Thank you for joining

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- Please post your questions using the chat box to the side of the webinar screen
- We’re available to answer your questions throughout the webinar
- Some information presented could be specific to the universities delivering the presentation
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Taking the Next Step:
Navigating UCAS, admissions and student funding

Dawn Dowling, Newcastle University
Jalal Pour, UCL



Session aims

By the end of this session, we hope that you will be better able to:

- Understand the university application journey.
- Identify relevant admissions and financial support.
- Support students to disclose their circumstances where they choose.
- Signpost students to relevant resources and support services.

Coming up

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Applicant Journey: UCAS overview

How can CEES students share details about their circumstances?

Accessing financial support

Why disclosure matters

What support is available?

5 key takeaways

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Applicant Journey: UCAS Overview



University & Colleges Admissions Services

- **Most students in the UK apply to university via UCAS**
  - UCAS opens in September and closes in January (Oct deadline for Oxbridge, Med, Dent and Vet Med courses)
  - Apply for up to 5 courses
  - Requires a teacher/tutor to act as a referee
- **All applicants must provide:**
  - Personal details e.g. Name, DOB, School
  - Course Choices: up to 5
  - Qualifications e.g. GCSE's, predicted grades
  - Work Experience: part time job, volunteering etc
  - Personal Statement: 3 questions, 4,000 characters to support their application



University & Colleges Admissions Services

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- **Care Experienced & Estranged applicants can:**
  - Use personal extenuating circumstances section to provide context
  - Declare care experience/estrangement (optional)
    - Supports contextual offer making
  - Ask their referee to include personal circumstances info in their statement
  - Check their eligibility for alternative entry routes



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How can CEES students share details about their circumstances?

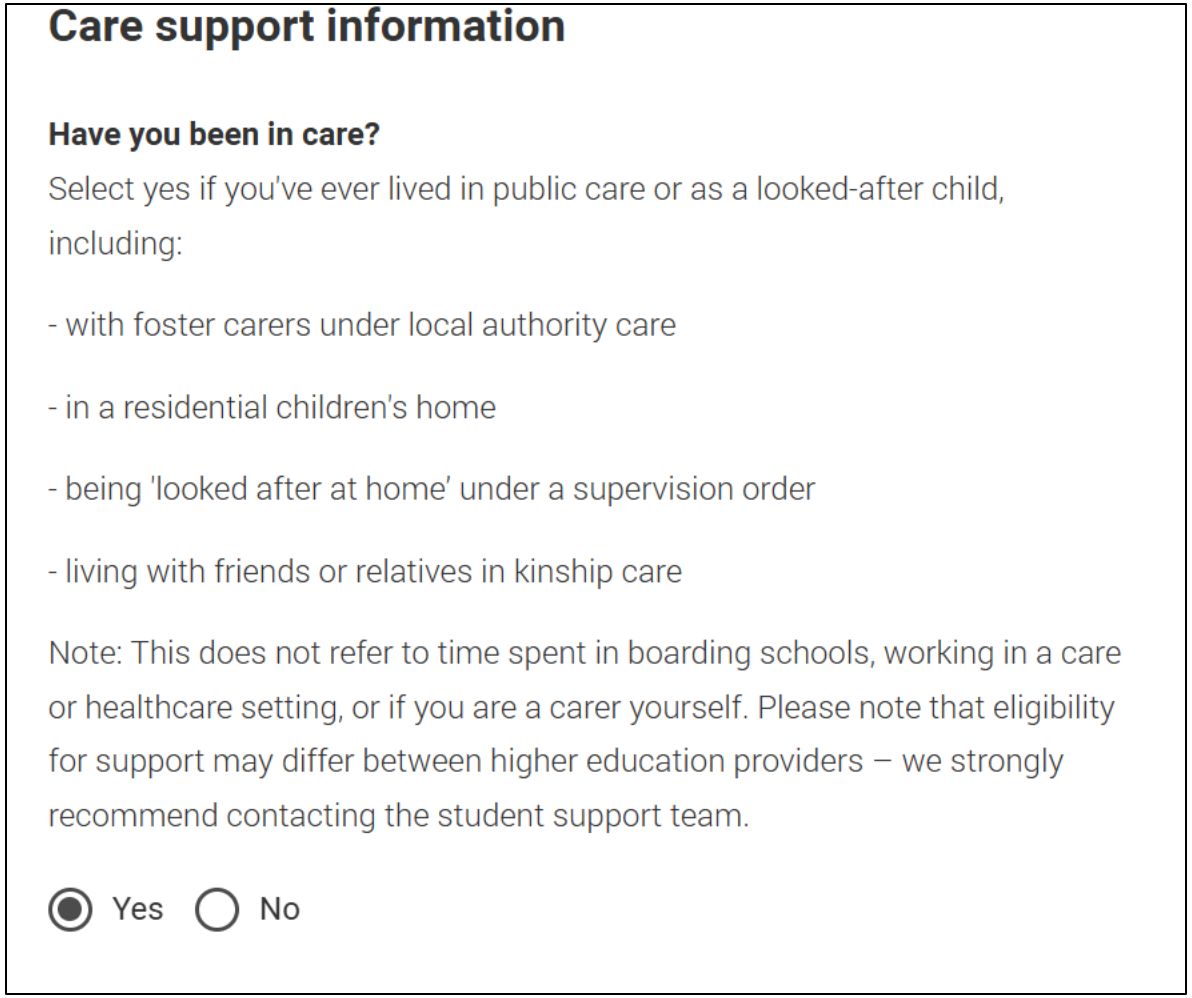


UCAS application: care experience

In the ‘Diversity and inclusion’* section of the UCAS application applicants can share if they are care experienced.

They are also asked to specify the duration of time in care.

*this section will only be visible after an applicant has completed ‘where you live’



Document upload

If an applicant selects ‘yes’ to the care experience question, they will be prompted to upload supporting documents.

Examples of supporting documents include:

- A signed letter from a professional third party (e.g. teacher, doctor, social worker)
- Letter/email from the local authority or school confirming dates in care
- Supporting information such as a Pathway Plan from a Personal Adviser

Care leavers wanting to apply for the UCAS fee waiver must provide documents.

Care experienced students not eligible for the waiver may also (optionally) upload supporting documents.

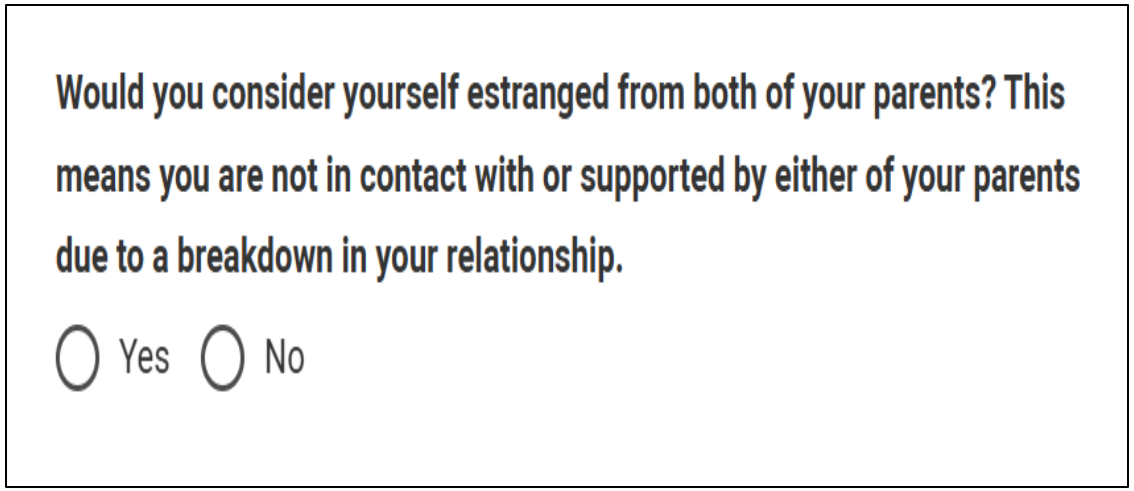
Any questions?

- Please post your questions using the chat box to the side of the webinar screen

UCAS application: estrangement

In the ‘more about you’ section of the UCAS application, students can share details of their personal circumstances, including if they:

- **Are estranged from their parents**
- Have any caring responsibilities
- Have refugee status or are an asylum seeker
- Have a physical and/or mental health condition, long term illness or learning difference
- Received Free School Meals



Personal statement

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UCAS has personal statement guidance for students with individual needs, including those with experience of care or estrangement.

If an applicant feels comfortable doing so, and especially if it's relevant to their course choice or future ambitions, they are welcome to discuss their care experience or estrangement within the personal statement questions.

For example, they could discuss how their experiences have shaped their **skills** and **qualities** and reflect on how this demonstrates suitability for their course.

Skills

Calm under pressure

Problem solving

Self-advocacy

Qualities

Determined

Empathetic

Resourceful

Remember: the personal statement now has three questions.
Students have 4,000 characters across all three answers.

Personal statement

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"In my personal statement, I explained that because I'd never had a nice room (and being in foster care the room was never mine), I understood the psychological importance of having an effect over your own space and feeling like it's an extension of you."

Alice, Interior Design student

"My one piece of advice would be to use your care experience and not hide away from it. I found that the main point of my statement was how my childhood circumstances swayed me into wanting to do the degree/subject area I'm doing now."

Shenya, Criminal Psychology student

UCAS Hub

In addition to the questions in the UCAS application, students can now share that they are care experienced or estranged right at the start of their UCAS journey when they register for the **UCAS Hub**.

This will allow them to receive tailored communications throughout their discovery and application journey, including targeted emails, enhanced information and advice, and signposting to specialist support.

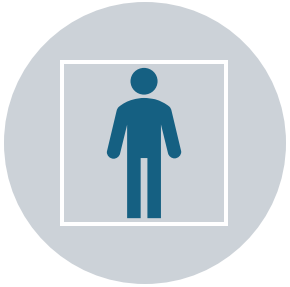


UCAS fee waiver: care leavers

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From the 2027 cycle **statutory care leavers** will now be eligible for the UCAS fee waiver.



This is a student-led process – applicants must indicate care experience and upload supporting documents.



UCAS will then send an email with instructions on how to apply the fee waiver.



Applicants must contact UCAS **after** they complete all sections but **before** they submit.

Care leaver: someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16th birthday. Applicants from England, Wales and NI can have the fee waiver applied up until their 25th birthday, or 26th birthday if applying from Scotland.

UCAS fee waiver: FSM

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For the 2027 cycle eligible students who received UK government funded free school meals may apply for the UCAS fee waiver.



Importantly, centres need to enable the 'free school meals waiver' in their payment options.



In most cases, confirmation of eligibility is provided by an applicant's teacher/adviser via the Adviser Portal.

Eligibility: students who are currently enrolled at school or college, and have been in receipt of UK government funded free school meals at some point during the last six years (i.e. during their secondary education) up until the end of their final year

References

- **All applicants must supply a reference as part of the UCAS process**
  - Teacher/Tutor
  - Virtual School Staff
  - Personal Adviser
  - Social Worker
  - Leaving Care Worker

- **Maximum 4,000 characters**

- **A strong reference will:**
  - Provide relevant context to the individual
  - Explain any educational disruption or challenges
  - Highlight resilience & achievements
  - Help us to understand the student's journey



Any questions?

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Accessing financial support



Accessing Financial Support

- **Tuition Fees, Maintenance Loans & Bursaries**
  - Key differences
  - Maximum awards
  - Institution specific support

- **Supporting your young people**
  - Apply early!
  - Ensure they declare their circumstances
  - Support in gathering important documents
    - NI Number
    - Proof of ID
      - Valid UK passport *or*
      - Birth or adoption certificate
  - Understand evidence requirements & identify who can supply this:
    - Typically supplied by the local authority to confirm care leaver status
    - Estranged students can submit evidence from a teacher, social work or another independent professional



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Why Disclosure Matters



Three reasons to tick the box

If an applicant is care experienced or estranged, it is highly advisable for them to indicate this on their UCAS application.

They will be connected to support that they're entitled to

Contextualised admissions

The information shared is treated sensitively

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What support is available?



What support is available?

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Care experienced and estranged students can access various sources of support during the application stage.

- University named contacts
- Dedicated webpages
- Propel into Education
- Travel bursaries
- Widening participation and outreach activities

New dedicated phoneline

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UCAS has introduced a new dedicated phoneline specifically for care-experienced students, staffed by trained advisers.

These advisers will be able to:

- Share details about named institutional contacts and support offers at universities, signpost local authority support and relevant UCAS resources.
- Signpost to tools such as Propel and other supportive organisations such as Become, NNECL, and the Unite Foundation.
- Suggest questions that applicants can ask universities on open days and at UCAS Discovery events.



Phoneline:
0371 33 44 447
(open Mon-Fri 09:00-17:00)

Supporting the supporters

- UCAS Supporters' and Advisers' Toolkits
- PEP Action Guide
- PDP platform
- Train the Trainer workshops



Key action points

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Engage	Have supportive, non-judgemental conversations about sharing circumstances on the UCAS application. Explain the benefits without pressuring students to disclose.
Plan ahead	Help students understand fee waivers, gather supporting evidence and prepare for UCAS and Student Finance applications.
Support strong applications	Help students reflect on their skills and experiences and provide references that explain relevant context and achievements.
Research	Help students find named university contacts, financial support, accommodation information and relevant outreach opportunities. Signpost them to Propel.
Upskill yourself	Use the UCAS Supporters' and Advisers' Toolkits, the Professional Development Platform and Train the Trainer workshops to build your confidence.

Thank you for listening

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- Please post your questions using the chat box to the side of the webinar screen
- The chat will close in around 5 minutes, you're welcome to continue discussions in the Networking Hall
- Thank you again for attending!