you to apply for this subject.

This will be personal to you(!) but might include:

- Love of the subject and want to pursue further?
- Inspired by a person/event/experience/book/exhibition?
- Interested in a particular part of this subject area and want to know more?
- Part of a long-term career plan? Driven to pursue a particular profession?



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Q2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course or subject?

Thinking about your formal education (at school/college/or even short online course).....

- What transferable skills have you gained?
- What has helped to give you an insight into this subject? (*Has a particular module helped you understand the subject more? Have you done any extra courses/study outside school that is relevant?*)
- How might this help you succeed at University?
- Any other academic achievements that can show your skills and abilities? (*e.g. winning school competition? Acting as school ambassador or team captain? Musical or drama achievements?*)

Focus on what's most recent and relevant to your application.

Remember you **don't need to include information about the grades you've achieved** already – universities see this in another part of the application.



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Q3. What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences useful?

A chance to highlight other activities/experiences you have had which also demonstrate your suitability for the subject or course. This will be unique to you(!) – but examples might include:

Work experience, employment, or volunteering

- Particularly important if applying for a professional/vocational course where the University is looking for relevant work experience e.g. Medicine/Vet Med/Teaching/ health professions
- Also a great way to demonstrate key skills – time management, communication skills, leadership skills...

Personal life experiences or responsibilities

For example a life experience that influenced/inspired your choice of career? Do you have family caring responsibilities? Have you had experiences that have helped you develop skills like resilience and empathy? **(Important!** Challenging circumstances can be included in the reference – you don't need to mention here unless relevant to your choices)

Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities

This could include music, sport, drama – any activities which demonstrate your particular skills and personal qualities – and explain why you'd make a great student.



Personal statement: **Writing style**

- May not be a style you are used to
- Avoid writing sentences that have a lot of words that all say pretty much the same thing and where the reader probably got the point nine words in yet use thirty-three words



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Personal statement: **Writing style**

- May not be a style you are used to
- Be concise



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Personal statement: **Writing style**

- May not be a style you are used to
- Be concise
- Cut words as you redraft
- Natural language, not complex
- Positive tone
- Focus on you, “I did” not “we did”
- Try not to repeat words too often
- Avoid using lists
- Standing out isn’t always positive!



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Personal statement:

Top tips

- One personal statement for five choices
- Aim for all choices to have a common theme (avoid 50:50 statements)
- Min 350 characters per question (4000 character max overall)
- Limit includes punctuation, spaces and blank lines
- Draft and redraft!



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Personal statement: Qualities and Achievements

- Who you are beyond your grades
- How will you contribute to university life?
- Include:
 - Additional achievements
 - Awards gained
 - Positions of leadership and responsibility
- More than just the outcome
- Relate back to your application



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AI – why not?

- When you complete your application, you now have to declare that your personal statement hasn't been copied or provided from another source, including artificial intelligence software
- Could be considered fraud
- It is called a **personal** statement!

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-your-personal-statement/guide-using-ai-and-chatgpt-your-personal-statement>



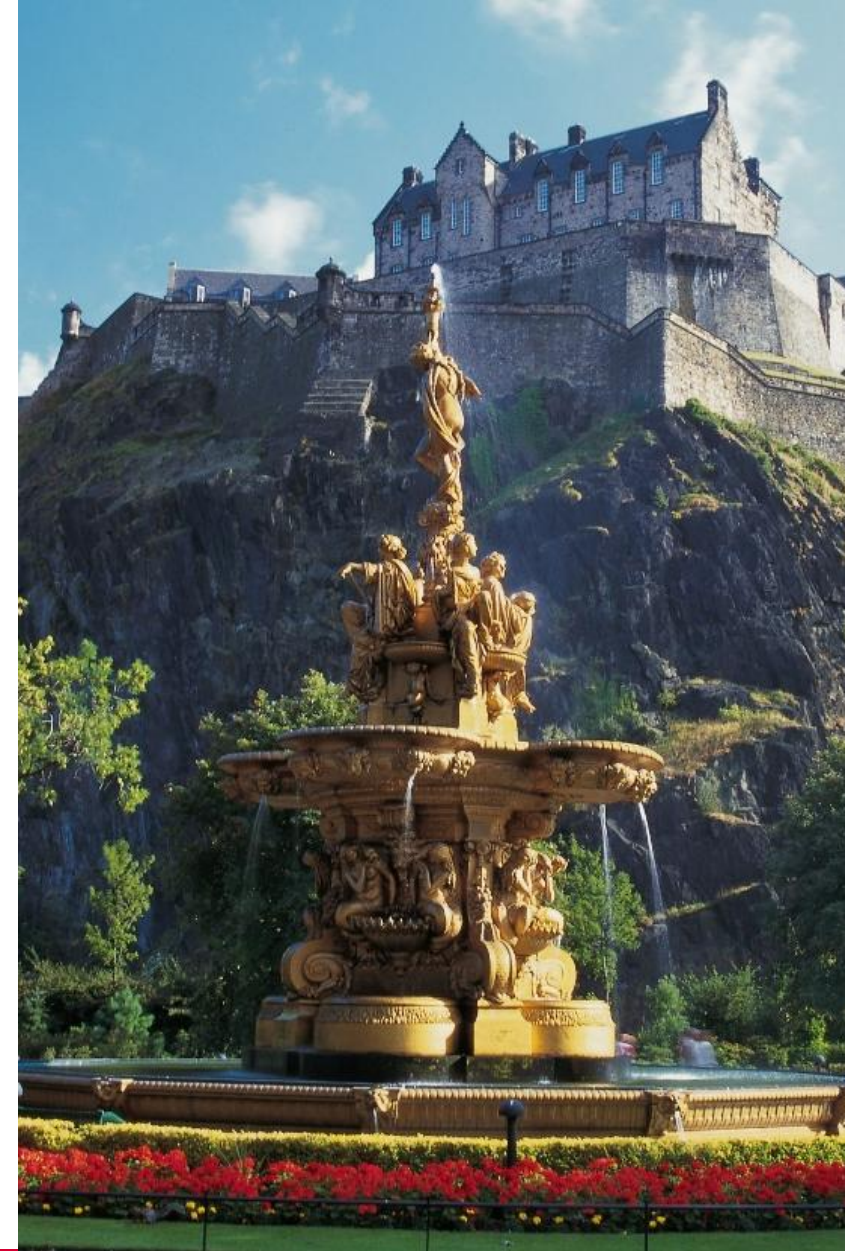
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Personal statement:

Key facts

- Can be the reason you get an offer
- One statement for up to five choices
- Do your research first
- Focussed language
- Avoid lists
- Try to relate achievements and experiences back to your application
- Make sure it reads well
- Draft and redraft
- Use the support your school offers



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Questions?

futurestudents@ed.ac.uk

**Chat to
our students**
edin.ac/31GKkZp



**Online Sessions/
Open Days**
edin.ac/2HT0gzi



Campus Visits
edin.ac/3d9jRHx



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