



# Access UCL

**UCL'S Contextual Offer Scheme**  
Frequently Asked Questions

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# Contents

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## Eligibility 4

How do I find out if my school and postcode make me eligible for Access UCL? .....	5	I am care experienced/young carer/estranged from my family am I eligible for a reduced offer? .....	6
I have been to one of UCL's other WP programmes but I am not eligible for Access UCL; why not? .....	5	I did my A Levels over 2 years ago, can I be eligible for Access UCL? .....	7
I am at a private school on a bursary/scholarship, can I be eligible for Access UCL? .....	5	Why isn't my school eligible? .....	7
I am taking a gap year, am I still eligible for Access UCL? .....	5	I live in Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland, will this affect my eligibility? .....	7
I am doing a BTEC/Access course/alternative qualification, am I eligible? .....	5	I do not meet the standard eligibility requirements, but I believe I have other significant extenuating circumstances. Might I be eligible for Access UCL? .....	7
I am part of Realising Opportunities, can I also do Access UCL? .....	5	I have received contextual offers from other universities' schemes, will that mean I am also eligible for Access UCL? .....	7
I am currently studying at another university, can I apply to Access UCL? .....	5	I've received an email saying I am eligible or Access UCL, is this an offer from the university? .....	7
I am a mature student, am I eligible? .....	5		

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## Process 8

How do I apply for Access UCL? .....	8
If I receive a reduced offer through Access UCL can I defer my entry? .....	8
If I put UCL as my insurance choice can I still have a reduced offer? .....	8
When will I hear back about my application? ..	8
Will completing the Access UCL scheme delay the start of my chosen programme at UCL? ...	8

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## The PAS Module 9

What does the Preparation for Academic Study (PAS) module consist of? .....	9
Do I have to do the PAS module? .....	9
Is it possible to fail the online Preparation for Academic Study module? .....	9
I also have coursework and exams to complete; will Access UCL get in the way? .....	9

<b>General</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>UCAS and Admissions</b>	<b>11</b>
I want to study History at UCL, will this affect whether I am eligible for Access UCL?.....	10	What are the reduced Access UCL entry requirements for the programme I am applying for?.....	11
Is this the first scheme of its kind? .....	10	If I do better than my predicted grades can I still go into Adjustment? .....	11
Is there a limit to how many reduced offers UCL will give out? .....	10	If I don't meet the conditions for my Access UCL offer can I still go into Clearing? .....	11
Will my future department know that I have been admitted to UCL with a reduced offer? ..	10	Do other universities see that I have been accepted on to the Access UCL scheme?....	11
Why have UCL decided to do this scheme? .	10	Can I be on an access scheme for more than one university?.....	11
Will there be ongoing support for students once they are accepted and join UCL? .....	10	What if I don't meet the conditions of my Access UCL offer?.....	11
Will there be ongoing research of Access UCL students? If so, what? .....	10		



# Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the Access UCL scheme you must meet **two** of the following criteria:

 **Attend/have attended a low-performing school for GCSE or A Level**

This means your school falls into the lower 50% of schools in the UK for average GCSE achievement and/or average A Level point score.

 **Live in an area which has a high level of financial, social or economic deprivation as measured by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data**

We use Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data to identify levels of financial, social or economic deprivation, as defined by home postcode at:

 [gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019)

 **Live in a neighbourhood which has a low progression rate to higher education as identified by POLAR data**

We use POLAR classification to look at how likely young people are to participate in HE across the UK, as defined by home postcode at:

 [officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/)

In order to provide a reliable indicator of disadvantage and low progression to HE, IMD data and POLAR4 Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) data are used.

POLAR4 data assigns all electoral wards into quintiles based on progression to HE. Those wards in the lowest quintile according to HE progression are classified as Low Participation Neighbourhoods.

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## How do I find out if my school and postcode make me eligible for Access UCL?

We have an online checking tool for eligibility. You can find this on the following page of the UCL website:

 [ucl.ac.uk/wp/access-ucl](https://ucl.ac.uk/wp/access-ucl)

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## I have been to one of UCL's other WP programmes but I am not eligible for Access UCL; why not?

Access UCL is a UCL-wide scheme and so is separate from the individual schemes that we run out of the Access and Widening Participation Office. We use information (postcode and school data) that can be taken from the UCAS application without verification, once the scheme has been established we may consider other eligibility criteria such as participation in one of our other schemes.

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## I am at a private school on a bursary/scholarship, can I be eligible for Access UCL?

Unfortunately, if you are attending a fee-paying school, albeit through the means of a bursary, you will not be eligible for a contextual offer at UCL. Students and applicants from fee-paying schools are not eligible for any of UCL's widening participation initiatives.

The only exception to this is if you are a care leaver, estranged student, or young carer. These applicants will be considered on an individual basis.

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## I am taking a gap year, am I still eligible for Access UCL?

Yes, deferred entry and applications after you've completed your A Levels are accepted.

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## I am doing a BTEC/Access course/alternative qualification, am I eligible?

Non-standard qualifications will be considered on an individual basis, please contact us at [wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk) with details of your qualifications for consideration.

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## I am part of Realising Opportunities, can I also do Access UCL?

If you are eligible for both Realising Opportunities and Access UCL, you can take part in either or both schemes. Access UCL and Realising Opportunities at have the same reduced offers at UCL.

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## I am currently studying at another university, can I apply to Access UCL?

If you have studied at university for one year or less, you may be eligible for Access UCL. If you have completed a full undergraduate degree you will not be eligible.

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## I am a mature student, am I eligible?

We welcome applications from mature applicants and you may be eligible for Access UCL, but your eligibility will be considered on an individual basis. Please contact us at [wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk) with a list of your qualifications, the dates you took them, your current home postcode, a list of the schools you have attended and the home postcodes you lived at whilst attending these schools.



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## **I am care experienced/young carer/estranged from my family am I eligible for a reduced offer?**

If you are care experienced/a young carer/estranged from your family you will be automatically eligible for Access UCL provided you are studying/studied your A Levels (or equivalent) at a UK state school.

UCL defines a care leaver as a person aged 25 or under who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 3 months at any time in their life. The weeks do not have to be consecutive. If you declare on your UCAS form that you are a care leaver our admissions department will contact you to verify this. Verification should come from the local authority or a social worker.

UCL's definition of a young adult carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member who could not manage without this help. This usually means looking after a parent or caring for a brother or sister. To be eligible for Access UCL, young adult carers must be aged 20 or under on their first day of study at UCL.

Estrangement means you no longer have the support of your family due to a breakdown in your relationship(s) which has led to ceased contact. This might mean your biological, step or adoptive parents, or wider family members who have been responsible for supporting you in the past. This means that you no longer have contact with/do not live with your parents. This does not include single-parent families, as you are still in contact with one parent. Estranged students who are eligible for Access UCL must be aged 25 or under on their first day of study at UCL.

Estranged and young carer students will need to have their status verified. They are required to write a personal statement about their situation and provide verification from a third party.

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## I did my A Levels over 2 years ago, can I be eligible for Access UCL?

Please see the answer on **page 5** to the question ‘I am a mature student, am I eligible?’

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## Why isn't my school eligible?

We take the lower 50% of schools in the UK (from the Department for Education) for average GCSE achievement and/or average A Level point score. Unfortunately, if your school does not fall into this group it will not be included.

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## I live in Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland, will this affect my eligibility?

No, we use the relevant data for all four nations of the UK.

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## I do not meet the standard eligibility requirements, but I believe I have other significant extenuating circumstances. Might I be eligible for Access UCL?

The eligibility requirements for Access UCL are only those as outlined above. UCL usually expects any significant extenuating circumstances to be declared to the exam boards when you take your qualifications, and they will then take this into account when awarding you your grades. It is therefore usually unnecessary to make any additional adjustment to an offer UCL may make to you.

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## I have received contextual offers from other universities' schemes, will that mean I am also eligible for Access UCL?

Not necessarily. Other universities may use different datasets and eligibility criteria for their contextual offer schemes, even if the wording sounds very similar. You may well be eligible for contextual offer schemes at other universities and still not be eligible for Access UCL. Eligibility for one university's scheme does not guarantee your eligibility for any other university's scheme.

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## I've received an email saying I am eligible for Access UCL, is this an offer from the university?

No, Access UCL is not an automatic offer scheme, it means that you are eligible for consideration of a reduced offer. You must still apply via the normal UCAS system, and your application will still be assessed against the same admissions criteria for reference, personal statement etc. You must still complete the Preparation for Academic Study (PAS) module to take advantage of your reduced offer.



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# Process

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## How do I apply for Access UCL?

You do not need to do anything other than apply to UCL via UCAS. If you are eligible for Access UCL your application will be automatically flagged using data contained in your UCAS application.

If you are care experienced, a young carer or estranged from your family you will need to verify your status and eligibility by emailing [wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk)

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## If I receive a reduced offer through Access UCL can I defer my entry?

Yes, your deferral request will be considered in line with UCL policy. It will be sent to the Admissions Tutor for your programme for consideration, as is standard for all offer holders requesting a deferral.

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## If I put UCL as my insurance choice can I still have a reduced offer?

Yes, you do not need to select UCL as your firm choice to take advantage of your contextual offer.

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## When will I hear back about my application?

You will hear back within the usual timeframes of the UCAS cycle and by the standard UCL admissions deadlines.

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## Will completing the Access UCL scheme delay the start of my chosen programme at UCL?

No, the scheme, including the Preparation for Academic Study module, is all due to take place between you applying to UCL and receiving your results in the summer following your application. You will be starting at UCL alongside all other successful applicants.



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# The PAS Module

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## What does the Preparation for Academic Study (PAS) module consist of?

The Preparation for Academic Study (PAS) module is on UCL eXtend, an online virtual learning environment. The module is not assessed, although you must complete it in order to be eligible to use your Access UCL offer. The course will take approximately four hours and can be completed in stages over a period of time.

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## Do I have to do the PAS module?

Yes, the Preparation for Academic Study module is a compulsory part of Access UCL. It must be completed in order for you to be accepted to UCL with a contextual offer. The PAS module is not assessed, but you must complete the module and the feedback questionnaire in order to access the contextual offer.

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## Is it possible to fail the online Preparation for Academic Study module?

No, the study skills module is not assessed. In order to access the lower offer you must complete the module by working through each section and the feedback questionnaire, but you will not be graded.

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## I also have coursework and exams to complete; will Access UCL get in the way?

No. We set deadlines to fit around your other studies, and the programme should not cause you additional stress. As a prospective university student, you are expected to manage your time effectively, as this is an essential skill for university study. The module is designed so that you can complete it as and when is convenient for you.



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# General

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## I want to study History at UCL, will this affect whether I am eligible for Access UCL?

For our undergraduate History programmes we run a slightly different scheme, called Access UCL (History). For more details about the History scheme, please see the following page of our website:

➤ [ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/application/entry-requirements/access-ucl-contextual-offers/access-ucl-history-scheme](https://ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/application/entry-requirements/access-ucl-contextual-offers/access-ucl-history-scheme)

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## Is this the first scheme of its kind?

No, our Provost, Michael Arthur, was previously in post at the University of Leeds where he introduced a similar scheme which has been running successfully for a number of years now. There are a number of universities in the UK with similar schemes, and even more that are using contextual data in their admissions processes one way or another.

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## Is there a limit to how many reduced offers UCL will give out?

No. There is obviously a limit to the total numbers of offers UCL can make, but the Access UCL offers will not be considered separately to these.

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## Will my future department know that I have been admitted to UCL with a reduced offer?

Yes, we believe it is important that once you arrive at UCL you are given the right support by your department.

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## Why have UCL decided to do this scheme?

We are introducing the contextual offer scheme as part of our commitment to increasing participation of underrepresented groups at UCL.

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## Will there be ongoing support for students once they are accepted and join UCL?

There won't be specific support aimed at Access UCL students. All first year students have access to the UCL Transition scheme, where they are assigned a mentor from the second or third year of their programme. All undergraduate students are also given a personal tutor who they will meet with regularly and who can offer both academic and pastoral support. As well as this, support at the undergraduate level is provided by The Student Centre, Library Services, Disability Services, Student Support and Wellbeing and UCL Careers.

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## Will there be ongoing research of Access UCL students? If so, what?

Yes, we will be tracking and evaluating all aspects of the scheme including eligibility criteria, effectivity of the PAS module, retention and progression rates and achievement up to graduation.

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# UCAS and Admissions

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## What are the reduced Access UCL entry requirements for the programme I am applying for?

The usual Access UCL offer is two A Level grades below the standard offer for that programme. You can check both the standard offers and usual contextual offers for each of UCL's degree programmes in the online prospectus:

▶ [ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/degrees](https://ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate/degrees)

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## If I do better than my predicted grades can I still go into Adjustment?

All of the ordinary UCAS procedures such as Adjustment will be available to you as usual, the only difference will be that you will receive a dual offer from UCL: one reduced offer and the standard UCL offer for the programme you have applied to.

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## If I don't meet the conditions for my Access UCL offer can I still go into Clearing?

All of the ordinary UCAS procedures such as Clearing will be available to you as usual, the only difference will be that you will receive a dual offer from UCL: one reduced offer and the standard UCL offer for the programme you have applied to.

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## Do other universities see that I have been accepted on to the Access UCL scheme?

No, this information will not be visible on UCAS track for other institutions to see.

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## Can I be on an access scheme for more than one university?

Yes, it is possible that you will also be eligible for other universities' access schemes and your participation in these will not affect Access UCL.

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## What if I don't meet the conditions of my Access UCL offer?

All candidates who do not meet the conditions of their offer are considered on a case by case basis on A Level results day. If, however, a candidate achieves a C grade in one of their A Levels they will not be admitted to UCL as this is below the UCL benchmark of BBB.

## UCL Access and Widening Participation

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