



[Home](#) > [A letter to students from Ofqual and UCAS](#)



Correspondence

# A letter to students from Ofqual and UCAS

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**Applies to England**



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Dear student,

For those of you receiving your results this summer we know you might have questions about how your results are determined, results day, confirming offers and Clearing. Such as, what are your options on results day? What happens if you change your mind about your choices?

Here are a few things to remember:

- Your work is marked and graded by expert examiners. They do not know your name, which school or college you attended, or where in the country you live. Ofqual makes sure that the rules are the same for all students taking the same qualification.
- All students are assessed on the same basis and your grade is determined solely on your work. Whatever your results, you can be confident that it's no harder or easier to achieve a particular grade in the same subject no matter which exam board's GCSE or A level qualification you took.
- **As you will have been aware from the time you began your course, this year GCSEs, AS and A level grading standards are returning to normal.** There is, however, some grading protection built in to the overall national results (not at individual student level), because of the disruption students have faced. This protection won't boost your marks by whole grades, but it will mean that the quality of work required to achieve a grade is ever so slightly lower than would have been needed before the pandemic (find out more in [Ofqual's grading blog \(https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/10/exam-results-2023-10-things-to-know-about-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades/\)](https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/10/exam-results-2023-10-things-to-know-about-gcse-as-and-a-level-grades/)).
- Awarding organisations are aware of the grading approach taken for GCSEs and A Levels and are taking an appropriate approach for each of their vocational and technical qualifications (such as T Levels, BTECs or Cambridge Technicals), given their different structures. For more information see Ofqual's [VTQ grading blog \(https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/10/vocational-and-technical-qualifications-grading-in-2023/\)](https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/10/vocational-and-technical-qualifications-grading-in-2023/).
- **If you don't get your predicted grades, don't worry, this happens very often. In 2019 only 21% of accepted applicants achieved or exceeded their predicted grades. Yet 86% of UK 18-year-olds applying to UCAS took up a higher education place. The number of university places available is not affected by the approach to grading.** Universities understood what grades will look like overall this year and took this into account when making offers. They also look at the full range of information within the UCAS application, including the personal statement and reference. This year 89% of students have received and accepted an offer from their preferred university, up from 83% last year.
- **Once you know your grades, Clearing offers you the chance to re-evaluate your choice regardless of whether you receive predicted, better or lower grades, and there will be thousands of courses available. Last year, 12,000 applicants who did not have a place on results day went on to be accepted onto a course in Clearing.** You will also receive an email from UCAS tailored to you, which will clearly outline your next steps and other options you may want to consider.

- **You will have plenty of choice for your next steps.** Due to an increase in 18-year-olds in the population, there will be competition for higher education places again this year as more students seek to go to university or college – but be assured, there will be many options to choose from, whether exploring an undergraduate degree, thinking about an apprenticeship or employment. Take some time to thoroughly consider all your options – but be mindful that the most selective courses do get filled quickly.

Each year, UCAS supports almost 1.5 million students in making informed choices about their future. To get ahead, research your options well in advance of results day, speak directly to universities and colleges and use the range of personalised tools [available on \*\*ucas.com\*\*](https://www.ucas.com/) (<https://www.ucas.com/>) to explore all available pathways, including apprenticeships, before making your final decision.

You can also listen to UCAS' [Streetview video series](https://www.ucas.com/clearing-launch) (<https://www.ucas.com/clearing-launch>) and [Clearing Choices podcasts](https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/clearing-and-results-day/clearing-choices-show-katie-thistleton#:~:text=Sit%20back%20and%20listen%20to,who%20have%20been%20through%20Clearing.) (<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/clearing-and-results-day/clearing-choices-show-katie-thistleton#:~:text=Sit%20back%20and%20listen%20to,who%20have%20been%20through%20Clearing.>) about all things to do with results day, and discover your personalised options in your UCAS account (UCAS Hub) so that you can take control of your future.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Jo Saxton, Chief Regulator, Ofqual

Clare Marchant, Chief Executive, UCAS

[↑ Back to top](#)

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