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## Applying to Higher Education (for 2017 entry)

Realising Opportunities -  
supporting progression  
to leading universities.

[www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk](http://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk)

# Realising Opportunities – Applying to Higher Education Guide

Realising Opportunities (RO) is an innovative, national programme giving you increased access to some of the country's leading universities.

This RO guide will give you information and guidance on researching different courses and universities. It also tells you how to apply through UCAS and how to identify yourself as an RO student to ensure your application gets additional consideration and, if applicable, receive an alternative offer.

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# Applying to Higher Education

Throughout your involvement in RO you will receive advice and guidance from the RO universities and your ementor about applying to higher education. This guide will focus on the two key steps that will help you to decide what and where you want to study and how to apply.

## Step A Research:

The first thing you need to do when applying to higher education is to think about which course you want to apply for and which university is right for you.



## Step B The Application Process:

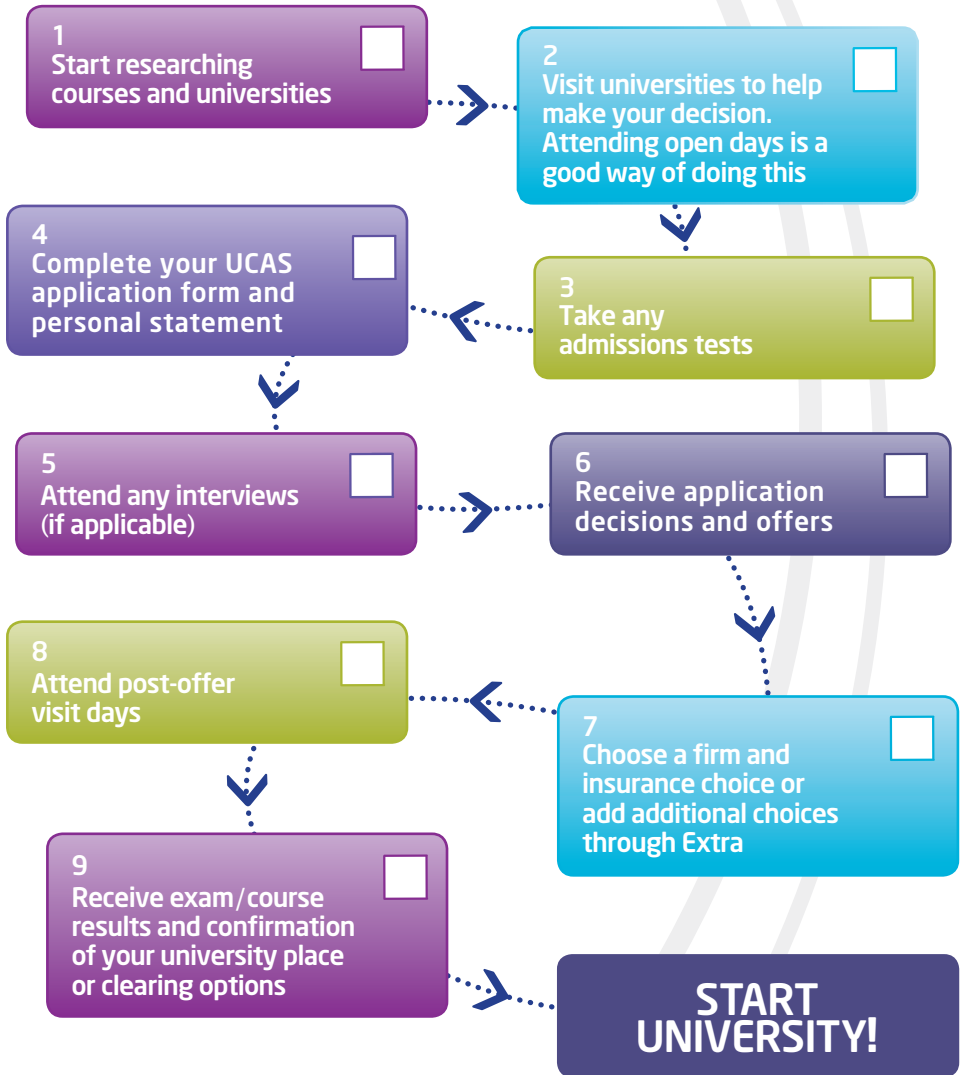
Once you have done your research and made your choices, you can apply to university by completing your UCAS form online which includes a personal statement. You should do this in conjunction with your school/college.



# Applying to Higher Education

## Overview

Here is an overview of the process of applying to higher education. You can use it as a checklist to track your progress.



# Choosing Your Course

Before you start to apply to university, it is important that you do your research. There are over 35,000 courses to choose from in the UK, so when thinking about which course you would like to apply for, you should consider the following.

### Subject

- Which subjects do you enjoy studying now?
- Are there any new subjects which you have never studied before, but relate to your current studies?
- Do you have a specific career in mind which requires a degree in a certain subject?

### Course Type

- Do you want to study a single subject or multiple subjects?
- Do you want to do a sandwich year in industry or study abroad?

### Course Structure

- How is the course assessed?
- Are there any practical or field work elements?
- How much contact time is there?
- What modules are available?



# Research

## Entrance Requirements

- What grades or UCAS tariff points does the course require?
- Will you achieve those grades in your current studies?
- Does the course require any specific A levels, GCSEs or a foundation course?
- Are there any subjects which the course will not recognise e.g. General Studies?
- Do you need to take any additional admissions tests?
- Do you need to have any work experience?

## Professional Accreditation

- For some careers the degree you take must be accredited by the appropriate professional body, eg: psychology, architecture, town planning. Check if this applies to your chosen career and that the course meets this requirement.

### Tip

Ask your teachers/tutors about your predicted grades and use these to make realistic course choices.

## Your Course Research

Use this table to record your course research. Click on the link at the bottom of the table for a printable version.

Course Research:

COURSE TITLE	COURSE CODE	UNIVERSITY	ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS	NOTES

 [Print](#)

## Choosing Your University

When choosing your university you should decide which factors are most important to you and consider your options with these in mind. It's your choice and it should be driven by your preferences and interests. Think about the following:

### Type

**Campus:** Campus universities are usually outside of the city centre and have all their teaching buildings and accommodation on one site.

**City:** City universities tend to have their teaching and accommodation buildings spread out across the city.

### Size

● Universities can vary in size from less than 10,000 students up to around 40,000 students.

### Making Comparisons

● Looking at league tables is a good way to compare different universities. Remember to look at subject league tables too!

### Distance from Home

- How far away from home would you like to be?
- Are there good transport links?
- How much will it cost to travel there?



### Tip

The best university is the one that feels right for you, and you should take the opportunity to have a look around before you make a final decision. Visiting universities is also a great way of finding out how far away from home they are, and how easy it is to get there.

# Research

## Social Opportunities

- Do you have a particular interest in a hobby or sport, and does the university offer the opportunity to continue with this?
- What sports facilities are available?
- What societies are there?
- Are there good social spaces within the university such as a Student's Union?

## Research Intensive Universities

- Research intensive universities offer a very high quality of teaching that is research led.
- The research undertaken at these universities helps to address problems in the wider world.

Check out this great website designed by the University of Birmingham. It gives you advice on how to research your course and university.  
[www.tips4uni.bham.ac.uk](http://www.tips4uni.bham.ac.uk)

## Your University Research

Use this table to record your university research. Click on the link at the bottom of the page for a printable version.

University Research:

UNIVERSITY NAME	TYPE AND SIZE	DISTANCE FROM HOME	ACCOMMODATION	SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES	NOTES

 Print

Realising Opportunities has encouraged me to visit a variety of different universities which I would not have considered an option in the first place.

Realising Opportunities Student





## Where to Find Information

### UCAS

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

- The UCAS website has lots of useful resources for applicants including a UCAS search tool that gives detailed information about all the courses offered by UK universities, including entry requirements.
- It provides basic information about universities such as student numbers and accommodation.
- UCAS hold around 50 higher education conventions every year throughout the country. They give you the opportunity to speak to representatives from universities, recruiters, gap year companies and many more.

### University Specific Information

- Every university publishes a prospectus each year giving information about the university itself, its facilities and the courses it offers. These are free and can be obtained by either emailing or telephoning the university.
- Many universities also provide subject specific brochures which give in depth details regarding particular courses and subjects. These can be ordered in the same way as prospectuses.
- University websites will contain up-to-date information about the university and its courses.

### Open Days

- Visiting a university on one of their open days, or taking a campus tour is a great way to see if you would like to study and live there.
- Information about open days will be available on university websites.

### Teachers and Careers Advisors

- Speak to your teachers or careers advisors at school/college who will be able to discuss your options with you.
- Your school/college may have copies of university prospectuses you can look at.

### Your Ementor

- Your ementor will be able to give you lots of support and advice about researching courses and universities. Remember, they had to do the same thing themselves recently!

### RO Events and Activities

Many RO universities offer events and activities that can help with your course and university research. It is also a good way to get to see the university for yourself. Details of the events and activities are available on the RO website: [www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk](http://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk)

# Research

## Useful Websites

Here are some websites which you may find useful to help you with your research.

### Choosing a University

**What Uni**  
[www.whatuni.com](http://www.whatuni.com)

Provides university reviews written by students.

**UNISTATS**  
[www.unistats.co.uk](http://www.unistats.co.uk)

Offers official data on universities and colleges based on student satisfaction scores. It allows you to compare different institutions and courses.

**QAA: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**  
[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

The QAA undertakes assessment of all universities in the UK on the quality of their teaching.

**tips4uni**  
[www.tips4uni.bham.ac.uk](http://www.tips4uni.bham.ac.uk)

Advice on researching a course and university.

**The Complete University Guide**  
[www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)

Provides information about all aspects of university.

### Advice on HE

**National Union of Students**  
[www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

The confederation of students' unions which represents university students.

**The Student Room**  
[www.thestudentroom.co.uk](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk)

The UK's biggest student community sharing tips for applying to university, careers information and lots more.

**Push**  
[www.push.co.uk](http://www.push.co.uk)

An independent guide to UK universities, student life, gap years, open days and student finance.

**Studential**  
[www.studential.com](http://www.studential.com)

Information and advice about options at school, university and beyond.

### Student Finance

**Student Finance**  
[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

Information on the financial help available to students.

**Student Calculator**  
<http://studentcalculator.org>  
A useful site providing realistic projections of your student finances.

### Careers

**Prospects**  
[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

A graduate careers site which gives information on career paths.

**Plotr**  
[www.plotr.co.uk](http://www.plotr.co.uk)  
A site to help you find out about jobs and careers linked to your interests and skills.



# The Application Process

## UCAS

Once you have done all your research it's time to make your application through UCAS.

### Registering with UCAS Apply

- 1 Ask your school/college for the "buzzword". You will need to enter this when you register and it links your application to the school, college or centre, so that your tutor or advisor can check your application and write your reference. You can't register without it.
- 2 Log on to [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and click on *Apply*.
- 3 Follow the instructions given. This registration process generates your username and then you will create your own password. If you forget your password, follow the instructions provided.

### UCAS Form

- Once you have registered with UCAS you can start your application form.
- The form will lead you through the sections in order.
- You can choose **up to 5 course choices** to apply to.
- You can only apply for **4 courses in Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science**, but you can choose a different subject for your 5th choice.
- Usually you can only apply to one course at **either** the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge.

### Remember

- You should get your application in as early as possible, but make sure you give yourself plenty of time to work through the form.
- Make sure you check if there are admissions tests required for your course, and give yourself plenty of time to take these within the provided deadlines.
- There is an **earlier deadline** for courses in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Sciences and for applications to Oxford or Cambridge.
- Some art and design courses have a **later deadline**, make sure you check this before you apply.



# The Application Process

## Recording Your Participation in Realising Opportunities

It is important for the RO universities to be able to identify you as an RO student so they can give your UCAS application additional consideration. You must record your participation in RO in **two** places when using the online *Apply* system:

- 1 In the *Additional information* section.  
Note: this section will only appear once you have completed the 'Personal details' section.
- 2 In the *Choice details* section.

### 1. Additional Information

In this section you will be asked:

- If you are a resident of the UK.
- If so you will then be asked if you have completed any activities to help you prepare for university, such as summer schools or a HE related activity. This is where you should mention your participation in RO.
- Enter the five pieces of information as shown below in the *Activities in preparation for higher education: 1* section.

Welcome	
Personal details	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Additional information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student finance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference	<input type="checkbox"/>
View all details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay/Send	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help	
Options/Opssynau	

#### Equality monitoring

Universities and colleges have a legal obligation to make sure applicants are not discriminated against or disadvantaged. This information will not influence any decision in respect of your application and will only be shared with the universities and colleges after you have secured a place or at the end of the application cycle.

Ethnic origin\*  ?

The next three questions are optional. If you have any concerns you do not have to answer them.

Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

What is your religion or belief?  ?

What is your sexual orientation?  ?

Is your gender identity different to the sex you were assumed to be at birth?  ?

National identity\*  ?

Dual national identity  ?

#### Key

- Completed
- In progress
- Not started
- Help

#### Activities in preparation for higher education: 1

For example: summer schools, Saturday university, campus days, summer academies, taster courses and booster courses. If you have not taken any such course, please leave these sections blank.

Start date   ?

Duration (days)  ?

School year  ?

Location  ?

Sponsor  ?

#### Activities in preparation for higher education: 2

Start date   ?

Duration (days)  ?

School year  ?

Location  ?

PUT START DATE AS FEBRUARY 2016

PUT DURATION AS 1

PUT YEAR AS 12

PUT LOCATION AS YOUR HOST UNIVERSITY

SELECT REALISING OPPORTUNITIES AS YOUR SPONSOR

# The Application Process

## 2. Course Choices

- In this section you are asked to fill in the details of the courses you are applying to.
- When you are applying for a course at **any of the RO universities** you need to put **ROP** in the *Further details* box as shown below.

### Remember

You do not need to apply to your courses in order of preference, UCAS automatically puts them into alphabetical order.

Welcome	
Personal details	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Additional information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student finance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choices	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference	<input type="checkbox"/>
View all details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pay/Send	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help	
Options/Opsynau	

### Key

- Completed
- In progress
- Not started
- Help

Welcome > Choice summary > Choice details

To avoid losing information please click 'save' before leaving the page.

To find courses based on subject, provider and location, check entry requirements, and view course-specific fee information, please use [the UCAS search tool](#) (opens in a new window).

Compulsory fields are marked with an asterisk (\*).

Institution code*	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="see list"/>	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/>
Course code*	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="see list"/>	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/>
Campus code*	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="see list"/>	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/>
Start date*	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="see list"/>	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/>
Further details	<input type="text" value="ROP"/>	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/> <td>← WRITE ROP HERE</td>	← WRITE ROP HERE
Live at home while studying?*	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/>
Point of entry	<input type="text"/>	<input <="" td="" type="button" value="?"/> <td></td>	

# The Application Process

## Your Personal Statement

Your personal statement is a very important part of your UCAS application because it tells the university why you want to study your chosen course. Admissions tutors are looking for someone who has the potential to be successful in their studies and who will contribute towards their degree and university.

What you should include

### Course choice

- Why did you choose that course?
- What interests you about it?
- What do you want to learn more about?
- Do you have any future career plans?

### Your current studies

- What are you currently studying at school/ college and why do you find these subjects interesting?
- How are they relevant to your chosen university course?

### Work experience

- Have you done any paid part time work?
- Have you been a volunteer?
- What skills have you learnt through your work experience?
- Did you have any key responsibilities?

### Your extra-curricular experiences

- Give details of any clubs or societies you have been involved with.
- What skills have you developed by taking part in extra-curricular activities?
- Did you have any key responsibilities?
- Include information about activities you have done as part of Realising Opportunities.

### Other information

- If you are planning to take a gap year it is very important to include information about why you are taking a year out, what you will be doing and the skills you hope to gain from this.
- If you are applying to different courses try to include information that will be relevant to them all. This may be easier if the courses are similar, but if they are unrelated you may have to focus more on your interests and current studies rather than specific course content.

### Conclusion

- How will you be successful on this course and what do you hope to achieve?

### Remember

- A personal statement cannot be more than 4000 characters long.
- No formatting is allowed, so you cannot use words in bold or italics.
- Try to include space between paragraphs as this makes it easier to read.

# The Application Process

## Where to Find Information about Personal Statements

### Ementoring Portal

- **Your Ementor:** they will be able to offer you lots of support and advice about writing a personal statement, they may even read yours through to check the content and for any errors.
- **Scheme Resources:** the RO ementoring portal contains guides to writing your personal statement and top tips from our UCAS expert about the application process.
- **Bright Knowledge:** on the RO ementoring portal you will find a section called '*applying to university*' under '*education pathways*' with information about writing personal statements.

My ementor was a great help when it came to writing my personal statement. It was nice knowing that if I had any queries that I could contact them whenever, which was particularly useful to me since neither of my parents have been to university.

A Realising Opportunities Student



### RO Events and Activities

Many RO universities offer sessions to help with writing personal statements. Details of these are available on the RO website: [www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk](http://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk)



## UCAS Checklist

When you have completed your UCAS form check that you have:

- Completed all the sections of the form.
- Recorded your participation in RO and any other activities in preparation for HE.
- Entered your personal details correctly.
- Entered the correct fee code.
- Entered the correct residential category.
- Entered the correct course codes.
- Entered all your qualifications/exams that you have taken and will take.

You are now ready to apply!

Good luck with your UCAS application!

RO Central Team





## Jargon Buster!

While you are doing your research there may be some terms, abbreviations and jargon that you'll come across that may be new to you. We hope the quick guide below will help.

Term	Description
Access courses	Access courses are designed to prepare students who do not have standard entry qualifications for higher education courses.
BA/BSc	Bachelor of Arts/Science.
BEd	Bachelor of Education.
Campus	The main area on which the university is based. Some universities might have more than one campus.
Contact time	The amount of time you spend in lectures, seminars, labs, workshops etc. where you have contact with a tutor.
Degree course	A higher education course leading to the award of a bachelor's or master's degree.
Dissertation	An extended piece of work of approximately 5,000-10,000 words, usually undertaken in the final year of your degree.
Foundation degree	A two year degree level qualification which combines academic study with work place learning. It is the equivalent of two thirds of a full honours degree.
Foundation course	Different to a foundation degree. A foundation course is preparation for degree level study which may need specific qualifications e.g. an Art and Design Foundation prepares students to study a range of art and design degrees at university.
Fresher	First year student.
Graduate	Someone who has attained a bachelor's or higher degree.
HE	Higher Education.
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England.

## Jargon Buster!

Term	Description
Initial teacher training (ITT)	A course that leads to a qualification as a teacher. ITT is funded by the Teaching Agency.
Joint honours	A degree where you study two or more subjects e.g. History and Politics.
MA/MSc	MA is Master of Arts and MSc is Master of Science. These are postgraduate qualifications that can be studied after an undergraduate degree. They usually take a year to complete or two years part time. Some 4 year degrees are classified as an MA or MSc.
MPhil	An MPhil is a Master of Philosophy. This is another form of postgraduate qualification and it signifies the person has completed a period of research rather than a taught programme.
MBA	Master of Business Administration.
MEd	Master of Education.
MEng	Master of Engineering.
Modules	Programmes of study are made up of modules which each focus on a specific area or topic.
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education – a teaching qualification.
PhD	A PhD stands for Doctor of Philosophy and is a higher level degree normally taken after a postgraduate degree.
Postgraduate	A student who is working towards their master's degree and has already completed their bachelor's/undergraduate degree.
Sandwich course/year	A course of study which includes periods of practical work in organisations outside the university or college, or a year abroad.
Semester	A study period of up to 16 weeks, often with exams and assessments at the end.
Single honours	A degree where you study a single subject e.g. Chemistry.
UCAS	The organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education in the UK.
Undergraduate	Student working towards a first degree.



The RO Central Team co-ordinates the Programme on behalf of the RO Partner universities. You can contact us at:

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