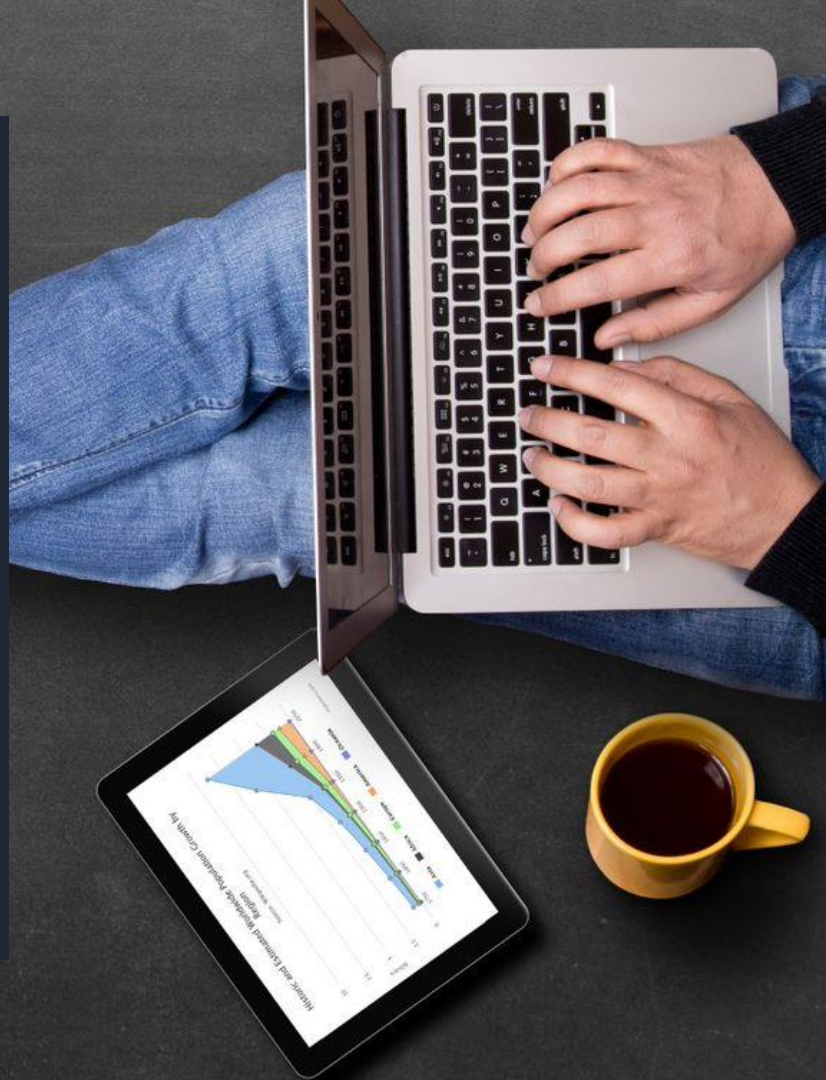


# Insight Newsletter

January 2023

UCAS



## Welcome to the UCAS Insight Newsletter – Happy New Year!

New year, new term, and new insight to boot – let's get those resolutions off to a flying start.

So put down the mince pies and get ready to digest some breaking news, which could change the way you engage with one of your most important 2023 audiences.

Not undergraduates, who are busy enjoying a few more home-cooked meals before getting back to campus. Not **applicants**, who are putting the final touches to their January applications. It's 2023's **pre-applicants** that we're focussed on this month, because the results of our *Clearing Survey* are in...

From new decision-making timelines, to a changing set of priorities as the cost-of-living rises, next year's messaging is set to look different. We've even seen a different way of using Clearing, that shows greater choice and flexibility are central to their behaviours.

All of that – plus some eye-opening insights from a new report looking students from care backgrounds – and the usual updates on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com), is inside.

**Let's get stuck in.**

# What were students doing November 2022?

Across [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)

# WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top ten visited Subject Guides on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) in November 2022

Position for  
November 2022

▲ <sup>1</sup>	1	Business, management and administrative studies	▲ <sup>1</sup>	6	Biological sciences
▼ <sub>1</sub>	2	Psychology	▲ <sup>4</sup>	7	Criminology
=	3	Law	▲ <sup>1</sup>	8	Accounting
=	4	Computer science	▼ <sub>3</sub>	9	Architecture, building and planning
=	5	Medicine and allied subjects	▲ <sup>3</sup>	10	Nursing

▲  
Change in position  
since November 2021



# WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top ten visited City Guides on [ucas.com](#) in November 2022



Position for  
November 2022

=	1	London
=	2	Manchester
▲ <sup>2</sup>	3	Birmingham
=	4	Bath
▲ <sup>1</sup>	5	Leeds
▲ <sup>1</sup>	6	Edinburgh
▼ <sup>4</sup>	7	Bristol
=	8	Liverpool
▲ <sup>3</sup>	9	Cardiff
▲ <sup>1</sup>	10	Glasgow

POSTCODE DISTRICT MAP

Change in position  
since November 2021





# WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top five undergraduate pages on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) in November 2022

Position for  
November 2022

=	1	How to write a UCAS Undergraduate personal statement
=	2	Applying to university
=	3	Filling in your UCAS Undergraduate application
=	4	When to apply
=	5	Tracking your UCAS application

Change in position  
since November  
2021



# What were students doing December 2022?

Across [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)

# WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top ten visited Subject Guides on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) in December 2022

Position for  
December 2022

=	1	Psychology	▲ <sup>10</sup>	6	Criminology
=	2	Business, management and administrative studies	▲ <sup>1</sup>	7	Nursing
=	3	Law	▼ <sub>1</sub>	8	Biological sciences
▲ <sup>1</sup>	4	Medicine and allied subjects	▲ <sup>2</sup>	9	Aerospace engineering
▼ <sub>1</sub>	5	Computer science	▼ <sub>4</sub>	10	Architecture, building and planning

Change in position  
since December 2021





# WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

Top ten visited City Guides on [ucas.com](#) in December 2022



Position for  
December 2022

=	1	London
▲ <sup>3</sup>	2	Birmingham
▲ <sup>30</sup>	3	Chester
▼ <sup>2</sup>	4	Manchester
▲ <sup>9</sup>	5	Cardiff
▲ <sup>1</sup>	6	Leeds
▼ <sup>3</sup>	7	Bristol
▼ <sup>5</sup>	8	Edinburgh
=	9	Liverpool
▲ <sup>1</sup>	10	Glasgow

POSTCODE DISTRICT MAP

Change in position  
since December 2021



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▼ <sub>1</sub>	4	Tracking your UCAS application
=	5	When to apply

Change in position  
since December 2021



# Clearing 2023 preview

Insights and lessons from Clearing 2022, and how we're shaping our Clearing 2023 media offer

# Key take-outs from our Clearing 2023 preview webinar

1. **There are 3 types of Clearing student to consider** – unplaced on results day; direct to Clearing; decline my place. 1 in 3 of those placed in Clearing used decline my place in 2022 – around 20,000 students.
2. **Early awareness is key to recruiting Clearing students** – two thirds started researching the provider they ended up at before August 2022. Direct to Clearing and decline my place applicants increasingly plan use of those routes in advance.
3. **Multiple channels are needed to reach students across Clearing** – in 2022, channels like social media and UCAS.com helped them find providers in the 'passive' discovery phase; UCAS search and provider websites became important during 'active' research.

# The three Clearings

Main scheme Clearing

**21,000**

unplaced on JCQ  
results day

**12,000**

placed

Direct to Clearing

**12,500**

placed

Decline My Place

**37,000**

applicants used

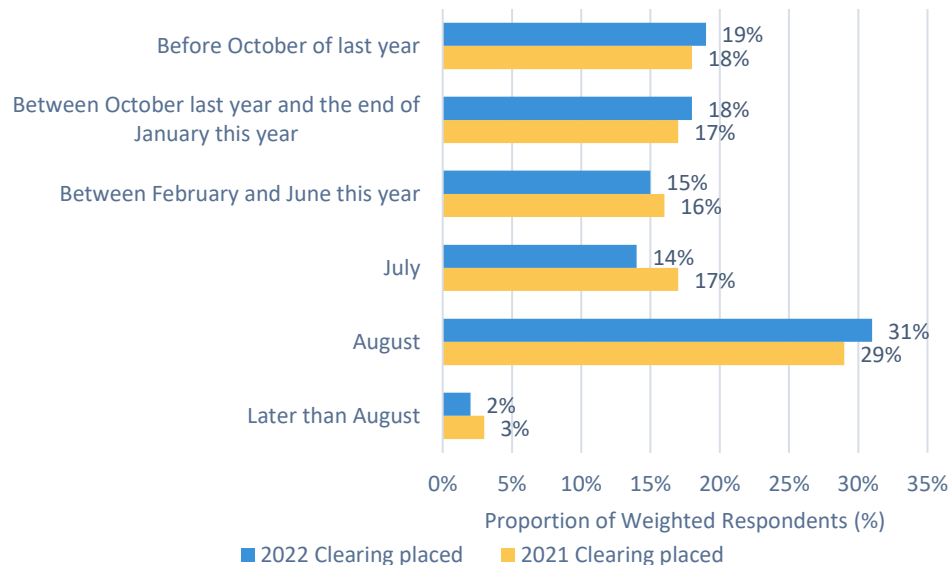
**20,000**

placed



# Research starts early, with only a third starting their research in August

Q.5 When did you start researching the university or college you were placed at through Clearing?

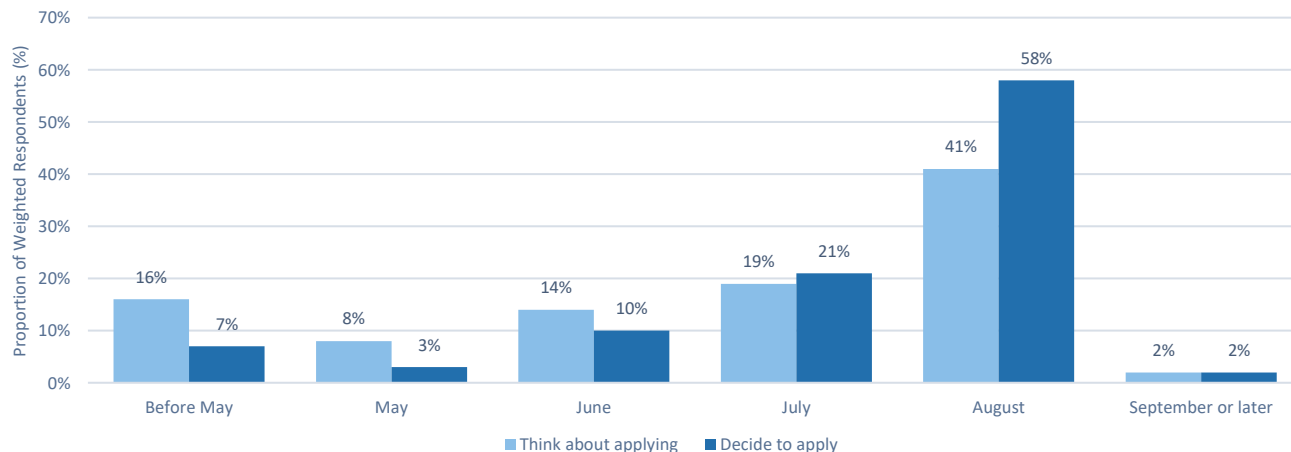


62% had researched the university or college they were placed at through Clearing when they made their original five choices (up from 56% in 2021)

Q.5 When did you start researching the university or college you were placed at through Clearing?  
(vs 2021).  
2022 survey; No. respondents: 1,292

# Over 50% of those who had declined their place had already considered this option before August

Q.39 When did you start thinking about applying somewhere else?  
Q.40 When did you decide you would apply somewhere else?

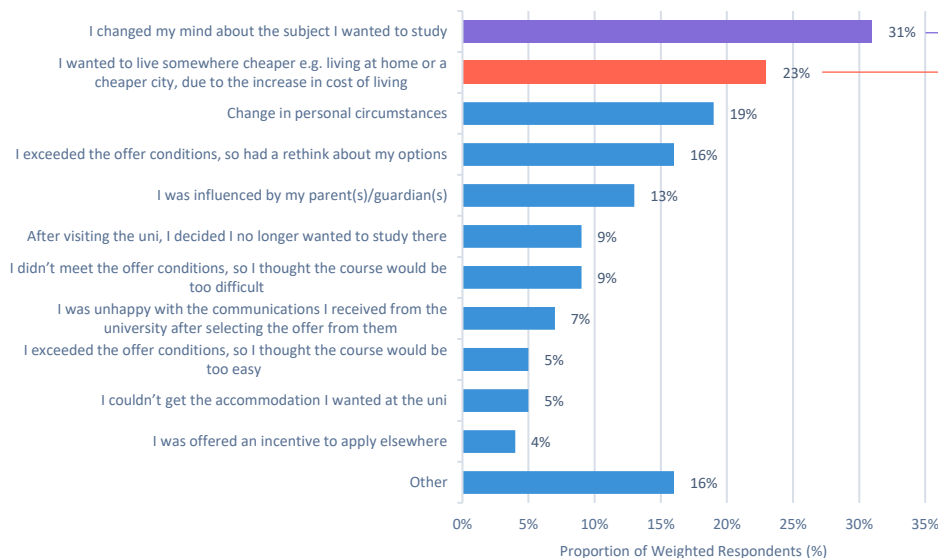


46% claim that they changed their mind about studying at their original choice before results day, up +3%pts YoY, and up +12%pts vs 2019.

Q.39 When did you start thinking about applying somewhere else?  
Q.40 When did you decide you would apply somewhere else?  
(Questions only asked to those who released themselves into Clearing)  
2022 survey; No. respondents: 408

# The main influences are flexibility - responding to changing mindsets or personalities since the original application stage

**Q.43 Which of the following factors, if any, influenced your decision to decline your firm choice university or college? Please select all that apply.**



The most common reason to decline a firm place was a **change of heart** about what subject to study.

*"I realised the course and uni wasn't right for me a few months after firming my offer."*

*"I decided to release to Clearing and go for the uni in my hometown due to family circumstances"*

*"I had changed my mind, since I felt the clearing course was more appropriate within the field"*

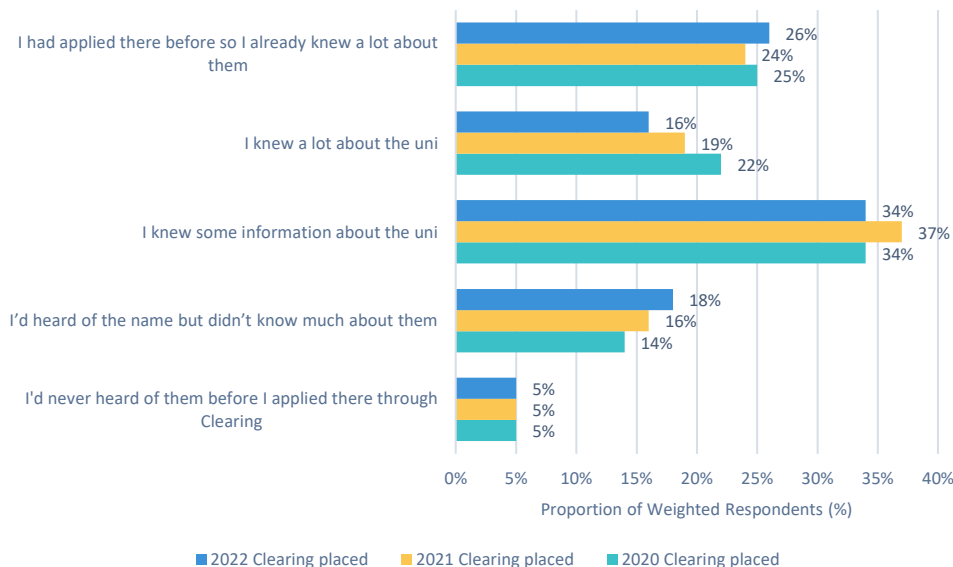
But 23% said they were influenced by the cost of living.

**Q.43 Which of the following factors, if any, influenced your decision to decline your firm choice university or college? Please select all that apply.**

Question only asked to those who released themselves into Clearing#  
2022 survey; No. respondents: 408

# The majority of Clearing applicants know at least something about their chosen university beyond just the name

**Q.3 Thinking about the university or college you were placed at through Clearing, how much do you feel you knew about them before applying to them through Clearing?**



- 26% had applied to their university before, so already knew a lot about it.
- But less than half know a lot about their university of choice (42%)
- Only 5% have never heard of their chosen university before they applied – this remains consistent year on year.

**Q.3 Thinking about the university or college you were placed at through Clearing, how much do you feel you knew about them before applying to them through Clearing?**

(vs 2021 and 2020).

2022 survey; No. respondents: 1,292

## Applicants find their places in two ways -

### Passive (discovery)

- **UCAS is now as influential as word of mouth**
- Their most cited sources of first hearing about the place they ended up were word of mouth and the UCAS website

### Active (searching)

- When **directly searching**, university websites become more important, and **UCAS is still the preferred option**
- Passive discovery is **not happening through out of home advertising**, but is instead focused online

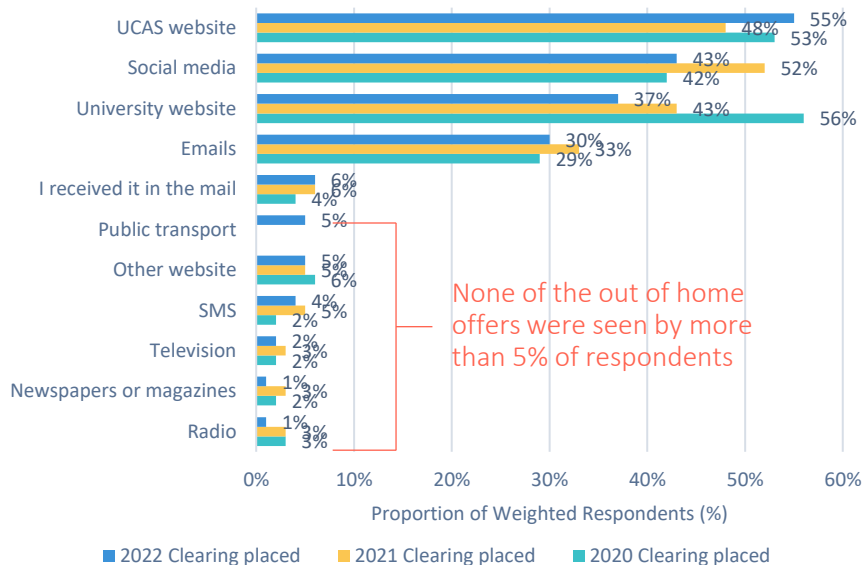


# Most placed students discovered their university through the UCAS website

UCAS

Passive (discovery)

Q.35 In which of the following places, if any, did you see advertisements from the university or college you're currently placed at during the Clearing period? Please select all that apply.



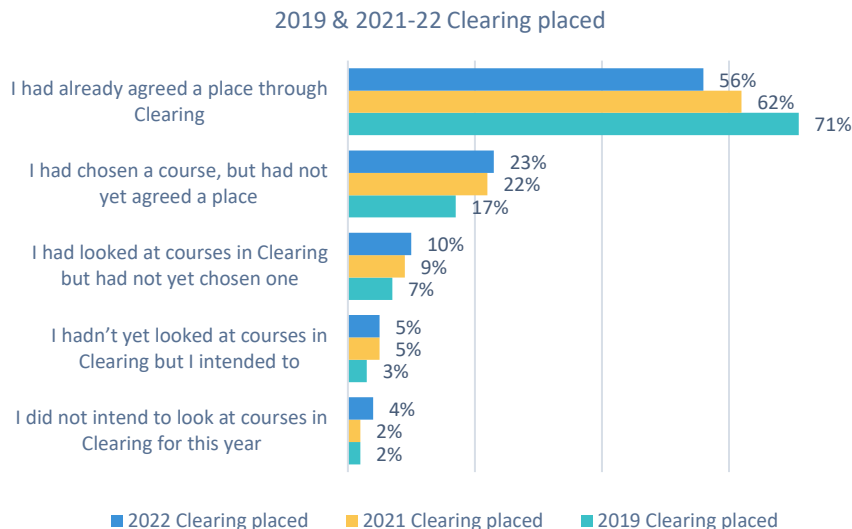
- This year the **UCAS website** was the most likely to get their attention, but **social media** has a key role to play.
- **University websites** are trending downwards.

Q.35 In which of the following places, if any, did you see advertisements from the university or college you're currently placed at during the Clearing period? Please select all that apply.

(vs 2021).  
2022 survey; No. respondents: 1,226

# For those who declined their place, fewer had already agreed a place in Clearing

## Q.42 When you declined your firm choice and released yourself into Clearing, what were your plans?



- The proportion of applicants who released themselves into clearing and already had agreed a place continues to decline.

## Q.42 When you declined your firm choice and released yourself into Clearing, what were your plans?

Question only asked to those who released themselves into Clearing

2022 survey; No. respondents: 411

95%

Confident they made the right choice for them

81%

Had a good or excellent experience of clearing

68%

Found the process easy

*"Clearing helped me find a course that was completely suited to me; so while I felt disappointment over not getting into my first choice, my clearing choice has made me hopeful and excited for what the future has to offer! "*

*"Happier with the course than my original application and excited for the university I will be studying at"*

*"Absolutely buzzing about this course, is far better for me than any of my original courses and I cannot wait."*

*"Clearing can open your mind to new options you hadn't considered when you made your first choice."*

*"I finally discovered clearing I didn't feel supported but they reassured me and it sounded so easy"*

# Clearing 2023:

## A solutions-focused media approach

3 core principles:

### Responsive



- meeting current customer needs & market trends

### Effective



- coherent & powerful packages that amplify performance

### Transparent



- simple & without unexpected product combinations

# Clearing 2023:

## Using multi-channel campaigning to deliver results

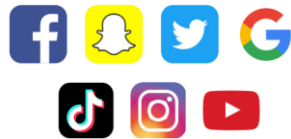
Our multichannel campaigns, combining multiple touchpoints:

- build brand awareness throughout the Clearing period
- put you front of mind for students on results day and beyond
- deliver more conversions, with tangible ROI

2.9x better  
conversion  
than single-  
channel

100s of data  
points for  
precise  
targeting

Tracking  
through to  
application &  
acceptance





# UCAS Clearing Solution 2023:

## Simple, powerful multichannel packages

UCAS

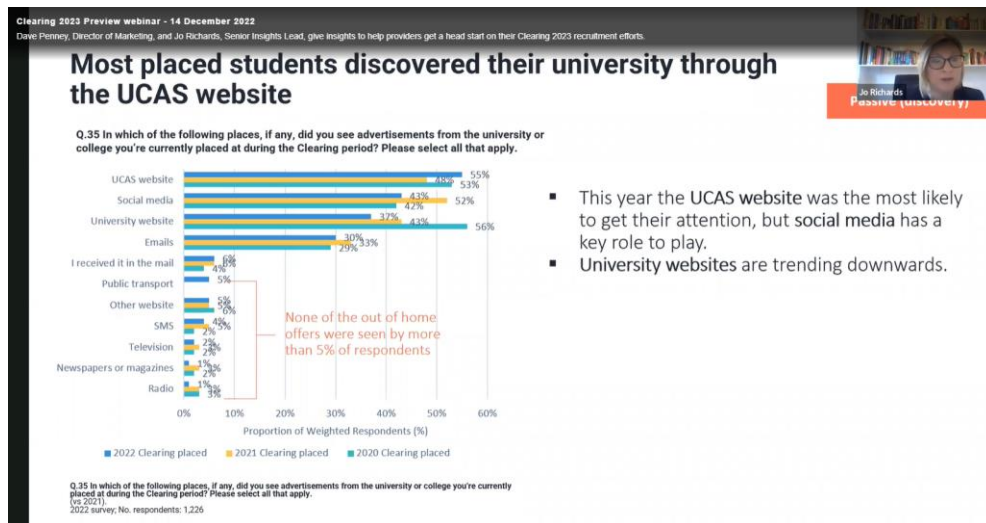
**All package types are being carefully designed to include:**

- Multiple products across multiple channels in every package – using the right combinations to reach different types of students at touchpoints throughout Clearing
- Products that build awareness from the start of Clearing on 5 July – to help maximise engagement and conversion later, through results day and beyond
- A range of options with different price points – offering choice and meeting needs of different types of providers with different objectives and budgets

Package type	Package option	Quantity available*
Complete Clearing packages	Platinum	10
	Gold	20
	Silver	15
	Bronze	30
Specialist audience packages	Tariff releases	7
	Widening participation	3
	International	5
	SQA results day	20
Subject specific packages (29 subjects across 3 tiers)	Gold	1 per subject
	Silver	3 per subject
	Bronze	4 per subject
*Subject to change until official inventory release, Jan 2023		

# If you missed it...

[Watch the playback:](#)



- This year the UCAS website was the most likely to get their attention, but social media has a key role to play.
- University websites are trending downwards.

[Or download the webinar presentation](#)

# #CareMeAndHE

Next Steps: What is the experience of students with a care background in education?

Our latest impact report in the Next Step series where we look at a snapshot of applicants about to take their next steps.

UCAS

## NEXT STEPS:

### WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS FROM A CARE BACKGROUND IN EDUCATION?

In collaboration with

Unite

Foundation



## Key findings

The number of UK applicants sharing care experience has **doubled** since the question was first introduced in 2008.

### Compared to applicants without a care background:

- Much more likely to be mature
- 12% more likely to be women
- Grades are lower
- Vocational courses are favoured
- More likely to share a disability
- More likely to share a mental health condition
- More likely to identify as LGBT+
- More likely to be from a disadvantaged background
- A much higher proportion of applicants from Black and Mixed ethnic groups

# Survey respondents told us:



Looking forward to HE and expect the support to be good



Mental health and wellbeing support = the most influential factor in their decision making



Individual needs are important in their decision making



3/5 received no guidance about going to HE with care experience



Strongly motivated by career and academic development

#CareMeAndHE

# Key challenges

- Improving **visibility of support** in HE for CEX students and those supporting them
- How to ensure the **right people** have the **right resources** and information to support CEX students
- Making sure applicants know about **disability and MH support** in HE – and that we consider how to address these additional barriers and challenges
- Supporting **mature** CEX applicants – access to I&A
- Improving **progression rates** – especially to higher tariff providers, and ensuring parity of access to apprenticeships and other pathways
- How can the sector ensure those with **potential** do not miss out, even if their **grades** are lower?

Read the report [online](#).

# Clearing 2022: 3 Big Lessons for 2023

## Clearing campaigns need to come in three different flavours.

There are three groups of applicants who use Clearing in three different ways:

The Mind Changers decline their offers, joining Clearing to improve their options.

The Direct Routers don't apply for university until Clearing starts.

The Still Searching don't get offers, so enter Clearing to search for a plan B.

Getting to know what makes each of these groups tick, as well as the times that they're making their decisions, will ensure you appeal across the board.

## Launch your brand awareness and brand loyalty campaigns earlier.

The student timeline, across all groups, has moved up this year. Research is taking place as early as October and two thirds start theirs pre-Clearing. Your Results Day campaigns should be the final step in the process, capitalising on familiarity established well ahead of time.

Because, for the majority, students placed via Clearing already know the university that they end up joining. A quarter have even applied there before.

So start making your name well known, before Clearing even enters the equation.

## Make yourself available and arm yourself with the answers.

This year, applicants in Clearing have proven themselves expert hunters of information. They have a long list of questions they need answering, before they make a decision. They're phoning universities directly, rather than waiting on an email reply or searching around a website, so ensure your phones are fully staffed by people who have all the details.

Review your website and check whether the important information is easy to find. Highlight the various ways to get in touch and point applicants towards the best place or person to get their answers.

## A generation taking matters into their own hands.

Clearing is much more than an opportunity for providers to fill their remaining places.

But it's taken an empowered, digital-first generation to really discover the potential it holds for their future.

We're expecting to see this brand-new way of using Clearing grow, catch on, and stick around. As each new generation brings its own preferences and behaviours to Higher Education, Gen Z are building a world for themselves which allows for a greater voice and more choice. How else might they shake things up?

And as we cater towards a generation-wide shift in new behaviour, we must also remember the groups with them – and act on the insight from reports like #CareMeandHE.

**See you again soon.**



# Get in touch

For further information and insights contact your UCAS Customer Manager or email us at [educationservices@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:educationservices@ucas.ac.uk).