

UCAS reference examples for 2024 applications

The UCAS reference is moving to three structured sections. These changes have been designed with providers, to focus on the areas they want to know more about.

The changes have been implemented following a review with our advisory groups, including the Admissions Development Group, and broader validation with our key customer groups.

These examples have been developed to show the type of information that you could include in each of the sections. This not an exhaustive list and we will add to these materials as appropriate.

Please see our additional advice and guidance on how to complete the reference for 2024 and access further support materials. <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/writing-references/changes-undergraduate-references-2024-entry>

As with all aspects of the application process, we also suggest you continue speaking to universities and colleges, who will also be providing advice and guidance.

Examples for Establishment Details

Enter a general statement about your school/college/centre.

[The reference template under Centre Management in the Adviser Portal can be used to enter the information once and added to each reference thereafter.]

UCAS College is an open access sixth form institution with a full-time student body of c.2,000. We recruit primarily from the borough's varied comprehensive schools, but also attract students from further afield. Level 3 students undertake 3 A levels or applied general equivalents, together with an enrichment programme. We offer a wide range of BTEC and Cambridge Technical courses at all levels. A number of our university applicants will have enrolled on Level 2 programmes with us before embarking on study at Level 3. We base predicted grades on end of first year exams where available, alongside internal assessments and a range of other work students have completed.

The Sixth Form College has more than 2,000 students from various feeder schools set in Cheltenham with a range of A level and vocational courses on offer. It is worth noting the Access course at the college is validated and moderated by Acsentis Access Validating Agency and is recognised by QAA. There is no overall Diploma grade. To achieve the Diploma, students' study three subject modules and either a three-credit unit in maths or academic writing to attain 60 credits, 15 of which are not graded, 45 are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction grade. A Pass indicates that a student has achieved all the learning outcomes and is well suited to undergraduate work.

UCAS School is a state selective grammar school with a coeducational sixth form of nearly 400 students. Around a half of our sixth formers join us from a range of non-selective schools in the area. The school offers A level programmes of study in 22 subjects. Entry requirements are currently 48 points from eight GCSE subjects (including English Language and Maths).

Most students study three A levels together with the Extended Project or Core Maths qualification which is taken in Year 12. A number will opt to take four, particularly talented mathematicians who study Further Maths either to AS or to full A level.

Students sit rigorous internal assessments at the end of Year 12; this data, together with students' performance throughout the year, is used to formulate the predicted grades.

The UCAS Sixth Form in XX serves a diverse community where deprivation is surprisingly high. This is exemplified by the fact that the school is in one of the 10% most deprived areas of XX; it also falls into the first POLAR3 quintile and has 22% of students declaring FSM eligibility. In January 20XX Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in XX) declared that the school required significant improvement; this category applied to the school until July 20XX.

The school offers a mix of A levels, BTEC, and Welsh BaccaLaureate qualifications. Predicted grades have been generated from a holistic overview of performance and end of year assessment.

UCAS School and Sixth Form Centre is a large, comprehensive, and inclusive academy. Typically, students take three A levels or combine A level study with a BTEC course. The EPQ and Core Maths qualifications are additional options open to all students. This is one of the poorest wards in the XX region. 40% of students qualify for pupil premium and many are the first in their family to apply for university.

Internal exams and assessments sat in Y13 are used to inform predicted grades. Students end of term exams results in Year 12 are used to base predicted grades for October deadline courses.

UCAS High School is a small, rural, comprehensive school on the edge of the XX. It is in an area affected by coastal deprivation, and poor access to further and higher education. The school offers a range of higher qualifications – 25 different subjects, however, ten of these are delivered through multi-level classes alongside National 5 students.

Students can study a number of Advanced Highers. In our setting this may mean they are in a bi-level class with Higher students, or they may receive just three taught periods a week, unlike bigger schools where there is a more comprehensive taught offer. The onus is on students to work independently and organise their study time effectively.

The UCAS School is a community comprehensive school for boys, with approximately 1,077 students on roll of which 150 students are in Post 16 education. Approximately one third of the students in the school have SEND and the number of students entitled to FSM is well above the national average. At post-16, we offer a range of subjects at A level in addition to a number of vocational courses. Most students study three subjects at Level 3 with only a very small minority being allowed to study four subjects

Agent UCAS helps students from around the world achieve their ambition of studying overseas at university. We support international students to apply for entry to an undergraduate or graduate degree program, and work with universities to create unique preparation programs designed for those students who don't yet meet the university's requirements. Our undergraduate and postgraduate pathway programs support students in improving their English and developing their subject-specific academic knowledge. With our support, we'll help to ensure students comfortably settle into life in a new country and are ready to succeed.

Examples for Extenuating Circumstances

Enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement.

Catrin's Year 12 assessment, along with the rest of her cohort, was impacted by an unfortunate staffing challenge, which led to her class having two new teachers in the space of three months in subject XX. She has recovered well from the disruption and remains positive, and we feel that her tenacity will help her to close some of the gap. However, her final grades may not truly reflect her natural intellect and ability.

Ross moved sixth form centre having spent the previous five years at one of our feeder schools. Transitioning to a new environment represented a challenge for Ross and he took longer to adjust than his peers. He and our pastoral team worked very closely together during the first two terms to ensure that Ross developed the skills and confidence needed to succeed.

He has expressed some anxiety about transitioning into another new learning environment and we would recommend a proactive approach from Ross's future tutors in offering access to support materials

Outside of school, Munroe takes on significant responsibilities within his family by supporting his mum in caring for his three young siblings. It's to his credit that he does this, but early in his National 5 studies it did create pressure when he had competing deadlines for internally assessed work. He has been very open with us about balancing his home life and studies and we have been delighted to support him with flexibility on deadlines

Jordan was diagnosed with macular dystrophy known as Best Disease, an eye disorder that can cause worsening (progressive) vision loss for which there is no treatment and is registered as visually impaired. It has been a life-changing diagnosis.

We ensured Jordan sat at the front of the class, all lectures printed off in A3 handouts or given as PowerPoint (to his personal ipad) as he is unable to read the board.
The school have contacted the examination board on his behalf.

Joyah's attainment profile reflects some disruption in her personal life, with her family circumstances meaning that she moved house twice in Year 11. National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2 results reflect her hardworking nature, and we believe they are a more accurate representation of her capability and potential than the exams taken previously. Life is becoming more stable, and this is reflected in an upturn in her work; she is now on track to return to her higher levels of attainment

Chao achieved a handful of grade 8 results in his GCSEs but as a whole, do not accurately reflect the grades he is now on track to achieve. Significant change in attitude saw him achieve high results in his internal assessments. He has approached his Level 3 studies with a greater degree of maturity and we have confidence that the predictions are accurate

Examples for other supportive information

Outline any supportive information specific to the applicant that you think universities/colleges should be aware of, or how they can support the applicant.

Rose is the strongest of a large cohort and an outstanding Biologist. Her wider reading and passion for the subject underpins her vast subject knowledge and she was involved in the Biology Olympiad, achieving a Silver Award. An exceptional chemist, she is one of the most able in the cohort, consistently placed in the top 5% in assessments.

Practical skills within the sciences is of particular note, gaining high marks in her practical exam. Her practical skills also benefited her in her recent study of aspirin which she completed to a very high standard. She used her highly developed manipulative skills to synthesise aspirin and then successfully analysed her sample using thin layer chromatography and NMR spectroscopy.

Olivia is a gifted and talented national and GB level U18 national squad hockey player. During her studies she has spent significant time away from the classroom to engage with rigorous training. This has the potential to put pressure on her academic work, however, Olivia has never failed to make up for lost learning time.

Olivia's attitude, commitment, and drive to succeed is nurtured through her sport is also apparent in her studies. We hope that her future university will be supportive in enabling her to continue to balance her academic and sporting commitments; if they do, they will find the skills she brings back to the learning environment highly rewarding.

Pakrut participated in extra voluntary sessions for his maths A level to ensure he is on target and has become a mentor towards some of the younger students.

Pakrut was awarded the Service Prize, in recognition of his exceptional contribution to fundraising for various charity projects including his organisation of a school dance production for the orphanages in Mumbai.

Catrin achieved Head Girl and is a credit to the school for whom she represents often going above and beyond her duties, including running a charity event to support Ukrainian students

Catrin has won several school poetry competitions

Catrin was our only student within the last 5 years to get to the final of The Schools' Mace competition

Jasmine's refocus has opened new opportunities and her subject choice reflected her desire to pursue Business and Hospitality and we fully support her endeavour. Strong-willed, tenacious attitude will ensure she succeeds in whatever she puts her mind to. Self-motivating, independent and varied interests have seen her win the Scouts regional cookery competition

Omar is considered one of our top students and recently ranked first out of 60 in Geography in our internal assessments. Our head of Geography rates Omar among the top three students he has taught in his 25-year career. Omar's attitude to learning is second to none and has a position of responsibility which he takes on with dedication as Class Representative. Omar has indeed taken on work experience which she sourced herself and has received outstanding feedback from her time with XX

In Chemistry Amira achieved the highest aggregate grade in our Year 12 cohort of 75, with two A*s in her end of year exams. She is an outstanding historian, absorbing new concepts and skills with ease and ranking first in an able cohort of 170 students. She is also one of the strongest philosophers to study here in recent years, ranking first out of our cohort of 45 students, with an average mark of 89.7% and a mock exam score of 92%.

The very top of a large cohort, Harry is an outstanding Biologist. His intellectual curiosity is evidenced through his wider reading and passion for the subject, which underpins his vast subject knowledge. Grasping new concepts quickly, he makes links to previous learning and is able to express his ideas with clarity and detail, making accurate use of chemical terminology. He has recently taken part in the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge, receiving a Copper Award, and is currently enrolled online in an edX introductory course on Biochemistry

INDEPENDENT REFEREE EXAMPLES**Examples for Relationship to applicant**

Provide an overview of your relationship with the applicant.

I have known Akemi from XXXX to XXXX in my capacity as theatre anaesthetic and recovery lead and hospital resuscitation lead practitioner at the XX Royal Hospital. Akemi joined the Community Team for Learning Disabilities (CTLD) from January – May 20XX for her exposure to learning disabilities placement as part of her Trainee Nursing Associate training

I am the store manager of Next in XX and have held my position there for the last five years. I employed Kim and have known her in this professional setting for the last four years, and I must say it has been an absolute pleasure to have her as part of my team.

Examples for Extenuating Circumstances

Enter any information about extenuating circumstances which may have impacted the applicant's education and achievement.

Akemi has dyslexia and at first really struggled to communicate, however her confidence progressed well; always finding the way to convey the messages exchanged.

I cannot comment on her qualifications to date, but in my experience during her employment, Kim has held various roles having taken on additional responsibilities and proven her capability and adaptability in any given daily situation and have no doubt she is a suitable candidate for the course she is applying for.

I understand that Marly was raised in an environment where work and life skills were prioritised and was encouraged to gain full time employment at the earliest opportunity. While he did this admirably and has an impressive CV, it did mean that his attitude to education at the time he was at school doesn't reflect his current attitude. He has demonstrated at work that when he is committed to something he will pursue it to the very best of his ability, and I believe the same will be true at university.

Clem has commented frequently that although she has always had an interest in pursuing study in dance, this wasn't an available option at the school she attended, and a private dance school wasn't accessible either. She has had to work incredibly hard since leaving school to self-fund classes and training in order to gain the right foundation for further study.

Examples for other supportive information

Outline any supportive information specific to the applicant that you think universities/colleges should be aware of, or how they can support the applicant

Charlie has taken the decision to commit to further study and has successfully managed to balance family life, work life and additional responsibilities in his schedule and have no doubt about his ability and his commitment to the course

Ash has been a top asset for us during her work experience placement; her ability to balance the need for clear information with empathy and compassion when dealing with our clients has been outstanding. Responsibility to lead client sessions was delegated to Ash significantly faster than any other placement colleague we have had, exemplifying her capability and ability to inspire trust.

Jack was a very committed and conscientious student during their time with us, working hard to achieve their results. Since leaving, they have been undertaking voluntary work in Bali. In preparing for this they have greatly sharpened their organisational skills, and in discussing this application with them we have been impressed with how much more developed their understanding of marine conservation is, going well beyond anything covered within the school curriculum.