

Correspondence

Joint letter from Ofqual and UCAS to students, summer 2025 (accessible)

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What you need to know at a glance

- The tried and tested process for marking and grading continues - the standard of work needed to achieve any particular grade is the same each year.
- Your grade will be determined by your performance in your exams and assessments.
- Most people get their first university choice, your UCAS 'firm choice'. If you don't, or you change your mind, there are plenty of options available, with around 28,000 courses in Clearing offering you choice and flexibility.

Dear student,

It's getting close to results days, with plans well under way to support those of you who would like to go on to university or college this September. We appreciate that this is a very important time while you consider decisions around next steps, including university offers and UCAS Clearing. Therefore, we want to make it as easy as possible for you to know your options when you get your results, including if you should change your mind.

Here are some things to be aware of before results are issued:

How will my exam be marked?

- Your work is marked anonymously by expert markers, who are often teachers with many years of experience. They do not know your name, which school or college you go to, or where you live. Ofqual makes sure that the rules are the same for all students taking the same qualification.

How are grade boundaries set?

- The tried and tested arrangements for grading are in place for GCSEs, AS, A levels and vocational and technical qualifications (such as in health and social care or engineering) in 2025. These arrangements allow exam boards to ensure the standard of work needed to achieve any particular grade is comparable year on year.
- Exam boards compare data about the students taking the qualification with data about those who have taken it previously. Senior examiners then scrutinise samples of work from students who have achieved marks on and around these provisional grade boundaries. They compare this with the work of students from the previous year who achieved the same grade boundaries to make sure the standard of work this year and in previous years is comparable. Grade boundaries (the number of marks needed to get each grade) are then confirmed. The bottom line is that your grades are determined only by how you perform in your own assessments.
- All papers have to be new – and therefore different – every year. Grade boundaries typically change year on year to reflect small changes in the difficulty of the paper that students have sat. Where grade boundaries change from a previous year, for example, it does not mean it is more difficult or easier to achieve a particular grade – it just reflects that the level of difficulty of the paper was different.

- Your grades are then determined entirely on the basis of the marks you have achieved in your exams and assessments, and where those marks fall in relation to the grade boundaries. There are no quotas for the number of grades that can be awarded each year.
- Vocational and technical qualifications are graded in a way that is appropriate to the specific qualification.

How can I appeal against my grades?

- If you think there has been a mistake in how your exams or assessments have been marked, you should talk to your school or college. They can ask the exam boards to check if there were any errors in how your exam or assessment was marked. More information can be found in [Ofqual's student guide](#).

What if my results aren't what I expected?

- If you meet the conditions of your offer, congratulations; your place is confirmed, and your university or college will be in touch with information about what you need to do next. If you don't get the grades you were hoping for, don't worry, as your university or college may still offer you a place, even if you haven't achieved your predicted grades.
- If you didn't quite get the grades you were hoping for, or if you did but are reconsidering your choices, you can explore options in Clearing. You can even use Clearing if you are considering applying to begin studying this year for the first time.
- [Clearing is the final stage](#) of the UCAS admissions process and takes place after you receive your results. Clearing allows students to see which universities still have spaces on their courses, and for universities to match applicants to available places once they have received their results.
- Whether you are looking for an available place, rethinking your plans and considering a different course or institution, or submitting an application for the first time, there is plenty of choice available with around 28,000 different courses in Clearing this year.

How can I prepare for results day?

- When getting ready for results day, it's always worth doing a bit of research about your options. Think about [courses you are interested in](#) and contact the admissions offices at the universities and colleges to talk about spaces. You might want to look back at your original 5 choices on your UCAS application, and revisit them as a potential option, as we know many students choose to go back to one of these institutions via Clearing. You can also listen to UCAS' [Streetview YouTube series](#), discover different university courses with [Subject Spotlights](#) or get a taster of different careers with [virtual work experiences](#).
- Remember, there are no restrictions on the number of conversations you can have with universities during Clearing, so you can chat to lots of different universities or colleges before making a decision. If you need any advice about how to approach these conversations throughout Clearing, you can take a look at [UCAS' videos](#) for extra support.
- From 8am on results day, check your email or log into your UCAS Hub to start exploring your next steps. You can add a Clearing Choice on your UCAS application from 1pm on JCQ Results Day. If you need support, UCAS is here to help. You can contact UCAS by phone, on social media, or at ucas.com - whatever works best for you.

With around 1.2 million students coming to ucas.com each year, we're here to support everyone who wants to go to university or college this September find the right choice for them. Results day is a huge milestone, so we want you to reflect on your achievements and prepare for the next chapter feeling as informed and confident as you can be.

Yours faithfully,

Sir Ian Bauckham CBE, Chief Regulator, Ofqual
Dr Jo Saxton CBE, Chief Executive, UCAS