



Learning in England ∞ Clearing

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UCAS - the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is the organisation that deals with all applications to British Universities.

Most applicants will be A level pupils. Generally speaking, they apply, to study or 'read' one subject, to five different universities. [See our Information Document on Applying to University for more detail]. Within the application there will be predictions of grades made by their schools. Their applications must be uploaded to the UCAS website by 15 January in the calendar year in which they want to start studying. The academic year begins in late September. They may apply for University degree courses or apprenticeships. [UCAS also deals with applications for graduate degrees.]

An offer will follow. In most cases offers are conditional on achieving the predicted grades or even better. The pupil must provisionally accept two offers with one in priority over the other: a Firm Choice and an Insurance Choice.

A Level results come out in mid-August. If a pupil does not achieve the grades on which the chosen offers were made, then the offers may be withdrawn. The pupil can still try and find a place, through the UCAS Clearing Process.

Amazingly, over 60,000 places were allocated in this way in the summer holidays before the new academic year began, in 2019. There are many reasons why places on courses become available, quite apart from applicants not achieving the grades required. It provides a built-in flexibility to enable people to find a place to study, even at the last minute.

UCAS runs the Process online, which is user-friendly. Nonetheless, we can support you in the Clearing Process, if that is so required.



“On A Level results day two years ago, I missed my grades to get into my firm choice university. I decided to apply to university through clearing and I was offered a place at Sheffield Hallam to study English Language! I genuinely wouldn’t have wanted to be anywhere else.

On the morning of results day, I was really upset, and even made my Mum phone up for clearing, but the university asked to speak to me, and they reassured me and made me feel at ease. Applying through clearing was actually super easy; everyone was really helpful and made the whole process much less daunting.”¹

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Our son didn’t get his grades, so neither his Firm Choice or his Insurance Choice universities will take him. Is Clearing the only option or can he do anything else?

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There are quite a few possibilities here: He can

- > look for a place through Clearing. This is demonstrably popular and successful.
- > take a Gap Year [See our Information Document: What is a Gap Year?]. It may be that he wants to resit his A Levels so he can get better grades and apply to the same places again, if he has set his heart on that University and that course.
- > apply to UCAS again may be even in a different subject and different universities and take advantage of the opportunity of a Gap Year. This needs careful thought. The UCAS website has some very helpful guidelines to help with this decision. Paths to Learning can also help with the wide range of possibilities to consider.
- > take a completely different route and look for an Apprenticeship.

Contact us at Paths to Learning by emailing felicitygunn@hotmail.com

¹ Ellie: <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=4877654>
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