

UCAS Handbook

Planning for tomorrow, today

Introduction

You have worked hard for a number of years to be able to access Higher Education. The next few years of your life should provide an opportunity for increased independence and self-discovery whilst pursuing further study and becoming an expert in a subject area that you are passionate about.

The purpose for this handbook is to formally guide you through the process of applying for university through UCAS. It will also explain to you the other pathways that are open to you. There are several useful planning tools that will assist you when completing your application. This will ensure you have all the relevant information to successfully complete your UCAS application in a timely manner.

What course to choose?

You have up to **five** choices, but medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science you choose only **four** with your fifth choice being another course.

The UCAS application fee for 2026 will be £28.95. UCAS have introduced free school meals application fee waiver payment option. This is only available to students who are currently receiving free school meals.

Once you have decided what subject you want to study you need to decide which course will suit you. All universities and college structure their courses differently, and the way the course is run could be the difference between you loving or hating your degree, and in some cases leave one university and reapplying.

Subjects: What exactly does the course cover? How much time is spent on each module? What is the pattern of a typical teaching week? Most course will be taught through a mixture of lectures, seminars, and tutorials.

Course Structure: How much time will be spent in lectures, seminars, personal study, and assignments? How big are the class sizes? Are lectures back in person or are some still online? Many degree courses last 3 or 4 years. A four-year course may include a period of time spent abroad or in industry. Many degrees (MAs) from Scottish based university will be 4 years in length.

Course assessment: How is the course assessed – is it by final examination, continuous assessment or a bit of both? Which does it focus on, and which are you better at? Do they match? Modular courses are increasingly common, with units of teaching attracting a specified number of credits. Some modules may be compulsory, others will be optional, and it may be possible for you to make up your own study programme.

Study in Europe as part of the course: You may wish to consider applying to one of the universities which offer your chosen course within the new Turing scheme, whereby you can spend between 4 – 12 months of your course in another country.

Work placements: Does the course include work experience? If it does, how is this organised? Will you have to find a placement or is it organised for you? Will it be a sandwich course – e.g., will you have to take a full year out of your study to work?

Grade requirements: Find out what the required grades are. These may be worked on a UCAS points system.

A*	A	B	C	D	E
56	48	40	32	24	16

More and more courses are making candidates to obtain a particular grade in a subject, for example, an A* in Mathematics to read Economics at LSE.

Many universities will accept native language A Level (e.g. Chinese), but some will not. You should contact universities directly and ask them.

Which university?

To be able to assist you in choosing the right university/ college for you, you will need to consider the following:

Style: Traditional universities that have a focus on subject-based courses and research, to modern universities with a greater focus on vocational courses.

Location: Some are based in large cities, other in smaller towns, a major influence on the environment and lifestyle.

Size: Large universities can have more than 20,000 students whereas some of the smallest have only a few thousand.

Culture & facilities: What equipment and resources does the course and university/ college have? Look at the IT and the library facilities. What is the staff – student ration? What facilities exist to undertake visit or research outside the formal provision? Look at diversity of students who attend.

Destination list: Find out what the previous students on the course did after graduation. The association of Graduate Recruiters publishes an annual report called 'What Do Graduates Do?' This provides information about the destinations and employment rates by academic subject/ discipline.

Tuition fees: These can vary between universities/ colleges. Also check if there are any scholarships or bursaries available.

Living cost: Check out the different types of accommodations available, cost of transport to and from your chosen university/ college and price of food. All of these can vary enormously.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you want to live at home or move away?
- How far away?
- Do you prefer a city, town, campus-based university?
- How good are the transport links?
- What sort of accommodation is offered to first year students?
- How expensive is it to live in the places that you are considering?
- What do the places you are considering offer – good shops, nightlife, sports facilities, extra-curricular activities, student support, access to countryside, other factors for you?
- What is the local economy like? Are you likely to be able to find part-time work?
- Does the SU have a good reputation? Is this important to you?
- Are your friends also applying here? This could be a good or not so good thing.

Open Days: Look to see what universities are offering in terms of virtual/ open days, summer experiences and contact current students and talk to them to find out what it is like to study there. Look at www.whatuni.com/open-days/search to find when universities are holding their open days.

You will need to seek permission in advance by completing a planned absence form and by showing the sixth form team your email confirmation from the university you will be visiting. You will need to speak to your subject teachers and ensure that you will catch up with any work missed. Please be aware that there are plenty of opportunities to visit universities on weekends and during school holidays. We normally only approve up to six open day visits during school time.

Use the UCAS Choice Planner (Appendix 1) to assist you in making your choices. Before applying for your chosen universities/ college course(s) complete the 'Chosen university/ college justification form (Appendix 2) to show your form tutor or Mrs Battaglia.

When to apply?

All applications are made using the www.ucas.com website. This means that applications can be dealt with as rapidly and efficiently as possible. UCAS online applications for 2026 entry open 13th May 2025 but applications cannot be received until 2nd September 2025. Use the **UCAS Planner** to assist you in completing the sections in your UCAS Hub (Appendix 3).

Choices are **not** sent in preference order – UCAS sends an application to all the universities at the same time, and they do not know where else you have applied.

Applicants for Oxford or Cambridge, and most courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine/ science: deadline for applications is 15th October.

Applicants for medical/ dental school and veterinary science, you will need to be aware that you may have to sit additional tests, such as the UCAT and BMAT (see additional information)

Applicants for law may select to sit the LNAT examination.

Conservatoire; applications open for 2026 entry on 10th July 2025. Closing dates for music applicants is 2nd October 2025.

Deferred Applications: the same closing dates apply for deferred applications. Before choosing to defer an application, you should contact individual universities or colleges direct to check that they would be willing to consider a deferred application. In some cases, for examples, the course may not be offered in the following year.

During PSHE lessons and registration activities, you will need to have registered on the UCAS Hub and completed all the following section before **21st May:**

- Personal details
- Contact & residency
- Nationality
- Supporting information
- English language skills
- Finance & Funding
- Diversity & inclusion
- More about me
- Education
- Employment
- Extra activities

This will leave you to complete the **Choices** and **Personal Statement** sections in September.

Before the end of the summer term, you should have a draft of your personal statement and a shortlist of your chosen universities/ courses.

Once you have completed the application form paid and sent, your application will be sent to the sixth form team to check your application. If there is anything incorrect with your application, this will be sent back to you to rectify and send again once the necessary changes have been made. Do not worry you will not be asked to pay again.

Reference will be written by your subject teachers and your form tutor, this takes time, so ensure that you have notified them if you are an early applicant.

Once your application has been checked, references and predicted grades added, your application will then be sent off to UCAS. At this point you will receive notification from UCAS that they have received it. It is then automatically forwarded to your selected universities. From this point onwards, university admissions tutors will be in contact with you directly (not the school or your parents).

Give yourself the best chance – apply as early as possible. Please be aware that many universities offer places as applications come in. This means popular courses at prestigious universities often fill up before the UCAS deadline.

UCAS application process

There is plenty of additional support on how to complete the UCAS form on the student section of the www.ucas.com website.

1. Registration

- Go to www.ucas.com and click on 'Sign in' on the top right-hand side of the page, and then click 'Students'
- Click on 'Undergraduate' section, then under '2026 entry' click 'Apply'.
- Click on 'register'
- Follow the online instructions to register and enter your personal details, after agreeing to terms and conditions!
- Use a personal email address and you once you have left school your school email account will be archived, and you do not want to miss any vital information.
- Choose to opt in or out of marketing.
- Remember your password must be at least 8 characters and must contain a number, uppercase and lowercase letters, and [a special character](#).
- Select four security questions and enter relevant answers.
- You will be shown your username. **Make a note of your username and password as you need these every time you log in.**
- Click on 'log in now'

2. Filling in the UCAS form

- You are applying '**through my school / college**'
- The buzzword is **KLS2026**
- Select your tutor group from the drop-down menu.
- You will be issued with a personal ID – you must make a note of this number for all correspondence with UCAS.
- You will have been sent an email with a verification code.
- Log in to your email to verify your account before you start filling your UCAS form in.

A) Key points to note

- **You must complete all mandatory questions and you cannot skip any sections.** These must all be complete before your application can be sent.
- **Make sure your email address is always up to date** (do not use your school email address)– so you do not miss important updates on your application.
- **UCAS will ask for your residency status** – if you are from outside the UK and need clarification on this, [visit the UKCISA website](#) for detailed information.
- **There are questions specifically for UK students** – these are about your ethnic origin, national identity, and occupational background. These are mandatory questions used for monitoring purposes. This information will only be shared with universities and colleges after you have secured a place and will not influence any decision regarding your application.
- **UCAS ask for information about personal circumstances** – such as your parental education, [if you have been in care](#), or involved in widening participation activities, so universities and colleges can form a more complete understanding of you as an individual. While this information is optional, it can help universities and colleges better understand your background and provide support.

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UCAS application process

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- **If you are applying with the support of a school and you did not enter your buzzword during registration** – you can do this at any time from your application. This will link your application to your school or college, so they can track your progress and provide support, including adding your reference.
- **You will be asked how you plan to fund your studies** – for most of you your student support code will be **02 UK, ChI, IoM or EU student finance services**
- **You can give a parent, guardian, or adviser nominated access** – if you would like them to be able to speak to us on your behalf. We will be able to discuss your application with them, but for security reasons, we cannot share your login details (for example, if you need to change your password).
- Parental education, select 'yes' or 'no' as to whether any of your parents/ guardians have a degree level qualification.
- For occupational background, give the occupation of the highest earner of parent (this is an optional question)

B) Education

- Ensure all secondary school(s) are entered. Click on 'add new school'.
- Your finish date will be August 2026.
- Click on 'add [qualifications](#)'. Make sure you add all the correct subjects, exam board and grades for your GCSE. If you studied Combined Science, you would need to add this qualification separately as a double award.
- When adding you A Level subjects and exam board, your grades will be 'pending'. Do not input modules as this is not required.

For exams at this school, you must enter your exams exactly as appears on this list

Subject	Exam Board	Date
Art & Design: Fine Art	Edexcel	08/2026
Art & Design: Photography	Edexcel	08/2026
Biology A	OCR	08/2026
Business	AQA	08/2026
Chemistry A	OCR	08/2026
Design and Technology	Edexcel	08/2026
Drama & Theatre Studies	AQA	08/2026
Economics A	Edexcel	08/2026
English Literature A	AQA	08/2026
Extended Project	AQA	08/2024
French	Edexcel	08/2026
Further Mathematics	Edexcel	08/2026
Geography	Edexcel	08/2026
History A	Edexcel	08/2026
Mathematics	Edexcel	08/2026
Music	WJEC	08/2026
Photography	Edexcel	08/2026
Physical Education	OCR	08/2026
Physics A	OCR	08/2026
Politics	Edexcel	08/2026
Psychology	AQA	08/2026
Religious Studies	OCR	08/2026
Sociology	AQA	08/2026
Spanish	Edexcel	08/2026

UCAS application process

C) Employment

- Enter any paid employment details including employers name and address with relevant dates.

D) Personal statement

- This is easier to copy and paste from Unifrog.
- This is your chance to persuade a university admissions officer to give you a place, so it is essential to promote yourself effectively. You will have a limit of 4000 characters.
- Personal Statement now contains three questions:
 - * Why do you want to study this course or subject?
 - * How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
 - * What else have you done to prepare outside of educations, and why are these experiences useful?
- Remember to make sure your statement is clear, succinct, and confident. It is your chance to convey your subject knowledge and your enthusiasm, including your desire to learn more.
- You may be applying for one course at one university and another course at a different university. However, you will only be submitting one personal statement and it may be difficult to explain why you are applying for different courses. See Appendix 4 for **Hints for writing your Personal Statement**.

E) View all details

- Once your personal statement has been checked by your tutor and you have chosen and entered your choices, you are then ready to click 'pay and send'. The one-off fee of £28.95 will be required to pay to send off your application. You are only sending the form to the sixth form team. We then make the necessary checks and if required will send back to the applicant with any amendments. If we are sure that your application is ready, we then formally send it to UCAS.
- After this point, relax, congratulate yourself and wait to hear from your universities.

Deferring Entry

- Your UCAS application form has a deferred entry option for people who want to take a year out.
- You may choose to receive your offers for 2026 entry, and then ask universities if they will defer your place to 2026.
- Check with the university or college of your choice if they will accept a deferred entry application.
- If you accept a place for 2025 entry, you cannot reapply in that year's cycle (e.g 2026 entry cycle), unless you withdraw your original application.

Personal Statements

Hints for Writing Your Personal Statement

The personal statement gives you the opportunity to explain to Admissions Tutors why you are interested in their subject, what you already know about the subject and what you will be able to contribute to the University because of your academic skills, abilities, extra-curricular and other interests. Effectively you are writing an individual letter of application that will be read by several people as part of the recruitment process. Remember it's the ONLY piece of personal work the application team sees – if your personal statement is not well thought out, what guarantee do they have that your work once you join the course will be?

There is plenty of advice and guidance available on the UCAS website, Unifrog, in books and on websites. So much, in fact that you can spend too much time searching for advice rather than concentrating on writing your own.

KEEP IT SIMPLE – Remember you can only use 4000 characters (including punctuation and spaces) REMEMBER TO WRITE WELL – Admissions Tutors will judge your application on the quality of your writing, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and if your statement is interesting and easy to follow.

Golden Rules

Convince them of your commitment and motivation

- ⇒ Enthusiasm
- ⇒ Knowledge
- ⇒ Interests
- ⇒ Aspirations

Academic Interests

- ⇒ Current and Past Studies (but no further back than GCSE)
- ⇒ Skills – what are your strengths

For Vocational Degrees

- ⇒ Relevant work experience
- ⇒ Volunteering

Wide interest range

- ⇒ Current affairs, cultural, technical or any other areas of interest, research on where the degree might take you.

Ability to be trusted

- ⇒ Positions of responsibility inside and outside of school

Non-academic personal achievements

- ⇒ Such as music, sport, drama, or anything else that you are proud of.

TELL THE TRUTH – Just remember you might be interviewed, but even if not, if you don't tell truth the course might not suit you. If you end up leaving, you will still have the paid the course fees but have no qualification to show for this.

Personal Statements

Remember this is for advice only – you should aim to make your statement your own.

Question 1: Why do you want to study this course or subject?

This is the opportunity for you to showcase your passion, curiosity, interest and knowledge of your chosen course or subject area and to demonstrate to universities why it's a good fit for you and your future ambitions.

Examples of what you might talk about here:

- **Your motivations for studying this course(s):** Have you been inspired by a key role model or moment in your life? Maybe it's a subject you love and want to pursue further. We are all driven by something and it's important for you to talk about how your path has led you to this course or subject area.
- **Your knowledge of this subject area and interests:** Perhaps there's a particular subject area you've researched and can't wait to learn more about, or a book or subject expert doing great things that have sparked your interest? Universities want to see that you have done your research so they can be confident this is something you will enjoy and excel in. This is a great place to highlight super-curricular activities as evidence of curiosity and interest in the subject outside of the classroom.
- **Future plans and why this course/ subject is a good fit:** If you already have a particular profession in mind, you could talk about how you will use your studies to launch your career. If you don't think about what's important to you and your future and how the knowledge gained from your chosen course(s) will help you to achieve this.

Question 2: How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?

This is the chance to show evidence of the relevant or transferable skills you've gained from your formal education and highlight your understanding of how this will help you succeed in this subject area.

Examples of what you might talk about here:

- **How your studies or training relate to your chosen course(s) or subject area:** This could be current or previous studies within school, MOOCs, training provider or even a short online university course—any form of formal education. The main thing here is to focus on what's most recent and relevant to your chosen course(s).
- **What relevant or transferable skills you have that make you a great candidate:** Maybe there are a couple of subjects that have helped you develop a core set of skills required for your chosen course(s). Or, a particular module that helped you understand where your interests and strength lie.
- **Any relevant educational achievements:** Universities will see your grades elsewhere on your application, so don't waste time talking about these. Consider accomplishments like winning a school or national competition, serving as a student ambassador or team captain, or landing the lead role in a play.

Question 3: What else have you done to prepare outside of education and why are these experiences useful?

- **Work experience, employment or volunteering:** Whether it's in-person work experience or virtual work experience or volunteering at a dog shelter, the key thing here is for you to reflect on your experience and the skills gained relevant to your chosen course(s).
- **Personal life experiences or responsibilities:** Is there a situation you've personally overcome that has influenced your decision? Are there responsibilities such as caring for a family member that has helped you develop essential qualities for the course like resilience and empathy?
- **Hobbies and any extracurricular or outreach activities:** Think sports, reading, community work, summer schools—any activities outside of your studies that help further showcase why you'd make a great student.
- **Achievements outside of school:** This could be a position of responsibility such as captain of the local club, a music competition you've won or a qualification you've attained outside of the classroom.

Personal Statements

Admissions and Subject Tutors will ask themselves the following questions when looking at your statement:

- Do we want this student on this course?
- Do we want this student at this university?

These can be broken down into questions which you need to make sure are answered in your personal statement;

- Are you suited to the course you have applied for?
- Do you have the necessary qualities and qualifications for the course?
- Are you hardworking, conscientious, and likely to complete the course of study?
- Will you do your best?
- Will you cope with the demands of the course?
- Can you work under pressure?
- Have you got good communication skills?
- Are you dedicated to this course, have you researched it properly?
- Have you got a genuine interest in the subject?
- Are you keen to learn more about it?

Once you have identified all the points that you want to make in your Personal Statement, start writing! Don't worry if it sounds a bit odd at first – no one likes writing about themselves and we sometimes find it hard to emphasize our own achievements, especially in writing. But this is what will get you an offer of a place on your favourite course, so just do it.

Remember, it will take you several drafts before it is right. Once you have the first one completed – even if you think it's not particularly good, show it to someone and ask them to comment. This can be a friend, family member or one of the Sixth Form team, form tutor or subject teacher. But don't give it to too many people at once – everyone may have a different view and then you will be left confused as to what to do next.

Do not be tempted to copy anyone else's personal statement – even just a small section. UCAS check all applications using anti-plagiarism software and this will pick up any copied work and notify the universities that you are applying to. This may result in your application being rejected, so you won't receive offer.

Personal Statements

How to send Personal Statements for review by the Sixth Form team

We would like you to use **Unifrog** to draft and save versions of your Personal Statement. You can also use this to ask one of us to review and comment on it.

Follow these steps;

- Log into your Unifrog account <https://www.unifrog.org/>
- Scroll down your home page to 'Drafting Application Materials' and select the UK Personal Statement option.
- Complete the three sections.
- If you prefer to do your first draft in Word, that is OK, just cut and paste it into the Personal Statement tool in Unifrog (by following the instructions above). You can then send it for review and feedback (described in the next few steps).
- Once you are happy with what you have, scroll down to 'Ask teacher for feedback' and select the name of the person that you want to send it to. Make sure that you choose the right person, for example **Mrs Battaglia** otherwise it will go to the wrong person.
- You can add a note if you wish, then click 'SEND'. The person you have sent it to gets a notification, can review, and comment and send it back to you.
- You can also email your Personal Statement to someone; enter their email address and click 'SEND'. Or you can download it as a Word document.
- Unifrog saves copies of all versions so if you take something out and then decide you need to put it back in again, this is easy to do.
- Give it a go. I promise it will save you (and the Sixth Form team) time!

The Sixth Form team are here to help, so get in touch on 6form@kls.herts.sch.uk if you need individual advice and guidance.

Gap Year

A gap year is a chance for you to see the world, visit other countries, learn new skills, or do voluntary work. You can take a year out in many different countries, as well as the UK.

There are lots of options open to you:

- Volunteering in the UK or abroad
- Living abroad as part of a culture exchange
- Becoming a member of an expedition to some far-off country
- Joining a work experience programme
- Applying for paid work all over the world

If you decide to take a year out and are going through UCAS, outline in your personal statement how you will be spending your time out and what you think you will gain from it. Also, try being try in this country while your application is processed, in case there are any queries, or you are called for an interview.

You will be expected to share your Gap year plans with Mrs Battaglia. The school will be providing as part of your Post18 pathway, further details on Gap year by external speakers, registration or PSHE activities.

University offers

Once you have paid and sent and your application has been checked and sent to UCAS, you will start to receive offers from your chosen universities.

Conditional offer:

- This is good news! This means that the university has accepted you on to its course, subject to meeting the entry requirements of the offer. This usually means you will need to obtain certain grades in your current studies or achieve a minimum number of UCAS points.
- Think of it as the university saying to you: 'there is a place with your name on it on our course, but you will need to prove yourself academically to take it up'. The vast majority of offers made to applicants by universities are conditional offers.
- Entry requirements for course depends on the qualifications you are taking. The university will tell you the exact terms of your offer when responding to you.

Some examples of conditional offer:

- A Levels, grade AAB with 'A' in Chemistry and at least two other sciences or Mathematics.
- 120 UCAS points

Unconditional offer:

- You have met the terms or entry requirements for that course. While you still need to do a few things, such as provide paperwork to confirm your academic grades, you are [pretty much in](#).
- Be aware that if you accept an unconditional offer as your firm, you are committing to go to that university. Therefore, you cannot select an insurance choice or enter Clearing (you would need to be formally 'released' by that university [in order to](#) do so).
- If you accept an unconditional offer, the pressure is effectively off when it comes to your exams in the summer, but you should still work hard as these grades will follow you around in the future.

Unsuccessful applications

- It is not good news unfortunately. This means the university has declined your application and has not offered you a place.
- The university may provide a reason for its decision on UCAS track or in further communication to you (or you can get in touch directly to learn why). You simple may not meet the entry requirements based on your predicted grades, or it could be a super-competitive course with applicants far outweighing the number of places.
- Receiving an unsuccessful offer can be undeniably tough, but [don't](#) get too disheartened – learn from this and wait to hear from your other UCAS choices.

Withdrawn applications

- Your application to a university may be withdrawn for [a number of](#) reasons. For example, you might not have responded to a university's communications by a required date, or you may have missed an interview. You can learn why your application has been withdrawn on UCAS track.
- You can also withdraw your application yourself if you change your mind about applying to that course or university.

UCAS **reject by default** will be 13th May 2026.

UCAS Extra & Clearing

UCAS Extra

If you find yourself in the position of either rejecting all your offers or receiving no offers, you will have the opportunity to make additional choices through UCAS extra.

Extra is another chance for you to gain a place at university or college, from 28th February. If you used all five of your choices on your original application and you are not holding an offer, you will be able to add another choice using Extra.

Who can use Extra?

If you included five choices on your application, have received decisions from all five and were not accepted, or if you declined the offers you received, you will be able to use Extra.

If you did not use all your choices in your initial application, you don't need to use Extra, you can just sign into your application and add another choice, as long as it is before 30th June, and you have not accepted or declined any offers.

Clearing

Clearing will open on 5th July – 19th October, you can apply for a course using Clearing if you are not already holding an offer from a university or college, and the course still has places.

You can use Clearing if:

- You are applying after 30th June
- You did not receive any offers (or none you wanted to accept)
- You did not meet the conditions of your offers
- You have declined your firm place using the 'decline my place' button in your application

UCAS Deadlines 2026 Entry

- **15 October 2025** - Deadline for applications to Oxford and Cambridge universities and for most medicine, veterinary, and dentistry courses.
- **14 January 2026** - Deadline for most other undergraduate university applications.
- **26 February 2026** - UCAS Extra opens for any applicants who received no offers, or who rejected all their offers.
- **6 May 2026** - UCAS Undergraduate applicant decline by default
- **13 May 2026** - UCAS Undergraduate reject by default
- **30 June 2026** - Applications received after 6pm will automatically be entered into Clearing.
- **4 July 2026** - Last date to add a UCAS Extra choice.
- **5 July 2026** - Clearing 2026 opens
- **24 September 2026** - Final date for 2026 UCAS undergraduate applications.
- **19 October 2026** - Clearing 2026 closes

Appendix 1

UCAS Choice Planner

	Course and Code	University	Grades needed
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Appendix 2

It is important that before applying for your chosen universities/ course(s) you have checked the details about the course. You should be able to explain to your tutor the reasons for applying to a particular university/ college.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Appendix 3

UCAS PLANNING	
GCSE Subjects, exam board and grades:	
A Level subjects and exam board:	
EPQ Title:	
Unique Learner Number:	
Career aims/ future plans:	
Course I would like to apply are:	
Work experience:	

School activities I am involved in:	
Out of school activities I am involved in:	
Positions of responsibility:	
Extra university activities are:	
University funding code:	