

Supporting Applicants through UCAS Clearing

A guide for parents, carers, teachers, and advisers





What is Clearing?

Clearing may seem like a confusing process, but the process is quite simple if you understand what needs to be done, and by when.

Clearing is traditionally seen as an opportunity for applicants to find a place at university if they haven't performed as well as expected. However, Clearing should also be seen as an opportunity for applicants who are thinking of changing their mind on their university choice, or perform better than expected. If someone chooses to apply through UCAS after 30 June, their application will automatically be entered into Clearing, and they can apply once they have their results.

As Clearing approaches, the people you support may need some extra help and advice to decide what to do. UEA is here to help them, and to help you too. Clearing offers lots of opportunities and you can assist by researching how it all works, so you're there for them if they find themselves in Clearing. We've got lots of information to help you understand the process.



Understanding the Clearing Process

Timeline Overview

The dates for Clearing differ very slightly every year, although only by a little. Here are some key dates for Clearing from 2021-2026, to give you an idea of what to expect for the timeline:

Year	Opens Early July	Closes Mid October
2026	2 July	19 October
2025	5 July	20 October
2024	5 July	21 October
2023	5 July	17 October
2022	5 July	18 October
2021	5 July	19 October



Clearing always opens at the start of July, and closes mid-to-late October each year.

Applicants usually cannot add Clearing choices to their UCAS Hub until Results Day - 1pm on Level 3 (A-Level) Results Day, or 10am for SQA Results Day.

The most accurate and current dates for UCAS Clearing and Results Days can be found on the [UCAS website](https://www.ucas.com).



**UCAS Confirmation
and Clearing dates**



Who is Eligible for Clearing?

If any one of the following scenarios apply to an applicant, they will be eligible to apply for their chosen course through Clearing:

- **They are applying after the UCAS deadline** - applications submitted after the UCAS deadline go directly into Clearing
- **They do not hold any offers** - either they did not receive any offers, or they chose not to accept any offers they received
- **They did not meet the conditions of their offers** - in most cases, if an applicant does not meet the conditions of their offers, they will not be accepted, but sometimes HE providers exercise leniency, in which case the student will not be eligible for Clearing
- **They decline their firm place** - using the option in UCAS Hub, which they should use only if they no longer want to take up their place at that university or college. Doing so will decline their place and cancel their contract with the university or college, including any accommodation or scholarships
- **Their offer is still conditional** - they have received their results, but their firm choice offer is still conditional and they do not want to wait for the university or college to make a decision




How it Works - A Step-by-Step Guide to Clearing

Before calling university Clearing lines or declining any places on UCAS, applicants should seek advice from their school, college or career adviser. After talking their options through with an adviser they'll be able to make a much more informed decision. As the person reading this guide, you may be somebody they turn to for advice, and by familiarising yourself with the Clearing process and other information within this resource, you should feel equipped to support them. Here is what the process may look like from an applicant's point of view:

1. Build a UCAS Application

If they haven't already, applicants will need to create a UCAS application for the relevant entry year (for example, if applying through Clearing in 2026, they will need to create a 2026 entry application). All sections, including a personal statement and reference, should be completed. They will need to pay the UCAS application fee (unless they qualify for a fee waiver), and submit their application without adding their chosen course or university. At this point, they can contact universities and colleges to find a place through Clearing. Once they have received any offers, they can add one as their UCAS Clearing choice. This is sometimes called a "direct to Clearing" application.

2026 UCAS Application
Personal ID number 1234567890

[Go to Application](#) 

Your application is in Clearing

This is because you weren't placed at your firm or insurance choice, declined an offer, or applied after 2nd July 2026

What you can do now

- 1. Find a course you would like to study**
See recommended courses in your Clearing matches, or search for a specific course.
[View Clearing Matches](#)
- 2. Call the university or college for your chosen course**
You will need to confirm with the university or college if they are willing to offer you a place.
- 2. Add your Clearing choice (available from 13:00 on 13th August 2026)**
When you have an offer and permission from the university or college, add the choice to your application.
[Add a Clearing Choice](#)

If an applicant adds choices before the application deadline (usually at the end of June) but submits their application after the final deadline, those choices will be removed and the application will automatically be entered into Clearing.

2. Monitor Clearing Vacancies

Clearing vacancies are live on the UCAS website from the date that Clearing opens, and they are also advertised on individual universities' websites. Entering Clearing is a great time for an applicant to re-evaluate their course choice. Many students use this time to reconsider the options available to them, and to rethink their final decision. The most up-to-date information is available on the [UCAS search tool](#).



UCAS Search Tool



Applicants can also use Clearing Plus to find courses that may be of interest to them. Clearing Plus uses an applicant's qualifications and initial course choices to match them to relevant courses with Clearing vacancies. Students can express interest in up to 5 courses, and the corresponding university or college can contact them. Courses do fill up quickly in Clearing, so there's no guarantee they'll be contacted, and they should take the initiative to call the course provider themselves as soon as possible.

3. Monitor Clearing Contacts

Once a student has their exam results, they can contact their chosen universities about vacancies. Phone numbers for Clearing will be available via the UCAS Search Tool, and on universities' websites if they have spaces.

4. Make Phone Calls

The best way to find out if a university can make an offer through Clearing is to give them a phone call using the number found on the UCAS Search Tool, or on the university's website. There are a few things applicants should prepare and have handy ahead of making these calls:

- Applicants should have their UCAS ID number, and their results ready
- Applicants should prepare any questions they have about the process, such as how to secure accommodation, or details of any key dates that they need to make decisions by

The Clearing adviser on the phone will be following a process, with every intention of helping the applicant find a place. They will begin by introducing themselves and asking for the applicant's UCAS ID number, before running through some data security questions to ensure they retrieve the correct records for the applicant. They will then guide the applicant through the call, prompting them for the required information such as results and which course they are interested in, at the appropriate time.

When speaking on the phone, the applicant should be polite, speak clearly, and be prepared with any information they think they may need to share.

There are three possible outcomes of a Clearing phone call:

- An offer may be made
- An interview may be offered
- No offer or interview is given

Let's look at these individually.



Verbal offer made over the phone

If the applicant meets the criteria set by that university for the course they're wishing to apply for, the Clearing adviser may give them a verbal offer over the phone. They will then take some further details from the applicant to ensure that the written offer which follows this can reach them. On the right is an example of a written offer from UEA.

This contains the course title and code, the offer validity date and time, and the next steps to be taken. It will be followed by further terms and conditions of the offer, fee information, DBS/Occupational Health information (if applicable), details of accommodation, and information about visiting UEA's campus ahead of accepting the offer.

When an offer is made, it will only be valid for a specified period of time (usually 24 to 48 hours). This can sometimes be extended to allow time for a campus visit, or to allow applicants to properly consider all of their options.

The email may also ask for some further information or evidence, so it is important that applicants read all information thoroughly.



Your UEA Clearing Offer



Hello Lucy

UEA Clearing Ref: CLR000314539

Thank you for your enquiry regarding Psychology (C800) through Clearing at the University of East Anglia (UEA).

We are pleased to offer you a place on this course beginning in the academic year 2026-7 and **we will reserve your place until 15-Aug-2026 16:00**. Your offer will expire after this time and date.

This offer is subject to us verifying your qualifications and eligibility for the course including meeting any visa or English Language requirements and any requirements set by the accrediting bodies. If we need further information to do this we will contact you again in due course. We reserve the right to withdraw offers where we are unable to verify your qualifications or eligibility.

Your Next Steps:

1. You will need to submit a Clearing application through **UCAS HUB** to University of East Anglia (E14) by the deadline above. Once we have received your UCAS Application, we will formally confirm our offer. This written offer is subject to us verifying your declared grades.
2. You also have up to **four** days to complete the accommodation preference form to guarantee your room.
3. If you have a problem in keeping to these deadlines, please **contact us** immediately. We will try to offer some flexibility where we can, but places are subject to availability.
4. We are offering various **campus visits** so you can get a feel for what it's like to be a student here.
5. Finally, after your place is confirmed, we will be back in touch with details about starting your new adventure at UEA. We look forward to welcoming you.

An interview is offered over the phone

Some courses may require an interview. This is usually conducted by an academic, and might be completed over the telephone, online, or the applicant might be invited to a campus interview at a later date. The applicant should have a pen handy to note any deadlines or other information they may be given. After their interview has taken place, they will either receive an offer as above or may be unsuccessful in securing a place on the course.

No offer or interview is given

Whilst universities do not publicise their grade requirements for Clearing vacancies, there are baseline requirements and these are firm. If the applicant does not meet these requirements, an offer or interview cannot be given. At this stage, the applicant should consider their other options.

5. The Consideration Stage

Applicants can call as many universities as they would like, and receive as many verbal and written offers as they wish to. However, they may only input one of these as a Clearing choice on their UCAS Hub when this becomes available, and they must do this by any deadline attached to the offer given by the university.

To help applicants at this stage, many universities will offer Clearing campus tours, giving offer-holders a chance to visit the university and speak to current students.



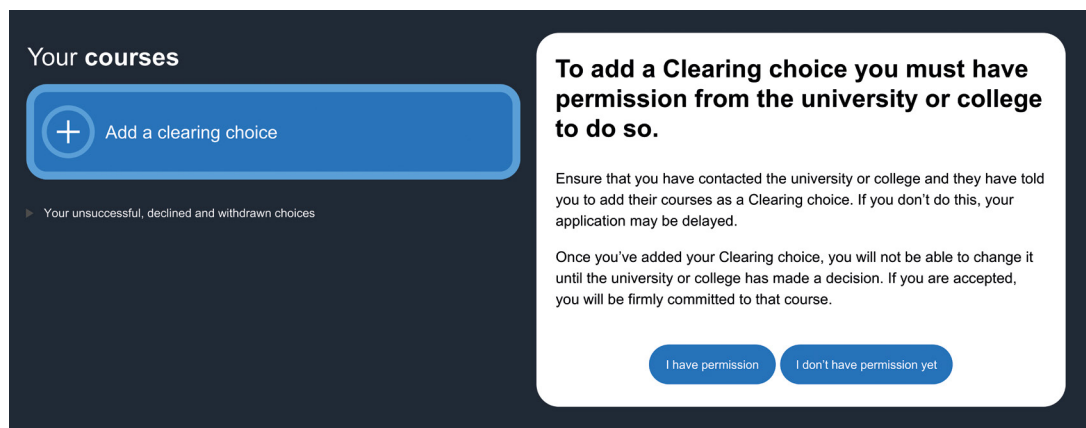
6. Adding Clearing Choices to UCAS

If an applicant receives an offer from a university, they can add the Clearing choice on UCAS when this becomes available (usually 1pm on Level 3 Results Day, 10am on SQA Results Day). Applicants should only enter a Clearing choice if they've been advised to do so by the university or college (that is if they've been given an offer).

A Clearing choice should not be added on UCAS without the applicant first contacting the university or college and receiving an offer.

Here is what applicants will see when adding a Clearing choice to UCAS:

Step 1 -



The screenshot shows a dark-themed interface for adding a Clearing choice. On the left, under the heading "Your courses", there is a blue button with a white plus sign and the text "Add a clearing choice". Below this button is a link that says "Your unsuccessful, declined and withdrawn choices". On the right, a white box contains the following text: "To add a Clearing choice you must have permission from the university or college to do so." Below this is a paragraph: "Ensure that you have contacted the university or college and they have told you to add their courses as a Clearing choice. If you don't do this, your application may be delayed." Another paragraph follows: "Once you've added your Clearing choice, you will not be able to change it until the university or college has made a decision. If you are accepted, you will be firmly committed to that course." At the bottom of the white box are two blue buttons: "I have permission" and "I don't have permission yet".



Step 2 -

Enter course details by the deadline provided by the university or college.

Sometimes the university or college will provide a specific course code to enter at this stage, for courses where vacancies are limited and fill quickly.

Enter course details

University / college name *

Course *

Course code: G100
 Course details: Ordinary degree

Location *

Start date *

Point of entry *
This tells the universities and colleges which year of the course you want to start, e.g. point of entry one is the first year of the course. If you wish to start in the first year of the course leave the box blank and you will automatically be considered for the first year. Enter 0 if you intend to take a foundation year – not all universities offer a foundation year so please check before applying. If you've spoken to your chosen university or college and they are willing to consider your application to start the course after the first year, please enter the relevant number for the year, e.g. second year = 2, third year = 3, etc.

Live at home while studying? *
 Yes No

Further details
You only need to provide information here if your chosen university or college has asked you to.

[Add choice](#) [Cancel and return to application](#)

Step 3 -

Wait for confirmation.

Your choices

Clearing choice – Waiting for confirmation

Course Title (c0d3)
 University of East Anglia (E14)

Location: Main Site
Start date: 14 September 2026
Point of entry: 1st year
Deferred entry: No
Live at home while studying: Yes

WAITING FOR CONFIRMATION

Clearing choice

Waiting for the Provider to confirm your place in Clearing

The “waiting for confirmation” message sometimes stays present for a few hours. University systems and UCAS systems only synchronise data at certain times throughout the day, which can cause a delay in what’s shown on UCAS Hub.

7. Decisions Displayed on UCAS

Once an applicant has added their Clearing choice on UCAS, the university will check all the information is correct and formally offer a place. This can be viewed via the UCAS Hub. Applicants can view and print their acceptance letter, which is a handy document to have when opening a student bank account.

The screenshot displays a notification titled "Your choices" with a sub-header "Clearing choice – Offer received". The main content is a card for a course at the University of East Anglia (E14). The card lists the following details:

- Course Title (c0d3):** University of East Anglia (E14)
- Location:** Main Site
- Start date:** 14 September 2026
- Point of entry:** 1st year
- Deferred entry:** No
- Live at home while studying:** Yes

To the right of these details is a green confirmation box with a checkmark icon and the text "CONFIRMED". Below this, it states "Your place has been confirmed" and "Congratulations! Your place at University of East Anglia to study COURSE is now confirmed." A blue link "Decline my place" is also visible.

If the university cannot offer the applicant a place, they can still contact other Higher Education providers to see whether there are other vacancies of interest.

Next Steps

After an applicant has a place on a course confirmed, they should think about accommodation and funding.

With regards to accommodation, the university they have accepted a place at should hopefully have provided some information already on availability and next steps for securing accommodation. If they have not had any information on this or they have been made aware that there is no accommodation available, they should get in contact with the university to find out what their options are.

With regards to finance, applicants should ensure their student finance application is up-to-date with the most recent details. If they have already applied for student finance, they will need to make sure the details of living situation, university, and course details are all up-to-date. The student finance application is not linked to UCAS, so the applicant needs to make sure they make student finance aware of any and all changes.

If the applicant has not applied for student finance yet, they should do so as soon as possible. It's easy to apply and only takes around 30 minutes.

Making changes to the student finance application is quick and easy. The most-up-to-date information for applicants in Clearing is available on the [**GOV.UK website**](https://www.gov.uk).



**Clearing student
finance**



Decline my Place

From the day that Clearing opens, anyone with an unconditional firm offer will see a "decline my place" button, which they should use only if they no longer want to take up their place at that university or college. Doing so will decline their place and cancel their contract with the university or college, including any accommodation or scholarships. Applicants should secure a new place before declining their current one if they still wish to attend university or college, as the decision of declining a place is irreversible. Their UCAS application does not need to be in Clearing to obtain verbal offers from universities. To confirm the decision, students must type "decline" where prompted. This option will be available until sometime in September. After this date, applicants need to contact the university or college directly if they wish to decline their place.

Applicants must understand that declining their place will put them in Clearing. It may not always be the best option to decline, as there may be alternatives available.

Applicants should never feel pressured to decline. If they are uncertain, they should contact UCAS to discuss their options.

Swapping between firm and insurance choices is not possible. If an applicant meets the conditions of their firm choice offer but decides they want to take up their insurance choice offer instead, they must seek to obtain a place through Clearing. They should first contact their insurance choice to confirm acceptance before declining their firm place, to ensure they are not left without either option.

Providing Support with Clearing

So, how can you help an applicant build a strong Clearing application?

Encourage them to prepare application materials in advance, including relevant supporting documents, and reliable references. If the applicant you are supporting has previously applied through UCAS, then they will already have a personal statement, but if they haven't and would now like to apply through Clearing, they will need to write a personal statement for their application. We've created an interactive workbook to help applicants write a **standout personal statement**.



**UEA personal
statement workbook**



By submitting their Clearing application as early as possible, applicants will increase their chances of securing a place on their preferred course. This will also give them time to consider alternative options and make a backup plan if there are no places on the course they are interested in.



Frequently Asked Questions

How can an applicant tell if they're in Clearing?

An applicant is in Clearing if their UCAS Hub shows "Your application is in Clearing" or "Clearing has started". This means that they don't have any offers, have declined their offers, or didn't meet the conditions of their firm or insurance offers.

Can applicants use Clearing if they didn't apply earlier in the year?

Yes - it is possible to create an application after Clearing has started. The applicant will need to pay the UCAS application fee (unless they qualify for a fee waiver), and submit their application without any choices. They will then be able to add their Clearing choice after having received any offers through Clearing from universities or colleges. This is sometimes called a "direct to Clearing" application.

Who can write an applicant's reference if they are not at sixth form/college?

Anyone who knows the applicant in a professional or academic capacity can write their reference for UCAS. This could be an ex-teacher they still have contact with, or a manager from a current or recent job. The applicant's reference cannot be written by a family member or friend. The most up-to-date information on writing independent references is available on the [UCAS website](#).



**UCAS references for
independent applicants**



Do applicants still have to write a personal statement if they apply direct to Clearing?

Yes - all sections of the UCAS application, including a personal statement and reference, should be completed.

Can students apply for multiple courses during Clearing?

Yes - applicants can call as many universities or colleges as they please and may receive multiple verbal or written offers. They can only add one Clearing choice at a time on their UCAS Hub though.

Can applicants apply for a completely different course through Clearing?

Yes - entering Clearing is a great time for an applicant to re-evaluate their course choice. Many students use this time to reconsider the options available to them, and to rethink their final decision. If they decide to apply for a completely different course or subject area, they may be asked to provide a new personal statement.

Can applicants use Clearing before Results Day?

Yes - Clearing opens around the start of July, and applicants can explore vacancies at universities and colleges from this point. In order to receive a Clearing offer from a university or college, the applicant must have their Level 3 results confirmed, as there is no conditional offer through Clearing – only unconditional offers can be given. This is why most activity happens on Results Day.

What time does Clearing open on Results Day?

Clearing call centres will typically open at 8am (UK time) on Level 3 Results Day. Popular courses generally fill up quickly, so applicants should aim to get on the phone as soon as possible. It's important to act quickly, but also to take the time to make the right decision.

Can applicants use Clearing to *upgrade* their university or college choice?

Absolutely - if an applicant gets their grades back and they have done better than expected, they may want to shop around to get a place at a different university or on a different course. They can do this by choosing "decline my place" under their unconditional firm offer on UCAS Hub, and lots of universities and colleges will have places available through Clearing. If the applicant meets the course requirements through Clearing, they may be able to secure an offer - even if the entry requirements are higher than those of their original firm choice. They should speak to the university or college they are interested in before declining their firm place to confirm an offer can be made, as declining their place is irreversible.

Will an applicant's insurance choice keep their place for them, even if they get accepted to their firm choice?

No - if an applicant meets the requirements of their firm choice, their insurance choice will be automatically declined. If they wish to decline their place at their firm choice, they can use the "decline my place" button to be released into Clearing, where they may be able to obtain a Clearing offer from their insurance choice. They should speak to their insurance choice university or college before declining their firm place to make sure it is what they definitely want to do, as the decision of declining a place is irreversible.

What do universities and colleges ask on a Clearing phone call?

The Clearing adviser will guide the applicant through the process. They will begin by introducing themselves and asking for the applicant's UCAS ID number, before running through some data security questions to ensure they retrieve the correct records for the applicant.

They will then guide the applicant through the call, prompting them for the required information such as their results, including some GCSE grades, and which course they are interested in.

After an offer is made, an academic will usually call the applicant; this is when they will be asked more about their interest in studying their chosen course.



Can I speak on behalf of an applicant during a Clearing phone call?

The applicant must be present for the call to verify their identity. Once they have been verified, they can pass the phone to a trusted person (for example, a parent, carer, teacher, or adviser) to support with the process.

Is a verbal offer a guaranteed place on the course?

Not officially. The verbal offer is informal, and it becomes official only when the applicant adds the course to UCAS Hub and the university confirms it. Following the verbal offer, the applicant should receive a written offer in an email, which is the formal contractual offer. This email will state a deadline for the applicant to add the course as their Clearing choice on UCAS Hub.

How long are Clearing offers valid for?

Each university and college sets their own time limit, and some offers may last longer than others. Applicants will be told how long their offer is valid, and this is usually 24 or 48 hours. The deadline will be confirmed during the call and by email to ensure they do not miss it.

What if an applicant needs more time to make a decision on a Clearing offer?

Universities and colleges can apply extensions to Clearing offers but the way this works will vary between institutions. Applicants should read their offer email carefully and give the university or college a call if they are still unsure.

What happens if the applicant is appealing a grade?

If an applicant chooses to appeal a grade, they will need to do so straight away on Results Day, and the school or college should support with this. The applicant should also let their firm choice know as soon as possible. Whilst it is not guaranteed, the university or college may be able to hold their place. If this is not possible, the applicant unfortunately has no way of getting this offer back but they can still apply through Clearing, even to their original firm choice, when their updated grade comes back.

Can applicants defer their place in Clearing?

No - applicants can only get offers for places on courses starting this year through Clearing. If an applicant already has an unconditional firm offer from a university, they can ask the university to defer, but there is no guarantee that the university will agree to this. If an applicant applied for a deferred place but wants to take it up this year, they can explore vacancies through Clearing.

Course Change Offers - can applicants switch back to their original course choice?

Sometimes, applicants may be given an offer on a course which is different to the one they applied for - for example, a university may offer a Foundation Year. Applicants can choose to accept or decline a changed course offer from their firm choice even if their insurance choice hasn't made a decision on their application. If they accept, they will be placed at their firm choice on the new course; if they decline, they will be placed at their insurance choice if they meet their conditions. If their insurance choice has not accepted them, they will be placed into Clearing.



Can an applicant enter Clearing if their offer is still conditional?

If an applicant has their results confirmed but their offer is still conditional when the option to add a Clearing choice on UCAS Hub becomes available (usually from 1pm on Level 3 Results Day), they may call the university or college to decline their conditional offer and be released into Clearing. It is likely that they will be asked to put this request in writing via email. This applies for students still awaiting GCSE results too, as these are typically released the week after Level 3 Results Day.

Does going through Clearing mean failure?

Absolutely not. Going through Clearing is a common experience, with 77,110 students securing their place through UCAS Clearing in 2025. Students who join through Clearing have the same opportunities and experience as everyone else at university.

What happens with accommodation and student finance when an applicant goes through Clearing?

Once an applicant secures their place at a university or college, they should log into their student finance portal and update the details of their living situation, university, and course details as soon as possible to ensure payments are received on time.

Most universities still offer some kind of accommodation guarantee even for applicants through Clearing, although they may have limited options. Applicants should ask their chosen institution what accommodation choices they have available and take advantage of Clearing tours at their new campus.

What happens if an applicant doesn't find a Clearing place?

Applicants may consider alternate pathways such as employment or apprenticeships, or they could take a gap year and reapply next year with a stronger application after gaining new skills and experience. Applicants can also contact UCAS for advice.



