

**Next Steps  
South West**



# 2020 **Parent & Carer** Clearing Handbook

**"Over 55,000 students secured a university or college place through Clearing in 2019" – UCAS**



# Hello there!

So, your child is ready to progress onto higher education...but they haven't received the grades they hoped for, or perhaps their plans have changed?

They're not alone, and they still have options. In fact, last year, more than one in ten university students were accepted through Clearing.



This handy booklet was designed to help you make sense of the Clearing process.

Clearing is a chance for your child to find a study programme at the same institutions they originally applied to, or somewhere new. Clearing can also be an option if they're a school leaver whose original plans have been cancelled, due to circumstances like the Covid-19 Pandemic.

# What is Clearing?

Clearing is the process universities carry out over summer to match vacant spaces on their study programmes with students seeking a place.

It takes place between July and September, with most vacancies published by UCAS around A-level results day. However, if your child has already received Highers, BTEC or IB results you might be able to get a head start, as some vacancies are published early.

## Your child is eligible to enter Clearing if:

**They're applying after 30<sup>th</sup> June.**

**They haven't met the conditions of their offers and so haven't been offered any places.**

**They haven't been made any offers at all (or none they wanted to accept) and didn't go through UCAS Extra.**

**They've declined their offers and want to go somewhere else.**

# What is Clearing Plus?

## New for 2020!

If your child finds themselves in Clearing this year, UCAS will match them to courses they may be interested in, using what they know about them from their application, and what universities and colleges are looking for in a student.

If they're unplaced or have started a new application, a button will appear in Track - My matches. This will take them to their top 50 course matches. They'll then be able to tell universities and colleges they're 'interested' in their courses. If there are still vacancies and they meet their entry requirements, they may call them.

Don't worry, if they want to apply for something different they can still find courses available in Clearing using the UCAS search tool.



**"Clearing gives you the ability to re-evaluate your options and you can find yourself going to a better university or doing a course you're more suited to that you didn't know existed!"**

Ella, BA (Hons) History with English

Becoming a Clearing candidate might feel like a compromise for your child at first, but once they start exploring the vacancies available they'll realise there are plenty of unique and exciting courses still open to them.

Follow these steps, so your child can create their new shortlist:

- 1 If they applied before the 30th June, they need to check their UCAS application, are any of their original selection going into Clearing? If they are applying after the 30th June, they will be fast-tracked directly into Clearing.
- 2 If not, look on the UCAS website for vacancies at any of their preferred universities/colleges. There is no need to buy any of the newspapers that print this information.
- 3 Search the course title they originally applied for (or would like to apply for) and see which universities/colleges are still recruiting for a similar study programme or a programme that interests them.
- 4 Check their Clearing Plus matches in Track - 'My Matches'. This will take them to their top 50 course matches.
- 5 Once they've narrowed their search to 5-10 courses, check out each institution's website and social media to get a feel for life on campus. Most universities also provide a virtual tour.
- 6 Build an honest picture of what it's like to study on each course, and compare the pros and cons. They'll find helpful information on websites such as Which?, The Student Room, and What Uni?
- 7 Seal the deal! Once they've made their decision, it's time to pick up the phone.

# It's their call

To make an application through Clearing your child may have to make a telephone call. Not everyone feels confident picking up the phone, but some simple preparation will make sure their conversation runs smoothly.

Most universities and colleges have a dedicated hotline number for them to call, with a team of friendly advisers waiting to hear from them. Phone calls may range from quick checks of their A-level results to in-depth interviews checking their suitability for the course.

**Follow the checklist opposite,  
so your child can make the  
right impression!**



## Before calling

1. They need their UCAS Clearing number and A-level / BTEC / IB results to hand.
2. Note down each university/college's name and phone number.
3. Find the course code, name and details of the course they're enquiring about.
4. It's good for them to re-read their personal statement and have a copy nearby to refer to when questioned.
5. They should make some notes on why each course appeals to them, why they deserve the place, and any questions they have.
6. They should keep a pen and paper ready to note down the course code if they accept them.
7. They need to make sure their phone is charged and they have good signal in a quiet place where they won't be disturbed.

## On the phone

1. They should be patient – they may not get through to an adviser straight away as there are many young people in the same position as them.
2. They should manage their time – if they tried the same number a few times and can't get through, move onto the next one and try again later.
3. They should take down the name, email and telephone of whoever they speak to, just in case they get cut off or need to get back in touch.
4. They need to sell themselves and ask as many questions as they need to – this is their moment to shine.
5. If an offer is made over the phone then they need to remember to write down the code they are given.
6. If they don't make your child an offer, they should move onto their next phone call.

## After calling

1. Whether they accept one verbal offer or multiple offers over the phone, they may only enter one code into UCAS Track.
2. They need to login to their account at **track.ucas.com** and click "Add Clearing Choice" to confirm their decision.
3. They did it! They need to look out for a confirmation letter from the university and remember to update their student finance and accommodation applications.



## Is Higher Education a good choice for my child?

Graduates are still likely to earn more than non-graduates even if they have non-graduate jobs. The benefits of a degree are also more than just the salary obtained, and include better chances of promotion, increased opportunities to adapt in the ever-changing work environment, and higher levels of job satisfaction. Vocational degrees lead to clear career paths, but research from the Office for National Statistics also shows that students feel they are utilising what they learnt in their studies in their current role, regardless of subject. Going to university is a highly worthwhile investment.

### How much money will university cost me?

Whilst there is no legal obligation for you to financially support your child at uni, the reality is that parents often contribute. The majority of students in England fund their tuition fees and living costs using the means-tested student loans system.

There are also many other ways to finance being a student, including taking a part-time job, and ways to reduce costs, such as accommodation alternatives to student halls or 2-year fast track degree programmes. If your child is able to live at home whilst studying, there are excellent local HE options.

Repayments are not linked to how much a student borrowed; they are based on how much they earn and repayments are automatically deducted from a person's pay. After 30 years, whatever amount is outstanding is written off.

Check out our Student Finance page for further information: <https://nextstepssw.ac.uk/a-guide-to-student-finance/>

### When does Clearing open?

Clearing officially opened on **Monday 6th July**, but not all Clearing courses will be advertised then. Most will be advertised around A-level results day on **Thursday 13th August**.

### When does Clearing close?

Clearing officially closes on **Tuesday 20th October**, but most vacancies will be filled before this date. Some universities or colleges may offer places in late October at their discretion, so it's always best to check with their admissions team.

### How to use Clearing.

If your child is eligible for Clearing, they'll be given an option to 'add a Clearing choice' in the 'next steps' section when they sign in to UCAS Track. They can then search for vacancies in the UCAS search tool. Once they've found the course they're interested in, encourage them to give the university a call to check for vacancies. If the university offers your child a place, they'll be able to add this choice in their UCAS Track.

### What is Adjustment?

Adjustment is only available to students who've exceeded the grade requirements for their firm choice university. UCAS Adjustment starts on A-level results day and gives your child the chance to switch to an alternative university or course should they wish to.

### Your child has just missed out on their predicted grades, what can they do?

If they came really close to receiving their predicted grades they may still be in with a chance of getting on to their preferred course. They should call up their firm university choice (and their insurance if they've missed the requirements for both) and ask if there's any possibility of being accepted still. They may have to explain their reasons for missing the mark, but they've nothing to lose by trying. Refer to the "It's Their Call" section of this guide to make sure they make the right impression.

### My child hasn't made a UCAS application before. Can they still apply for uni or college this year?

Yes, it's not too late! They need to create a new profile through UCAS and you they will be placed straight into Clearing.

### Can my child defer their offer if their accepted onto a course through Clearing?

Most universities/colleges offer Clearing vacancies for this academic year. If they don't want to enrol this September they will need to contact their admissions department and discuss their options. They may be advised to withdraw their application.

### My child applied for student finance before going through Clearing. What can they do?

Now that they've selected a choice through Clearing, they will need to change their application details with Student Finance England. They should visit [gov.uk/studentfinance](https://gov.uk/studentfinance) or their loan provider to update their details.

### It's results day and my child has not applied for student finance yet. What do they do?

They will have missed the official student finance deadline, so their loan may not arrive in time for the start of their course. Don't worry, they just need to start their application as soon as possible so that Student Finance England can begin processing their details.

### How is Clearing affected by the Covid -19 pandemic?

Clearing 2020 will follow the same processes as usual. However, there may be some changes e.g. how students chat to tutors or visit a campus. Please contact the university or college direct to discuss what they have to offer. Take a look at the NSSW website for more of your questions answered on Covid-19 <https://nextstepssw.ac.uk/is-university-for-me/faq/going-to-uni-admissions/>.

# Glossary

You'll see plenty of new words and abbreviations while conducting your research, but we've highlighted the 'need-to-know' phrases below.

## UCAS

**Clearing** – A second-chance process for higher education applicants who did not receive offers, declined their offers or did not meet entry requirements.

**Clearing Plus** – Available alongside Clearing. This new tool is designed to help you find your perfect course.

**Conditional Offer** – A HE offer made that is subject to conditions, usually related to exam results.

**Confirmation** – When an HE offer has been accepted by the college or university, and is now 'unconditional'.

**Deferral** – If an applicant decides to delay their enrolment and start in the following academic year.

**Entry Requirements** – What an applicant needs to have to get onto their HE course of choice. This may include qualifications, subject specialisms, interviews, portfolio reviews, admission tests, and more.

**Firm Choice** – The HE course offer a student accepts as their first choice.

**Insurance Choice** – A HE course offer a student accepts as a second choice, in case the conditions for the first offer are not met.

**Personal Statement** – A piece of text applicants write to demonstrate their suitability for a study programme.

**UCAS** – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. The website that will process your application to higher education.

**UCAS Track** – The name of the online tracking system where you can check your application's progress, reply to offers, and make Clearing choices.

**Unconditional Offer** – A HE offer made to you with no extra conditions to meet.

**Unsuccessful** – When you've not been made an offer or haven't met the conditions.

**Withdrawal** – When an applicant has changed their mind and decided to withdraw a choice.

## General

**College** – An institution that provides further education (post-16) and sometimes higher education. Nowadays, lots of colleges that offer 'FE' (A-levels & BTECS) also offer HE study.

**HEI** – Higher Education Institution.

**Higher Education (HE)** – An optional stage of learning beyond secondary level, usually offered by universities and colleges. You can apply for this level of education once you have completed A-levels, BTECs, or IBs.

**Postgraduate** – The next level of study after higher education, for those who have completed their undergraduate degree. You cannot apply for this until you've completed an undergraduate course.

**Undergraduate** – The first level of study in higher education such as degrees, Higher National Diplomas, and foundation degrees.

**University** – An institution that only provides higher education (i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate).

## Qualifications

**Degree Apprenticeship** – A qualification combining a degree from a HEI and work experience from an employer. Applications do not have to go through UCAS.

**Foundation Degree** – Combines academic and vocational skills in a higher education course. Equivalent of two years of a bachelor's degree.

**Foundation Year** – Also known as 'Year 0': a one-year preparation course for students who may not have gained entry requirements to go straight onto a degree, or want to explore a variety of disciplines before committing.

**Higher National Certificate (HNC)** – A vocational higher education qualification, that takes one year to complete. It's roughly equivalent to one year of university study.

**Higher National Diploma (HND)** – A vocational higher education qualification. Completion of an HND is considered equivalent to the second year of a three year degree course and can often be used to gain entry to a university course.

**Undergraduate Degree** – Also known as a bachelor's degree: a three or four year higher education course. Most are presented as a Bachelor of Arts (BA), a Bachelor of Science (BSc), or a Bachelor of Education (BEd).



# Hotlines

Next Steps South West represent 14 universities and colleges throughout the South West, each with their own unique variety of study programmes.

If your child is considering making an application through Clearing and want to stay in Devon, Cornwall or Somerset, get in touch today.

**"Plans can change – and there's nothing wrong with that – but it's better to have a plan that changes than to have no plan at all." – NSSW**

## Devon



01752 305 786



UNIVERSITY  
CENTRE  
SOUTH DEVON

0800 021 31 81



01392 400 444



0300 555 60 60



01271 852 335



01752 636 700



01752 203 402



01752 585 858

## Cornwall



0330 123 2523



01326 213 730



01872 267 061

## Somerset



University  
Centre  
Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

01278 441 373



01935 845 454



01458 844 401



# Next Steps South West

## Get in touch

Explore events and free resource on our website, or contact our friendly team for more information.



**[nextstepssw.ac.uk](https://nextstepssw.ac.uk)**



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