

# Guide to Clearing

Haven't achieved the exam results you needed to secure your university place?  
Don't panic - we can help you find a course that's still right for you.

## 1 Is Clearing for me?

Clearing is the process by which universities with available course places are matched with students seeking a place. You're eligible to enter Clearing if your Ucas Track status says **'You are in Clearing'** or **'Clearing has started'**. Go to the Ucas website for details of the latest university course vacancies - you'll need to call them up to secure a place.

Last year, more than 64,900 students found a course through Clearing - so you're not on your own. In fact, you'll need to move fast to snap up available courses.

### Top tip

Clearing actually opens several weeks before A-level results day, so you can get a headstart if you're not holding any offers or are a Highers, BTEC or IB student with results..

## 2 Research courses and universities

Be quick, but don't madly rush to accept the first course you find. Research vacancies thoroughly to draw up a shortlist of universities to call - it's worth dedicating time to this process before hitting the phones on results day.

Once you've found a potential course, make use of all available resources to build up a proper picture of what the course is like to study and what current students think about it - university websites and Which? University's course finder ([www.which.co.uk/university](http://www.which.co.uk/university)) will help.

### Top tip

A good place to start devising your Plan B is by thinking back to your original Ucas choices - not only to get yourself back into a researching mindset but also as a ready-made shortlist of universities and courses you've previously thought seriously about.

## 3 Preparing for The Call ...

Gather together the things you might need when speaking to universities.

- Your Ucas Clearing number, so tutors can view your original application.
- The course code, name and details of the course content you're enquiring about.
- Your personal statement - re-read this, in case you're asked questions.

Think about the key points you want to make. Note down why that specific course appeals to you - highlighting something specific about it that you uncovered during your research, why you should get the place and questions to ask them.

### Top tip

You may be asked why you didn't achieve your grades, so think honestly about what factors played a part here. Think about positive points to share, too - a really good unit mark, or experience relevant to the course that's not listed on your Ucas form.

## 4 Phoning universities

The conversation might simply involve a confirmation of your grades and that there's a place available with your name on it. On the other hand, you may find yourself on the receiving end of some tricky questions designed to test out your suitability for the course.

Take down contact details in case you need to get back in touch or get cut off. It might be that you get a straight 'yes' or 'no' over the phone, or that they'll follow up to confirm with you later.

### Top tip

You can call every uni on your shortlist and verbally accept more than one offer, but you may only enter one institution on Track. Before making that final commitment, try to go along to the university and look around. The 'feel' of a campus or city is crucial.

## 5 Confirming your place - the admin bit!

Think over the pros and cons of the offer(s). This is where you'll need family, friends or a teacher on hand. If you're happy, go to Track, click **'Add Clearing Choice'** and enter the course code and details requested. Once the university confirms this via Ucas you will receive a confirmation letter and your Track status will change. You're in!

### Time for a quick celebration but do:

- Change your university details on your student finance application
- Sort out your accommodation
- Let your school or college know where you're going

## Alternatives to Clearing

- Resit a subject and re-apply next year. This means exams again next summer, probably some tuition and definitely a place to sit the exams - so talk to a teacher.
- Or, you could just reapply next year for slightly different courses or universities with your existing grades. Plan your gap year to get the most out of it.
- Consider alternatives such as a Higher Apprenticeship - explore opportunities for employment and training in areas such as finance, retail, IT and childcare.
- The world of work. Brush up your CV, check out job ads or go to recruitment agencies to find either short- (to fund a gap year) or long-term roles.
- Study abroad. Some European unis offering English-speaking courses may have vacancies for the upcoming year. There are lots of issues to consider, so think through carefully.

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## Useful resources

- Live vacancies: Ucas and *The Telegraph*
  - UCAS Helpline: 0371 468 0468
  - Exam Results Helpline: 0808 100 8000
  - Which? University Clearing special:  
**[www.which.co.uk/clearing](http://www.which.co.uk/clearing)**
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“So many people I know didn’t get into their first choice unis - and all of them ended up loving where they ended up.”

1st year English student

“Think about it properly before committing. Most universities will give you 24 hours to think it through if you ask.”

3rd year Biology student

“Lines may be too busy to get through - so while you’re trying, keep researching. It’s all a panic but I was finally offered two places.”

2nd year Archaeology student

“I was rejected around eight times ... You have to be assertive and think of the phone call as an interview.”

1st year Economics student

