

HIGHER EDUCATION GLOSSARY

A glossary of key terms that students will likely encounter during their application to university.

Your research:

UCAS: The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service - this is the platform through which you will apply to university courses. The UCAS webpages also include lots of useful info for your research, including information about careers, subjects, courses, and more.

Open day: An opportunity to visit a university campus, and get a feel for what it's like to study there. You may attend general talks about student life, attend subject-specific talks, or take tours around the campus, city, accommodation, and facilities.

Applicant day: For current applicants to a university, also known as 'offer holder days'. These are a great way to get a more in-depth feel for a university, through taster lectures, campus and department tours, and meeting staff and students.

Subject taster: An opportunity for you to explore a subject area, either in-person or online, through a taster lecture or activity.

Core module: These are units within a course which each student will need to complete in order to progress and receive their award.

Optional module: Found within many courses, these modules allow you to choose your areas of interest within your course, outside of your core modules. Different courses and universities will have varying levels of flexibility. Courses usually become more flexible as you progress.

Foundation year: An extra year of study before the start of a course. This is usually a valid route for an applicant who cannot meet the entry requirements for a degree.

Integrated master's degree: This is a course which allows you to combine a bachelor's and master's into one, typically by adding an extra year onto the end of a course which consists of further research and increased expertise.

Joint honours degree: A course which combines more than one subject area, allowing you to study multiple subjects at once.

Placement year/year in industry: An extra year added into the middle of a degree which allows you to gain experience working in an industry, usually one related to your discipline.

Study year abroad: An extra year added to your degree which allows you to study abroad at a partner institution.

Applications:

UCAS Track: Track is the UCAS website portal on which students can view their applications to universities and colleges, and respond to any offers of a place or interview.

Offer: Receiving an offer means that the applicant has been offered a place at the university. A 'Conditional Offer' means you need to meet the entry requirements to get your place confirmed. Some applicants may be offered an 'Unconditional Offer', which means they've already met the entry requirements.

Contextual offers: are conditional offers made to students because of their educational, personal, and socioeconomic background and are typically lower than standard entry requirements.

An example can be found here on the University of Sheffield webpage - <https://sheffield.ac.uk/access-sheffield>

Firm & insurance choice: Your firm choice is your first choice; if it's conditional, the place is yours if you meet the offer conditions. When you're choosing your insurance, go for something with lower offer conditions and make sure you'd be happy to go there if you don't meet your firm offer.

Extra: UCAS Extra is a service which allows applicants to add one further choice to their UCAS application. This is typically used by applicants who have received all of their decisions from universities and weren't successful, or declined all of the offers they received.

Clearing: Clearing allows universities to fill any remaining spots on their courses. Students may enter into Clearing for a variety of reasons between early July and late August, including: changing their mind on their course of choice, receiving higher/lower results than expected, or even applying to university for the first time.

Clearing entry requirements: These are the adjusted entry requirements for which universities accept students into any remaining course places during Clearing.

UCAS tariff points: These are a numerical representation of your grades. Some universities and colleges accept these in place of letter grades. There is a tariff calculator on the UCAS website.

Extra support:

Widening access/participation: Universities often run programmes to support access to higher education for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Different programmes will have different eligibility criteria and activities, but support may include a contextual offer, specific Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) for under-represented groups, financial support, or mentoring.

Examples can be found on the University of Sheffield webpage:

<https://sheffield.ac.uk/schools/programmes>

Bursary/scholarship: A financial award applicants may receive and that doesn't need to be paid back. Bursaries are usually awarded automatically and are based on personal circumstances. Scholarships may be awarded by a university or an external partner, and usually require an application. They may be awarded based on academic merit, sports performance, or excellence in the arts.

Examples can be found on our website: <https://sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees-funding>