It’s A-level results time – and if you haven’t done as well as expected you may be feeling nervous and anxious. Don’t despair, however – because clearing gives you the chance to think again about your options. Last year, a record 41,000 courses were listed on the Ucas website through clearing after the A-level results came out – up from 37,000 in 2015 and there are expected to be even more course options this year. As Helen Thorne, Ucas’s director of external relations says: “The days of clearing being the bargain basement of university admissions are long gone.” In this special supplement, we look at how to go through the clearing process; there is advice and information on every aspect, from making those all-important phone calls to funding and accommodation hunting. First things first, though: log on to the Ucas website, look up the courses that interest you and make some notes before ringing the universities. And if you are offered a place over the phone, go to Ucas Track to confirm your choice. It’s that easy. Danial Ikwan-McCabe went through clearing last year, he says: “It’s easy to let disappointment and panic take over. But going through clearing honestly isn’t for people who have failed. It’s about finding the best option for you.”

Sarah Jewell
Guide to photography: Getty Images

The system has transformed into clearing.

To full-time university courses got there through clearing.

One in eight people accepted to full-time university courses got there through clearing.

With record numbers of people using clearing, it’s now an important and respected route into higher education, writes Lucy Jolin.

In the past few years, there have been many factors that might impact on clearing – Brexit, new A-level formats, the removal of the cap on student numbers and a demographic that means fewer 18-year-olds. But one trend is clear: attitudes towards it are changing fast.

“A few years ago, clearing was embarrassing,” says Sarah Gordon, head of outreach and engagement at London South Bank University. “It’s the polar opposite now. It’s open and it’s now an important route into higher education,” says Helen Thorne, director of external relations at Ucas.

So how will changes in the world and in higher education impact on clearing this year? Brent looms large in university funding, but it isn’t likely to have much of an effect on clearing, as student numbers from the EU are relatively small. “It’s certainly a factor, but not necessarily the biggest,” says a spokesperson from the University of Southampton. Perhaps the bigger unknown this year, they suggest, will be the impact of the reforms to qualifications such as A/AS levels, with the first cohort of applicants who followed the new linear A-level in some subjects.

Savvy students can now wait and see if places come up at Russell Group universities that have offered none or very few places through clearing in the past. Southampton offered places to 350 students via clearing last year, while St George’s, University of London, even offered places on its medicine undergraduate course, for the first time. King’s College London, which had vacancies on 30 courses last year, says this year may see “limited places available for high-achieving students to study at Kings’.

All these converging factors mean that students can now use clearing to their advantage. “We don’t really like the phrase ‘buyers’ market’ in universities, but I think that’s exactly what it is,” says Lynsey Hopkins, head of admissions at the University of Sheffield. “Students understand that the demographics are on their side – there are more courses than there are students to fill them.”

For Holly McSpadden, 19, clearing was a sporting chance.

For Holly McSpadden, 19, clearing was “the best thing you’ve got!”

Helen Ikhwan-McCabe, 19, took biology, chemistry and physics A-levels, with a sporting chance, the University of Leicester, which she found through clearing. “On results day, I got up early to look at my Ucas page and it said I hadn’t got into any of my choices,” he remembers. “I went into college to get my results. I saw them – two Bs and a C – and felt so disappointed. The initial feeling was just panic. I thought: I’m just not going to get into uni now. I’m going to have to re-sit the entire year.”

Luckily, Danial had good support.

Claire Willis, head of sixth form at Prince Henry’s Grammar School, Otley, West Yorkshire, took him aside and asked him if he knew about clearing. “I’d heard about it, but I always thought it was for people who had completely failed,” he says. “Mrs Willis said I might as well give it a go – what’s the worst that could happen?”

Mrs Willis was happy to stay with Danial during the clearing process to give him some moral support. He sat down at his school, used the Ucas website to find universities with places in sports science, and started ringing round.

“It was really easy,” he says. “All the people I spoke to at the universities were very helpful and friendly, while I was panicking and talking about a million miles an hour to them. I was saying stuff like ‘Please let me in! I’ll do any course you’ve got!’”

His final choice was the BSc in sports and education at Leeds Beckett University. “When I rang them, the woman I spoke to was nice and reassuring,” he says. “I knew they had a good reputation for sports as I’d played rugby for Yorkshire Carnegie Academy – Leeds Beckett are their partners. I had applied for the course before, but I turned it down in favour of Newcastle and Loughborough. The Ucas process just took a couple of minutes, and then I could relax after the initial panic.”

A year on, Danial is enjoying his course and university life. He says clearing was a hugely positive experience for him. “It’s easy to let disappointment and panic take over. But keep calm. Going through clearing honestly isn’t for people who have failed. It’s about finding the best thing for you at that time.”

How to prepare

1. Take time to understand exactly what clearing is and how it works.
2. Check the initial clearing lists that Ucas publishes from 5 July.
3. Prepare a shortlist of potential universities to target on the day - some allow you to pre-register.
4. Research the non-academic side - what societies do the universities have? How close are they to cities?
5. Think about alternative subjects.
6. Schedule in clearing open days if your target university offers them.
7. Keep your Ucas ID number to hand and have access to your statement.
8. If you’re working, see if you can take clearing opening day as leave.
9. Don’t plan holidays over the critical period.

University openings

More choice with clearing

When Danial Ikhwan-McCabe missed out on his chosen universities, he got back on track thanks to clearing.
How to apply
This easy, step-by-step guide will take you through the clearing process, from searching for a course to the resulting university offer. By Lucy Jolin

1. The early bird...
You can clear from 8am on results day. Use your Ucas personal ID number to log into your Track page. If you haven’t received any offers, or didn’t meet the conditions of your offer, your Track screen will tell you that you are now in clearing. You’ll find your clearing number on the Track home page in the top left hand corner, under the ‘My Status’ section. Keep this number to hand as you’ll need it at every stage of the process.

2. Start your search
Use the Ucas course search tool (which you can find on ucas.co.uk) to find courses that have places in your chosen subject. You’ll also find contact details on the tool, as some universities will have special clearing hotline numbers. Make a shortlist of potential places.

3. Be prepared
Get all your relevant information together. This might include your Ucas ID number, your clearing number, your A-level and GCSE results, details of relevant work experience, portfolios, and a copy of your personal statement, plus any notes and queries on the courses and universities that interest you.

4. Get on the phone
Start calling your chosen universities. You need to contact them directly and it needs to be you who calls. The admissions staff member will ask for your clearing number, which will enable them to open your Track screen and look at your application, results and personal statement.

5. Question time
If you’re eligible for a place and there’s still one available, the admissions staff member will probably ask you some questions - almost like a mini interview. These are not designed to catch you out, but to see if you’re a good fit for the course.

6. Make me an offer
The university may then make you a verbal offer. There are no conditional offers in clearing as you’ve already got your results. Or they may say they would like to call you back. Verbal offers usually come with time limits, so you may have a chance to think about it.

7. Keep on track
Once you accept an offer, you will need to update your Track screen – the university won’t update your Track for you. All you will need to do is click on the option which allows you to add a clearing choice.

8. Your confirmation
Importantly, just updating your Track screen isn’t enough. You’ll also have to contact the university directly and tell them that you have accepted their offer. Ask how they would like you to do this – some will want you to send a letter, others will accept an email. Make sure you keep a record of what offers are made, and ask how the offer will be confirmed and in what timeframe.

9. Congratulations! You’ve got your place. Now go out and celebrate

Ucas jargon buster
Firm choice
The first choice on your Ucas application
Insurance choice
The second choice on your Ucas application
Other main scheme choice
Your third, fourth and fifth choices on your Ucas application
Extra
An Ucas service to apply for an alternative place if you don’t hold an offer from your first five choices. Ucas Extra runs from 25 February to 4 July
Adjustment
An acceptance route where applicants who have met and exceeded the conditions of their firm choice choose to take up an alternative offer with higher entry requirements
Main scheme clearing
An applicant who is not placed or holding an offer and who applied by 30 June
Direct clearing
Applicants who registered to apply after 30 June
RPA
Record of prior acceptance, where an application is submitted to Ucas via an institution when an unconditional firm has been offered and accepted by the applicant

Help is at hand
Remember that the universities are on your side. Nobody will try to catch you out. “The clearing process is about helping you to develop your new plans for your new choice,” says Deborah Green, director of student recruitment at the University of Hull. “Admissions staff are great at helping with that. They are positive and upbeat and work hard to match you with a place.”

Do your prep
“Think about what you’re going to say before you call a university or college about a course,” advises Alison Wilde, admissions manager at Nottingham Trent University. “Have your Ucas details and grades ready, and note down why you’d like to do the course and why you think you should be offered a place. Also, jot down any questions you have. If you’re calm, positive and well prepared, you’ll come across better.”

Find peace and quiet
Create the right conditions for making the call. “It is difficult to have that conversation when you’re on the train, or you have a child with you,” says Sarah Gordon, head of outreach and engagement at London South Bank University. “Find a quiet place and be prepared for the fact that you might be interviewed on the phone. Standing up or smiling while you’re talking changes the tone of your voice. Have a cup of coffee, and if it’s impossible to talk first thing in the morning, ring and ask for a call back – most universities are very happy to arrange that.”

The sales pitch
Sell yourself using four key points, says Hannah Morrish, student choice and higher education lead at thestudentroom.co.uk. “Do it this way first, I’ve done my research and I’m really interested in your university. Second, I’m passionate about this subject area. Third, here’s how my grades and qualifications meet your requirements. And finally, I’ve got what it takes to succeed on the course.”

Be organised
If you’re ringing around a lot of universities, it can be easy to get confused, so Chris Watts, director of university recruitment at Leeds Beckett University, offers this advice on keeping track: “Make sure you know exactly what you’ve been offered from each university, and the details of their courses. Record any essential contacts, email addresses and telephone numbers which you may need.”
Earn while you learn

Degree apprenticeships combine on-the-job training and a salary with academic work - and if you complete one through the Open University, you can choose when and where to study

As anyone who hasn’t made their grades will know, all is not lost and university is still a possibility. But getting a degree doesn’t inevitably mean a traditional university experience. With the arrival of new professional schemes – degree apprenticeships - students have more choice and opportunity. Now they can combine academic work with on-the-job training - and a salary.

“Degree apprenticeships are growing fastest in areas designed to boost the UK’s knowledge economy - management, digital and technology, engineering,” says Steve Hill, engagement director at the Open University, which has worked with employers to create new professional schemes that lead to a full university degree.

These qualifications - offered by employers partnering with universities - have a lot going for them: career security, tuition fees paid by the employer, and the prestige of a recognised degree. They’re undeniably hard work - but many students welcome the structure of a working day, with time set aside for study.

“It’s been intense,” says Elizabeth Clarke, 17, a trainee food scientist who graduated last month with a degree in food science and technology at Nottingham Trent University, while working at McCains Foods. She regularly put in extra study at weekends and evenings and spent one day a week at university to complete her degree.

“The theory we learned at university, we then related back to why we were doing certain things at work... the course has been fantastic.”

Degree apprenticeships are currently available in some 20 subjects, from aerospace engineering to aspects of banking, law, technology and nuclear sciences. Their applied nature means apprentices will be highly desirable employees in the future, especially as many fear a dearth of skilled employees. “The challenge of automation, and the potential impact of Brexit on immigrant labour, mean it’s a huge shortfall in skills,” says Hill.

Blue-chip companies such as Airbus, Rotherham, Nercel, Jaguar Land Rover and many more already partner with universities to offer these purpose-built degrees. Companies such as BT see the new scheme as a means of “future proofing”.

The QU delivers high quality and flexible learning. Students choose when and where to study, and get support from tutors as a one-to-one and as part of group tutorials. The QU currently offers two degree apprenticeships - digital and technology solutions, and the business.

“We’re looking to see how the injection of higher education can offer greater growth of the business,” says Chartered manager, with more planned for 2018. For more information, visit open.ac.uk/apprenticeships.

OPEN UP THE FUTURE

Degree apprentices are based in a company, but devote 20% of their working week to study. This could mean flexible study, as offered by online learning experts the OU, which allows students to log on through any device to webinar, chat with other students on study forums and seek academic support. With other providers, it could mean spending a day a week at a university or college.

In addition, practice-based tutors will assess an apprentice at work several times a year, says David Willett, Director of corporate sales at the OU. “They’ll look at how they’re working in their role, how well they’re learning and how they are applying the learning to their job.”

After four years, Chopgan has graduated with a BSc. “My advice is don’t think that going straight to university full-time is your only option.”

SPEAKING OUT

The student

Kai Newton, 19, went through clearing last year to study biomedical sciences at the University of Hull.

Clearing was all really easy and I was pretty chilled throughout. There’s something very exciting about changing your plans. I know I didn’t think about the negatives. I focused on my future. I talked to teachers who confirmed I was making good choices. I looked up universities on Unistats, then did more research to get a feel for their entry requirements, and how life would be on campus. I found out about extra opportunities on offer as well as the module specifics. Making the call to Hull was nerve-wracking and staff were welcoming. There are always different routes to reach your end goal and these bring benefits you

The course tutor

Dr Helen Brocklehurst, senior lecturer in social science, University of Derby

Students mustn’t be scared to communicate with universities - rarely do we think of any enquiry as time-wasting. When we speak to students we’ll already have all their details in front of us. This is a more personal conversation - we’ll be assessing whether they’ll cope with the course. Some students will be sounding out possibilities – they might want to consider a joint degree for instance. Academics can make them a verbal offer right away, which often helps. We try not to apply pressure. We do try to speak to – even call back - and nurture all students who’ve shown an interest. When they are considering a new course, students will want to look at choices of modules, class sizes, teaching methods, and how they will be helped with the transition from sixth form.

The school teacher

Colin Gregory, careers and progression tutor, Christ The King sixth-form college, Lewisham

It’s worth getting up early - universities have access to the results the day before. Students can look on Ucas Track around 8am to see if they have a place or not, before they get access to the results the day before. Students need to have their Ucas personal ID, course code and results to hand, so their enquiry can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

It can be a stressful time but it’s students themselves that universities need to speak to – not their parents or carers. Some may hold a mini interview over the phone, or share important course information to make sure they are making an informed decision.

The admissions tutor

Bernard Strutt, head of UK/EU student recruitment, University of Manchester

If students have just missed their offer, there’s a chance they may still be under consideration, or they might be offered another course at the same university. Ucas Track will show if they’re clear when. They can contact the university hotline, they need to have their Ucas personal ID, course code and results to hand, so their enquiry can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

It can be a stressful time but it’s students themselves that universities need to speak to – not their parents or carers. Some may hold a mini interview over the phone, or share important course information to make sure they are making an informed decision.

The Ucas adviser

Bob Melville, customer experience partner, Ucas

Don’t wait for results day to search around for vacancies – the sooner the better. Once clearing opens, all vacancies are shown live on the Ucas site, along with grade requirements, and they are updated in real time. Even if students’ grades are slightly lower than required, universities might still accept them. If students ring our helpline, we can explain clearing, help find courses, give contact numbers and course codes.

We’re good at reassuring students. They need to have a clear idea of the course before they accept it in Ucas Track - and then it’s a contract. Many universities give a stress-free and staff were welcoming. There are always different routes to reach your end goal and these bring benefits you
Going into clearing can mean that you end up with something better than you’d hoped for – if you approach it with an open mind.

Fashion student Kate Hewitson, 20, from County Durham, wanted to do fashion at a university close to home, as she wanted to be able to drive back home whenever she needed to.

"After just missing out on my first choice, my careers adviser mentioned that Nottingham Trent was advertising spaces through clearing for fashion management with a one-year work placement, so I gave them a call. I was made to feel at ease straight away.

"Now I’m preparing to do a year in industry in London, which I’m really excited about. I’ve come a long way from the girl who did not want to leave the north-east, but that wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t been through clearing. It’s been the best decision I ever made. Clearing was almost the push I needed to go out of my comfort zone and I’ve never looked back!"

The key to success, says Allison Dickinson,

1. Make sure you have everything to hand, such as your qualifications, certificates and a copy of your personal statement.
2. Take a deep breath and try not to worry.
3. Give them a sense of who you are and why you want to study the course.
4. If you have appropriate work experience or have read any books or journals about a specific area of the subject you’re applying to, tell them about it.
5. During the call, stay calm and confident.
6. Don’t be tempted to increase your grades – they’ll be checked via Ucas.
7. Make sure that you have prepared a list of any questions.
8. Finally, remember that clearing is not a bad thing; it can have an incredibly positive outcome and open up a world of possibilities! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Rav Panesar, higher education business development manager at Leeds City College’s University Centre, is having an open mind.

"Your confidence may be low, but don’t accept the first thing that you get offered," he says.

"You are going to be doing that course for a long time, and you don’t want to be doing something that you don’t enjoy. Think about what it was about your original choice that you liked. Was it the modules, or was it the actual college or university that you were interested in? The challenge is finding something that ticks most of those boxes."

It’s important to remember that even though you might find a course with the same subject heading, it could differ in many ways - for example, it could contain different modules, be more exam-heavy. Some might even offer a year in industry or an international placement.

"Look at the modules covered to make sure they match your needs, have a look on the university or college website, and have a look at the Student Room to see what other students are saying," adds Panesar. "Think of the end goal and what you want to do after you have finished your degree. Perhaps a joint honours, or even a completely different route altogether, such as a higher level apprenticeship, could offer you more flexibility!"

Pick your course

How to avoid the short straw

Don’t just accept the first course you’re offered. Consider the modules covered and your end goal, writes Allison Dickinson.

Call us now on 0113 812 3113
leedsbeckett.ac.uk/clearing

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**Before you enter clearing, think about what you want from university and what matters to you.**

What were the most common things that students didn’t realise about clearing?

1. There were several examples of parents calling on their child’s behalf to discuss their application, but if you haven’t nominated a contact, such as your parent or your guardian, as part of your Ucas application form, then only you can speak to the university about your application. Many callers from the sample analysed were also surprised to discover that grades at clearing rarely drop - in many instances they actually increase as demand for places rises and the number of vacancies falls. And finally, bribery doesn’t work! One caller offered a “parental donation” to the university to secure a place – needless to say it did not change the outcome of their call.

Make the most of your calling

If you want a successful clearing experience, stay calm, avoid repeat calls and don’t let your parents resort to bribery. **Sarah Jewell** talks to two experts about the best preparation

Elizabeth Stokoe, professor of social intelligence, Loughborough University

What research have you done into clearing?

ES: We collected about 3,000 calls from last year’s clearing conversations at Loughborough University, transcribed them and then analysed in detail the patterns that emerged.

What mental state were people in?

ES: Clearing is an emotional time and we expected a lot of tears, but actually found that although people were upset they didn’t usually let their emotions interfere in the practical business of making a phonecall. They were generally quite calm and this didn’t surprise me, having studied people in crisis situations - for example doctors talking with patients – it’s amazing how resilient people can be even under very stressful circumstances.

What did you learn from your research into clearing?

ES: Repeat calling wastes everyone’s time and getting stroppy isn’t going to help - some students would phone again if they got a no, hoping to get a different offer from another call taker, but we found no evidence that repeat calling resulted in a course offer when a previous call had failed to secure a place. Repeat calling just slows everyone down - if you don’t get an offer from the first person you talk to, better to move on and look for a course elsewhere.

What should students do before phoning?

SB: It’s important to stay calm, think positively and use relaxation techniques. Be as prepared as possible - do some research on the clearing system. Go to the Ucas website where you can view the full list of vacancies available. You can then start drawing up a shortlist.

What questions should you ask?

SB: Before you even enter clearing, you need to ask what it is you want from university and what matters to you - for example, what type of course you want to embark on and why, and where you want to live. Think about whether there are any opportunities for work experience or placements, what type of jobs graduates in those subjects are getting, whether there is accommodation and what life is like in general as a student at that university.

What sort of attitude should an applicant have to be successful in clearing?

SB: Clearing could turn into the best thing that happens in your life, especially if you get on to a course you love, in a city you’ve always wanted to live in. It’s important to take any opportunity that comes along. While it might feel like a daunting and stressful time, it’s also exciting. The key is to stay positive, proactive and relaxed. Don’t feel sorry for yourself, or compare yourself with others.
Get on top of your finances

Before pitching up at university, ensure you’ve applied for student funding and, when there, make your top priority.

By Harriet Swain

Students who’ve failed to get their funding sorted out in time pose a regular start-of-term challenge for Rob Ellis, financial information support adviser at Swansea University and chair of the National Association of Student Money Advisers. “Often they apply and think that’s it,” he says. “They don’t have a letter back and by the time they get to university they find out they were meant to supply more information.”

For students securing a place through clearing, this can mean details of their new course – which will need to be sent through to Student Finance (for students in England) as soon as possible. Confirmation of any changes to the amount you’re eligible for – if you’ll now be studying in London, for example – will follow. Finance is released once students enrol and are physically present at the university.

Next September, students at English universities will pay tuition fees of up to £9,250 a year and receive loans to cover the fees, paid directly to their institution. They’ll also be eligible for means-tested maintenance loans, paid directly into their bank accounts at the start of each term.

But to secure the loans they must first apply to the student finance body relevant to the part of the UK they’re from. Loan arrangements differ for different regions of the UK, but students funded by Student Finance England will be due to start repaying the loans once they’re earning more than £21,000, from the April after they stop the course.

Meanwhile, they’ll need to budget. “The first term is a long term to last on one payment, so don’t do the obvious thing of wasting the loan in the first month,” advises Fergus Macphee, 22, now in his third year at Manchester University after gaining a place through clearing to study drama and film. “Christmas is expensive, and if you run out of cash you will be totally miserable in the run up to January.”

His other piece of advice is to remember when rent payments come out of your bank account “so you don’t end up owing estate agents a lot of money”.

Different universities and cities will involve different living costs and you should be able to get some idea of what these are likely to be by checking out the various institutions’ websites. It is important to find out what most students there actually spend, rather than what you could get away with spending, in theory, if you never went out or celebrated your friends’ birthdays, and managed to secure a bargain place to live. One of the disadvantages of getting a place through clearing is that you can miss out on the most sought-after accommodation, which may be cheaper or closer to the institution, so it’s important to sort this out as soon as possible.

It’s also a good idea to think about whether or not you will need a part-time job, says Ellis. Again, the best jobs – particularly those on campus – are often snapped up early. The financial support individual students receive can vary significantly because of means-testing and because some parents are much more generous – or better off – than others, so realistic prioritising is essential.

Students have to manage money to have a good experience, says Ellis. “If they spend aimlessly they cannot afford to spend on what they enjoy.”

Money matters

Meanwhile, they’ll need to budget. “The first term is a long term to last

In numbers: finance for 2017/2018 academic year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£9,250 per year</td>
<td>Tuition fees: in England, universities can charge up to £9,250 a year. Welsh institutions charge up to £9,000, but Welsh and non-English EU students get a grant of £4,954 to help pay for this, the rest is covered by a loan. Scottish institutions charge no fees for Scottish and non-English EU students. In Northern Ireland, fees are £4,030 for Northern Irish and non-UK EU students, but students from elsewhere in the UK can be charged up to £9,250.</td>
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<tr>
<td>£7,097 per year</td>
<td>Means-tested maintenance loans: differs across UK nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£11,002 per year</td>
<td>Loan repayment: the April after students complete or leave their courses - once they start earning £21,000 (England and Wales) or £17,775 (Northern Ireland or Scotland) they will begin repaying their student loans. Repayments start around £7 per month and are collected through the UK tax system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£8,430 per year</td>
<td>Grants: Welsh and Northern Irish students are also eligible for means-tested maintenance grants; Scottish students are eligible for bursaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£8,430 per year</td>
<td>Support: means-tested childcare, dependents and disability allowances and travel expenses may also be available to students.</td>
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£147 fee over months on moving accommodation.

Anybody found to be watching TV without a licence will be fined - up to £1,010.

Since September last year, anyone watching or recording live television must have a TV licence, regardless of device – smartphone, laptop and games consoles all count. Students can spread the annual £147 fee over weekly, monthly, or quarterly payments, and will get a refund for any unused months on moving out of student accommodation. Nobody found to be watching TV without a licence will be fined - up to £1,010.

Espresso express: be quick to snap up one of the best jobs on campus

£8,430 per year                  | means-tested childcare, dependents and disability allowances and travel expenses may also be available to students. |

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£21,000 (Northern Ireland or Scotland) - are often snapped up early.

The financial support individual students receive can vary significantly because of means-testing and because some parents are much more generous - or better off - than others, so realistic prioritising is essential.

“Students have to manage money to have a good experience,” says Ellis. “If they spend aimlessly they cannot afford to spend on what they enjoy.”

£21,000

£147 fee over months on moving accommodation.

Anybody found to be watching TV without a licence will be fined - up to £1,010.

Since September last year, anyone watching or recording live television must have a TV licence, regardless of device – smartphone, laptop and games consoles all count. Students can spread the annual £147 fee over weekly, monthly, or quarterly payments, and will get a refund for any unused months on moving out of student accommodation. Nobody found to be watching TV without a licence will be fined - up to £1,010.

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Don't waste all your money on takeaways. With a few simple ingredients, you can create cheap, delicious meals that are nourishing and easy to cook.

**Eggs**
A great source of protein and so versatile. After you've tried them poached, fried, hard-boiled and scrambled, branch out into omelettes or egg-fried rice.

**Garlic**
Buy fresh bulbs or keep a jar of chopped garlic in the fridge.

**Dried herbs**
Use a sprinkle of oregano, rosemary, thyme or basil to add a bit of flavour to mundane meals.

**Chilies**
Dried, flaked or fresh – add some heat to your meals.

**Curry powder and spices**
Liven up your concoctions with delicious fresh spices.

**Lentils**
For hearty soups and curries, use lentils instead of meat – they're cheaper and packed with protein.

**Tins of tomatoes**
A key ingredient in loads of recipes. Simmer tinned tomatoes with olive oil, chilli and garlic for a simple pasta sauce or pizza topping. Pitta bread makes a great alternative pizza base.

**Pasta and rice**
A bit of bulk is essential – and what doesn't go with one will work with the other.

**Tins of chickpeas**
Packed with protein, chickpeas are a great addition to stews and soups. You can also make your own hummus or roast chickpeas with spices for a delicious healthy snack or salad ingredient.

**Lentils**
For hearty soups and curries, use lentils instead of meat – they're cheaper and packed with protein.

**Salt and pepper**
Seasoning perks up a mundane meal.

**Chives**
Dried, flaked or fresh – add some heat to your meals.

**Dried herbs**
Use a sprinkle of oregano, rosemary, thyme or basil to add a bit of flavour to mundane meals.

**Extra**
Don't waste all your money on takeaways. With a few simple ingredients, you can create cheap, delicious meals that are nourishing and easy to cook.
Simply a life–changing education

The University of Lincoln has excellent graduate prospects, world-class research and is rated as Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework.

Where will you be this September?

CALL US ON 0808 164 4444
When Lizzie Stack, 21, received her A-level grades, she was distraught. Instead of the ABB she needed to study history and French at Oxford Brookes, she had received BCD. The D was in maths, so she hoped the university would be lenient, but when she rang, she discovered it had lost her the place. “Obviously I felt my life was over,” says Lizzie. Southampton – her insurance offer – wasn’t interested. Nor were the rest of her five Ucas choices, all of which had previously made offers. She shut herself in her room with the phone and told her mother to stay out. Nor did she feel she could speak to friends. But, once she decided to look at universities she’d never considered before, she started receiving offers. “I had an hour of being upset and not knowing what to do,” she says. “As soon as the first few offers came through I realised it wasn’t that bad and I would still be able to go somewhere.” By mid-afternoon she had confirmed an offer at the University of Greenwich.

Three years on, she is on course for a 2.1, has been prominent in the student union, was elected head of the cheerleading society, and loves London – which she had originally planned to avoid – she will be staying on to do a law conversion course at BPP University.

Heather Stack, a special needs and disability consultant from Warwickshire, had designed the perfect results day for her daughter. There was champagne, a special breakfast, friends coming round and an evening of clubbing. Instead, she found herself communicating with Lizzie by text through a closed bedroom door.

Lizzie had meticulously researched her original choices – preparing spreadsheets of universities, courses and grades demanded, and visiting campuses. “Everything was all planned out, and there was a lot of support from her college for all that,” says Heather. “But what they don’t prepare for is what happens on that day if it doesn’t work out.”

Most stressful was the feeling of time pressure, she says. Some universities had a 10-minute wait to get through by phone, and Lizzie had to decide whether to hang on for possible rejection or try another university on her list. Some asked for communication by text. “How can you condense all that emotion into 140 characters?” asks Heather.

The turning point, she says, was when Lizzie started trying universities lower in the rankings. Getting some offers in meant she started feeling better about herself.

“Early on, I kept wanting Greenwich to be a different place,” says Heather. “But now I’ve seen the charm of it and how happy Lizzie has been there. She’s adored it.”

Interview by Harriet Swain

When she was turned down by her Ucas choices on results day, Lizzie Stack took to the phone and secured a place within hours. Three years on, she has no regrets.
Guide to Clearing 2017

Open days
Book yourself a campus visit

Not sure which clearing offer to commit to? Sign up for an open day or two, says Suzanne Bearne. ‘Clearing can be stressful, but we try to make it as exciting as possible’, says Anthony McGrath, domestic student recruitment manager at Queen’s. “Clearing week can be stressful for some students, but we try to make it as exciting as possible.” Other institutions, including the University of Plymouth, offer visitors free accommodation the night before open day.

So what to expect during the big day? Clearing open days vary from uni to uni, but generally you’ll be going on a tour of the campus, meeting the course leader, scoping out the accommodation, and getting the low-down from the current crop of students.

Lucy Lisanti, 22, who studied anatomy and human biology at the University of Liverpool, recalls visiting the university with her mum. “We were taken on an excellent campus tour with one of the student ambassadors, followed by the head of the course giving us a personal tour of the lecture theatres and laboratories. It was incredibly useful and put my nerves at ease.” The head of the course even handed Lucy her email address, promising to guide her through any questions. “The entire drive back home consisted of me raving about my love for the course, university and city.”

Following the open day, students may still wish to consider other universities and visit their open days. Or maybe, like Lucy, they’ll accept the offer the minute they can get back online at home.

Some universities offer visitors free accommodation the night before their open days.

Are you weighing up several clearing offers? Perhaps you’ve found the perfect course, but aren’t sure you’ll like the university itself, or the city it’s in? Either way, paying a visit or two to prospective universities will put you in a much better position to make an informed choice. Booking to attend an open day is straightforward. Students are often informed about when they can visit when they go through clearing, and many unis allow you to book online. Some pull out all the stops to entice potential students. Queen’s University Belfast not only woos the next set of first-years with free or subsidised flights to its clearing week, but also promises personalised one-to-one tours of the campus. “From the moment students arrive on campus during clearing week they’ll be treated like a VIP.”

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The rules of adjustment

If you’ve exceeded your grade requirements, adjustment offers a five-day window to trade up your university or course, without losing your original place. By Helena Pozniak

Adjustment is like “posh” clearing, says one careers adviser at a Hampshire sixth-form college. It’s for students who’ve done better than expected in their A-levels and want to upgrade their university or course - but it also differs from clearing in vital ways.

‘Students are critical consumers of higher education’

Students who have exceeded the grades required by their firm choice have five days to look around for a better option, but don’t need to be “released” from their existing one. So, if they don’t find anything they like the look of, they still have a place at their firm choice.

While many competitive courses will be full, it’s worth ringing universities on the off-chance. “Things change quickly,” says Dr Katherine Lloyd Clark, head of student recruitment at the University of Exeter, which has recruited a handful of students via adjustment for the last three years. “There’s no harm in ringing round. It’s a great market for students at the moment and they should be ambitious.”

There’s no official vacancy list for adjustment, which was introduced in 2009, and numbers using it are small – last year just 890 of 535,175 who went to university in September did so through adjustment. As with clearing, the usual health warnings apply, and admissions tutors warn against rash choices made solely on the perceived prestige of a university.

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A wise investment of time

Dina Ghanma, 21, went through Ucas adjustment to change from pharmacology to finance and investment banking in 2013.

“I needed to get AAB to get to the University of Dundee - I saw pharmacology as a gateway to medicine. But I’d grown less sure that this was what I wanted, and wondered about trying for medicine or something completely different. I did better at A-level than I needed - I got an A-star and three As - so I realised I had options.

I began looking around as soon as I got my results. I used Ucas to do a course search on finance and investment banking and I emailed universities I was interested in - it did feel quite stressful. I read up about the different courses and what they entailed, read student blogs and looked how far each university was from London. I was at school in Jordan so I had to do everything remotely. But all the universities replied promptly.

The course at Reading looked perfect. I talked to lots of people - mostly relatives. My parents were relieved I’d be close to London. Ultimately, it was my own decision but all the small bits of advice helped nudge me in the right direction.

After a few days I made my decision and applied through adjustment - it was a quick process and I was accepted.

This was definitely the right decision - I achieved a 90% average on my course and I got really involved in extracurricular activities. I graduated last year and I’m now doing an MSc in financial research, hopefully with funding for further research. HP

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Having extra requirements should be no barrier to university, and a vast range of help is on offer, writes Allison Dickinson.

Some students with special needs may feel that their application could be affected or that the university could see this as a weakness, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. Universities are generally geared up to help students with additional needs, whatever those needs might be, and have specialist teams on hand to help — so students are encouraged to be open about the kind of support they might need.

“It’s important to state that any student who approaches us will always be assessed on their academic merits and their strengths in terms of being a potential student,” says David Seaton, head of student recruitment at the University of Bedfordshire.

“Under no circumstances should a student with additional needs ever be put off pursuing higher education, because there is a vast range of support available to help them succeed.”

For students with mobility difficulties, for example, campuses should be fully accessible in terms of lift access to all floors, so students can get to lectures and seminars, and technology has made it possible for visually impaired students to access seminar and lecture notes in large print or via text-to-speech software.

However, the amount and type of support needed is unique, so students should make the university aware of the help they need as soon as possible.

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However, the amount and type of support needed is unique, so students should make the university aware of the help they need as soon as possible. “Of course, not all disabilities are visible, so it’s important for students to tell us the kind of help they need, even if they might not need it straight away,” says Seaton. “However, it’s up to the student to decide how much help they need and when; the choice is very much theirs.”

Matthew Usher, student recruitment manager at Bournemouth University, agrees. “We have dedicated support teams for Additional Learning Support (ALS) and disabilities who work to understand your needs and how they can provide the most appropriate support for you and your course.”

Everyone’s needs are individual, so if you have a particular university or course in mind, it’s a good idea to contact the ALS and disability support teams while you’re waiting for your results, to understand what support is on offer alongside the course you’re thinking about.

If you’ve already had an assessment for support through the Disabled Students’ Allowance, you won’t need to do this part of the process again — but universities will want to understand your needs to make sure you get off to a great start to the term.”

Top tips

Joanne Jones, student wellbeing service manager at the University of Derby, offers tips for students with additional needs who are applying through clearing:

1. Inform the university of your needs at the earliest opportunity and share any current care/support plans with the student support team.
2. If you plan to move into halls of residence, do they have accommodation to suit your needs or will you need to make any specific adaptations? If adaptations are needed, is this achievable in the timeframe?
3. If you need help with personal care, refer yourself to the local authority for an assessment of your care and support needs.
4. If you are receiving secondary mental health care, talk to them and the university about transferring your support.
5. If you will be living independently for the first time, think about your skills in budgeting, cooking, laundry, etc.
6. Communicate any specific transport requirements.
7. Get advice on all available funding, including Disabled Students’ Allowances.
8. If you use regular medication, order a repeat prescription and bring at least a month’s supply to last until you can register with a new GP.
9. Visit the university and relevant departments. Consider whether the rooms are accessible and if this is the right environment for you.
Support from the University of Bedfordshire means that student Luke Walsh, who has autism and ADHD, is thriving on his broadcast journalism course, writes Allison Dickinson

1 was halfway through a BTEC at Barnfield College in Luton, but I had enough Ucas points to qualify for a foundation year - so instead of doing the second year at Barnfield I took the plunge and applied for university. I live in Luton with my parents and the University of Bedfordshire is quite close, so I applied for a foundation degree there.

I originally wanted to do sports journalism - I’m a sports fanatic and Sky Sports News is my life!

But I decided to pursue broadcast journalism to keep my options open, as it covered a wider range of media outlets. I got “promoted” within the first few weeks to the first-year undergraduate programme because my tutors thought I had potential, which was fantastic.

People at the University of Bedfordshire were really positive and I felt like they really understood my situation. They basically said to me: “If you have any worries or issues, you know where we are, and we will have time for you.”

I was evaluated so often going through school it felt like I was being constantly prodded and probed, so having that safety net was a breath of fresh air. Having that self-reliance means I am treated just like everyone else. I feel like I’m there as an individual, and not just someone with autism and ADHD.

I have social problems more than anything else, but having my diagnosis is like having a get-out-of-jail-free card for awkward situations!

When it comes to studying, I need extra time in exams, because I sometimes struggle to interpret the questions. I also type faster than I write, so I got a word processor when I was at school. Unfortunately, that’s not covered by the Disability Students’ Allowance at university because it’s only offered for students with dyslexia.

Should anything go wrong in the next three years I know there is someone to turn to, and I know I can talk it over with them and they will have the time and the patience to go through it all with me.

I covered the US election in November and the UK election in June, and I present two student radio programmes. I have a football programme on Saturday afternoon, and a little Sunday show where I interview guests and play music, so it’s all going really well. The world is my oyster.


‘I got promoted. My tutors saw potential’
If you don’t get the grades you were after, you may want to appeal or even resit your exams – but at what cost? By Harriet Swain

Re-mark, resit or resist the urge?

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Not going to uni this autumn? There’s a whole world of practical and vocational options for you to explore, says Suzanne Bearne

inspiring your A-levels and marching straight into university isn’t for everyone. For those looking to further their education or join the workforce, there’s a vast number of paths to explore.

“University is good but it’s not the be-all and end-all,” says Jez Booker, marketing manager at online guide Not Going to Uni. “A fair chunk of young people have a very clear idea of what they want to achieve and what professional role they want to follow in life. Others have the self-knowledge to know they are not ready for traditional university, and even degrees. " says Jez Booker, marketing manager at online guide Not Going to Uni.

There’s a whole world of opportunities out there for students - academic qualifications, management qualifications and even degrees.”

Another alternative path is to study for a technical or professional qualification at an FE college, where students combine theory with practical skills.

But if this is still too theoretical, a work placement may be the answer. “Work placements give the employer a chance to scope out a potential employee, while the student can assess whether it’s the job for them,” says Catherine Sezen, senior policy manager for 14-19 and curriculum at the Association of Colleges.

When Ana Sofia Pinto de Oliveira, 19, missed her predicted A-level grades, she was advised by her sixth-form teachers to resit her A-levels or do a foundation year. “I didn’t know what a foundation year was, so I did some research. It seemed a foundation year would suit my needs to move on from A-levels but also work well with other qualifications, management qualifications and even degrees.”

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Seek out your new home

You’re accepted on a course: the hard work’s done. But don’t forget you still need somewhere to live, says Helena Pozniak

W

here you live can make or break your student years. Amid the hubbub, students in clearing often forget to ask about accommodation when they’re trying to secure a university place. But places in halls will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. “The sooner we have a confirmed place on a course, the quicker we can allocate a student room in our halls – or we’ll help them find a suitable alternative,” says Steve Ward, customer services manager at Derby Student Residences, at the University of Derby, where staff help students sort out accommodation while they’ve got them on the phone. Millie Heathcote, who secured a place through clearing last year at Leeds Beckett University, was worried she might have missed out on the type of accommodation she wanted, but it was all arranged over the phone. “The accommodation team spent well over an hour speaking to me and my mum to track down the perfect place to live.”

Most helplines are open around the clock during the first days of clearing and many universities will guarantee all students a place to live if they decide by the end of August. At least some accommodation is normally held in reserve – more than a third of first-year students in London South Bank University’s four halls of residence came through clearing last year, says Sacha

Housing facts

1. Only 13% of students who went through clearing in 2016 didn’t find a place in university accommodation. Source: Which? University

2. Universities will offer a range of prices and room choices, from catered to self-catered, ensuites and luxury rooms. The average weekly rent for student halls is £147, according to a NUS/Unipol accommodation survey, but basic rooms are cheaper. Rooms at Northampton University, for example, start at £66.50. Some universities will charge around £70 a week more than their basic price for luxury rooms.

3. Private university halls, a relatively new development, are often more expensive than those run by the university. They normally include bills – but check what other extras to expect – and tend to be well located.

4. Private rented accommodation may be cheaper on a weekly basis, but tenancies may exceed the academic year and bills will be extra.

5. University hall costs vary across the country – Newcastle University costs £4,200-£5,460 for the academic year, Royal Holloway, University of London £4,760-£6,230, and the University of Bath £4,450-£6,290. Source: The Complete University Guide

6. Eight out of ten of the most expensive universities for living costs are in London, according to Go Compare.

7. Marshall-Ocaña, head of student accommodation. Prospective students can request a tour there before term starts, and staff do their best to match students with friends if they ask. Informal Facebook pages are a good place to “meet” future flatmates, he says. But not all universities are flush with student halls, and many of the affordable rooms may have gone – LSBU rents, for instance, range from £32 to £159 a week. Some universities hold housing events after results, where prospective students visit to find potential flatmates and private accommodation – private student halls have sprung up around many universities and all housing offices will have lists of approved landlords. Students often approach these events as a grim necessity – “a bit like speed dating” said one student. Happily, most report that the results are worth it, but for those who don’t find what they want, it isn’t too late to change after term begins. “If you don’t get on with your building or flatmates, check if your university does room-swaps,” says Nik Taylor, community editor at The Student Room. He adds that students will need to be proactive and persistent to get what they want.

Private landlords will ask for a deposit, whereas university accommodation doesn’t normally require this – but might require a small advance on rent. Sites such as studentpad.co.uk and spareroom.co.uk help with room searches and most universities have Facebook pages, while new apps promise to match student renters and landlords safely, with a guarantor in place.

“Where you live is an exciting part of your university experience,” says David Collett, director of campus and residential services at Leeds Beckett. “We understand how important it is.”
Huw Fletcher-Jones, 19, sat the International Baccalaureate at an international school in Cairo in 2016 and went through clearing to study chemistry at the University of Sheffield.

One particular maths exam didn’t go well and I missed my offers at Bath and Edinburgh. I spent a couple of days panicking – it was quite terrifying. But I do think the way clearing is set up as a safety net is really helpful.

Once I got over my annoyance at myself, I got down to some research. Originally I’d wanted to study chemical engineering. The extra time in clearing was useful. I could find out which universities had vacancies – I was specifically looking at places that I’d already visited, and I began phoning admissions officers. Some asked me to wait until A-level results came out. Others, such as Sheffield, put me through to the chemistry department who saw my physics and chemistry were good. I ended up getting a place at Sheffield before A-level results and I sorted accommodation earlier than most in clearing.

Although a minority qualification, IBs are highly regarded

‘Although a minority qualification, IBs are highly regarded’

IB students who’ve only just fallen short of required grades may still be accepted on to their course, like their A-Level counterparts. “It’s definitely worth ringing both your first and insurance choice after you get your results with your Ucas ID to hand,” advises Hunt. “They may be able to tell you then and there. But in some cases, until A-level results, they may ask you to sit tight.”

Admissions staff will look at individual subject scores. “So if they’ve done really well in their chosen subject, but worse in something unrelated, there might be some flexibility,” she says.

Ucas will list some course vacancies before 17 August, but students can also make opportunistic inquiries. Some universities such as Sheffield allow students to register in advance, so that student details are to hand as clearing hots up.

If they spot a course they really like, it’s worth phoning in advance to convince academics of their commitment “even if they don’t currently have any places listed in clearing,” says Shaun Fenton, headmaster of Reigate Grammar School. IB students might be asked to ring again on A-level results day itself, when they have a clearer picture of who’s in and who’s out.

With its broad scope, the IB could be a selling point in clearing – and students can use this to their advantage, says Fenton. ‘Although a minority qualification, it’s highly regarded.’

Taking the IB and clearing route to chemistry

How Fletcher-Jones, 19, sat the International Baccalaureate at an international school in Cairo in 2016 and went through clearing to study chemistry at the University of Sheffield.

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Your guide to gap-year greatness

A productive gap year or stint of travelling can be a voyage of discovery, whether volunteering, learning a new language or skill. You might even help your job prospects, writes Oliver Pickup

A productive gap year or stint of travelling can be a voyage of discovery, whether volunteering, learning a new language or skill. You might even help your job prospects, writes Oliver Pickup.
Clearing places available at a top 12 UK university

024 76 791 791

www.coventry.ac.uk/clearing

Switching on to social media

Universities aren’t just manning phonelines for clearing – as a way of appealing to text-happy, talk-phobic students, they’re also opening up social media channels. By Antonia Windsor

“Clearing day used to be about spending hours on the phone – often on hold or in a queue. And although clearing hotlines are still a big part of the process, universities are realising that if they are going to reach the text-happy generation, it makes sense to open up social media, live chat and text to start the application process and even make offers.”

“Speaking on the phone is not something many students do in their everyday lives,” says Charlotte Renwick, associate director of customer marketing at Leeds Beckett University. “We want to make it as easy as possible for students to talk to us comfortably. Of course we will still have lots of people on the phone lines, but we will also have provision for people to text in, use live chat and message through Facebook and Twitter – and the teams on all those channels are trained to make offers.”

Joe Field, social media manager at Sheffield Hallam university, says last year was a bit of a lightbulb moment: “We used Facebook Messenger to initiate the application process, giving applicants an alternative route. This year we’ll offer Facebook Messenger and Twitter DMs as ways people can enquire about course availability, and for us to get basic information about applicants’ suitability. We’ll also field questions on Snapchat, but won’t use it for applications.”

In Birmingham, both Newman University and Birmingham City University will be making offers through Facebook and Twitter messages. Renwick believes social media also enables people to ask questions they might otherwise be reluctant to ask: “Last year we had questions like ‘Can I bring my guinea pig?’ Facebook Live broadcasts will also be featured throughout the day at several universities, Leeds Beckett places to use the story features on Snapchat and Instagram to keep people updated about how the day is progressing.

Newcastle University, meanwhile, will keep prospective students updated via WhatsApp. “Students sign up for personalised information on the clearing process, course places and help and advice around results day - and this year we’re extending that to WhatsApp, so they get alerts straight to their phones,” says Matt Horne, digital marketing and social media officer at Newcastle University. “We’re using Snapchat influencers to encourage our target audience to sign up for alerts,” he adds. “Students will also be able to contact us through WhatsApp to ask any questions they might have about clearing, results day and coming here.”

Top tips

1. Find out if the university you are interested in is offering places or taking application enquiries through social media by looking up their Twitter feeds and Facebook pages.
2. If you get an offer, watch Facebook Live broadcasts, or go to the website to check out videos and virtual tours of the accommodation options and the facilities.
3. When you get offered a place you’re happy with, accept it in Ucas Track.
4. Take a selfie and post on social media to tell everyone you’ve got on a course you wanted.

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Virtual tours
Glimpse the future

Short of going on a whistle-stop tour, your best option for getting a feel for your new uni life is online, says Antonia Windsor. You’ve found some courses you like the sound of in clearing and need to create a shortlist, but you need to act quickly and trekking around the country to check out the universities in person is obviously out. This is where virtual open days and online videos of student life, facilities and accommodation come into their own – because websites and prospectuses give you loads of information, but they don’t really give you the atmosphere of a place.

Some virtual open days, such as the one on Southampton University’s website, rely on the street view function of Google Maps to give you an idea of the distance between places, such as your departmental building and your accommodation, or the lecture theatre and the sports centre. Other universities have interactive features that tailor the virtual open day to your particular interests.

At the University of Westminster’s website you select up to three subjects you are interested in – and can also tick options to find out about fees and funding, accommodation, sport and fitness, or life in London. You’re then taken to the campuses you would be studying on, and can explore virtually, climbing up stairs and entering lecture theatres. You also get videos about the subjects you are interested in, which include soundbites from students and lecturers and links to further information.

If you want to get a feel for a large number of different places, head to the Ucas website where there’s a handy list of virtual tours that you can click your way through, listed in alphabetical order of institution. And once you’ve secured your place through clearing, most universities hold clearing open days in August, so you will get a chance to check out your chosen place out in person before starting in the autumn. You may even be able to sign up for an online presentation, such as those offered at the University of Hertfordshire, where you attend talks in a virtual classroom, type in questions and get live responses.

Emerson Gaudin, who left Jersey a few years ago to study digital games at Falmouth University, found a general freshers page and a course-specific page before he went: a course page for talking informally to tutors and meeting people studying the same subject, and a general freshers’ page. ‘A few of us met up in the Student Union bar early in freshers’ week,’ he says.

And if you can’t find a group, consider setting one up, with a name other students might search for: Cardiff University Geology students 2017-2020, for example.

As always, remember to stay safe online. Don’t give out personal data and remember that people may present a false image of themselves online.
On the job with London Met

An emphasis on work-based learning – with placements and projects – makes graduates from London Metropolitan University especially attractive to potential employers.

ALL SYSTEMS GO

London Met graduate Alexander Duncan gained a first-class honours BSc in computer networking, followed by a distinction in an MSc in network management and security. Computer science students have access to specialist facilities, including advanced Cisco labs. Describing the teaching staff as “fantastic”, Duncan says he appreciated the mix of theory and practical work, which he needed to understand the theory of how IT systems work, but also be able to implement them and see how they work in real life.

Duncan now works at technology company Cisco as a global systems engineer. He attributes his success to the opportunities London Met gave him: “It really inspired me to push myself to become the person I am today.”

London Met works 95% of all 2016 graduates are in work or further study. If you want to do something you love, London Met can take you there, you could join London Met this September, Call 0800 055 2833 or visit londonmet.ac.uk/clearing

Get ahead of the pack

It’s easy to forget to take a vital item or two – so Allison Dickinson got some packing tips from old hands at the University of Chester.

Sarah Carden, third-year student

willing to learn about other people. – not everyone is the same, so be come with an open mind.

Top tip: Bring: a clothes airer

It’s so handy to have your own, as flatmates may argue over whose turn it is to buy the roll!

Top tip: Bring: a bicycle

A bike helps you get about and is good for wellbeing and exercise too – it proved really useful.

Top tip: bring Berocca!

Barry Miller, third-year student

Top tip: bring something sentimental

My Gran has always used airers, and insisted I bring one. I shared a house in my first year and everyone used it! It proved really useful.

Top tip: try something new.

Zhaania Stephenson, third-year student

ever done.

Top tip: bring something new.

I joined the cheerleading society as a joke, and it’s the best thing I’ve ever done.

Top tip: bring fancy dress

With clubs and societies come some great fancy-dress socials, so I’d suggest bringing spare costumes home to save a bit of cash.

Top tip: go for it!

Dr Anna Mackenzie, residential support manager, through what you’re bringing.

Top tip: try something new.

prospective housemates to talk to, and it proved really useful.

Top tip: get in touch with people who are used to living in halls. My family are from County Sligo and I’ve climbed Benbulben in my room that has a framed photo of Barry Miller, third-year student

Top tip: bring Berocca!

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What to take

Bedroom stuff

Duvet

Fitted sheets x 2

Uvet cover x 2

Pillows x2

Pillow cases x4

Mattress protector

Clothes hangers

Desk lamp

Laundry bag

Kitchen stuff

Crockery

Glasses x 4

Toilet roll

Toiletries

Towels

Bathroom

Toiletries

Towels

Bathroom stuff

Laundry bag

Clothes hangers

MPILow cases x4

Pillows x2

Duvet cover x 2

Fitted sheets x 2

Duvet

Bedroom stuff

Bags

Pasta and rice

Tins tomatoes

Tea and coffee

Squad

Electrical

Laptop

Speaker

Chargers

Headphones

Stationery

Drawing pins

Paper and pens

Memory stick

Sharpener

Seltalope

Hole puncher

Stapler and staples

Post-it notes

A4 ring binders

Plastic folders

Pillow cases x4

Pillows x2

Duvet cover x 2

Fitted sheets x 2

Duvet

Bedroom stuff

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Bathroom

Toiletries

Towels

Bathroom stuff

Laundry bag

Clothes hangers

MPILow cases x4

Pillows x2

Duvet cover x 2

Fitted sheets x 2

Duvet

Bedroom stuff

Bags

Pasta and rice

Tins tomatoes

Tea and coffee

Squad

Electrical

Laptop

Speaker

Chargers

Headphones

Stationery

Drawing pins

Paper and pens

Memory stick

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Seltalope

Hole puncher

Stapler and staples

Post-it notes

A4 ring binders

Plastic folders
University life is about so much more than getting your teeth into your subject. You’ll be missing a trick if you don’t get involved in volunteer work and join a few university societies, says Richard Brooks, vice-president (union development) at the National Union of Students.

University is an extremely exciting period of your life; it is a transformational experience, from start to finish. It is when many of us live away from home for the first time, and we are encouraged to try new things, figure out who we are, and firm up what career path we want to pursue (though don’t worry if you end up reaching graduation none the wiser).

Earning a degree or qualification may be the ultimate goal, but so much essential character shaping takes place outside of the lecture halls and exam rooms. Extracurricular activities offer students the chance to participate in a whole range of enriching and fulfilling pursuits. By learning new skills, finding hidden passions, making lifelong friends, and boosting your curriculum vitae, the rewards for signing up are plentiful.

There are literally thousands of clubs and societies to choose from. For instance, in the academic year just gone (2016-17), there were 786 members of the various Harry Potter societies and Quidditch teams at universities across the land.

And at the last count, there were 18,000 student volunteers (running unions, clubs, societies, and charities) in higher-education institutions in the UK – that’s more than the National Trust (82,000) and Oxfam (23,000) put together. Our latest NUS Volunteer Engagement Survey, published last year [2016], reveals that 60% of students volunteer because they want to help people, and more than half (52%) do so to improve their employability; 55% participate because they want to “make a difference” to the world. Quite incredibly, UK-based students raised more than £7m in the 2015-16 academic year, through their charity fundraising. In this way, not only is it a valuable experience for the volunteers themselves, but communities and society as a whole also benefit.

Yes, there are the glorious individual experiences and advantages from volunteering and taking part in extracurricular activities, but students are a force for change, building movements and legacies that last way beyond their own time at university. And that is why getting stuck in to life away from the lecture hall is so vital.

Interview by Oliver Pickup

Extracurricular activities give you a chance to boost your cv and broaden your friend base, says Richard Brooks.

*Students can build legacies that last way beyond their own time at university*
University societies

Rabbit suits, renewables and rare fun

Whatever your interest – however left field – chances are there’s a society for it. Oliver Pickup surveys the current crop

even there were 2.28 million students at UK higher education institutions in the 2015-16 academic year, according to Universities UK statistics, now more than ever it pays to stand out, follow new passions, and seek positive career while at uni.

A career-boosting degree may be the ultimate goal, but there is so much more to university life than books and studying. Embrace the variety on offer with gusto and it may define your future, according to James Reed, chairman of recruitment agency Reed: “Leadership, curiosity, and a willingness to pursue interests will to an extent translate well to the world of work.”

“One of the other highlights was climbing Everest, raising money for Childreach International – a charity which aims to improve the education, healthcare and rights of children in seven countries. The confidence I built up at university was mirrored in my work abroad. Now, having graduated, I’m making great strides in the business side of the music industry. OP

Guide to Clearing 2017 | 49
You might be upset when you first get your results—but try to gather yourself before calling the hotlines, says Lucy Jolin.

A quick reminder
Deep breaths...

Don’t ask your parent/teacher/best mate to make the call for you
Don’t panic!
Don’t lie
Take your time

You could and achieved the best you could,” says King. “Universities will check your grades, so be open and honest. The call will be confidential between you and the operator—nobody is listening in.”

It should also go without saying that it needs to be you who makes the call. Don’t be tempted to get your mum or your best mate to do it for you: it doesn’t look good and it’s pointless anyway—a university won’t deal with them. “Universities need to speak directly to students—not to parents or teachers,” says Helen Bower, assistant marketing director (undergraduate) at Northumbria University.

While having emotional support from your peers is great, exercise a bit of caution, says King: “Don’t let your friends sway you into making decisions that you are not comfortable with.”

And although it’s easy to get caught up in the rush to find a place—any place—don’t accept the first opportunity that comes along, says Zoe Carpenter, 18, currently studying animal biology at the University of Gloucestershire.

“I went through clearing having declined all the universities that accepted me—I was unsure of what I wanted to do at the time,” she says. “Look thoroughly through all the courses on offer and be confident you are genuinely interested in the subject. Don’t just jump at the first one you like because you think you have no time.”

Don’t panic!
Don’t ask your parent/teacher/best mate to make the call for you
Take your time

A quick reminder
Deep breaths...
At Regent’s University London, we deliver a truly cosmopolitan experience in the heart of the capital.

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