



**Brunel**  
University  
of London

# UCAS and Higher Education Parent Guide 2026

Daila Campbell  
Recruitment Officer (Schools & Colleges)

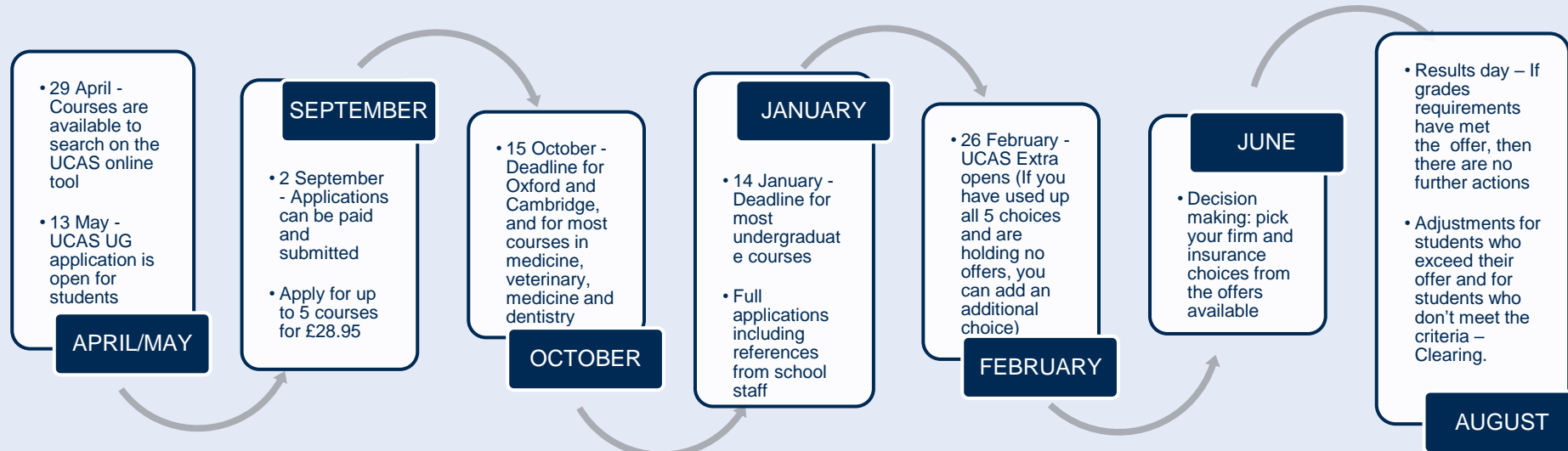


# What we will cover today

- Understanding the UCAS process & University timeline
- Researching courses & universities
- Personal Statements
  - Understanding the new personal statement format
- What next – Offers, decisions & Student finance
- Questions



# Application process



# Researching universities & courses

unifrog



**Brunel**  
University  
of London



UCAS



Open  
Day



UNI COMPARE



**Complete  
University  
Guide**



# Factors to consider when choosing a course and university

- Entry requirements
- Course content & teaching methods
- Location & facilities
- Placement, study abroad & work opportunities
- Student support
- Access to graduate jobs & career prospects
- A fresh start
- **Have I attended an Open day or Taster Day?**



# What is UCAS?

- [UCAS](#) is the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
- Independent organisation and centralised service for applying to higher education in the UK
- - All applications must go through **UCAS**
- Online-based – UCAS allows students to pick up to **five** university/course choices



# Application – How to apply

- [www.ucas.com/apply](https://www.ucas.com/apply)
  - Complete application form:
    - Personal Information
      - Nominated Access (Parents/Guardians)
    - Full Education History
    - Employment History
    - Extra Activities**
    - Course choices
    - Personal Statement**
    - Teacher reference

Buzzword' – to link your application to your school/college



# Personal Statements

- The personal statement is the **ONLY** place on the UCAS application where you can explain why you have chosen a course, demonstrate knowledge/enthusiasm and expand and focus on relevant qualities, skills, and experience.
- It is the same for all student choices
- There is a **4000-character** limit (including spaces and paragraphs) and a minimum character count of **250** per section)
- For 2026 entry, the personal statement focuses on **three structured questions** to help students clearly communicate their motivations and enthusiasm for the course.





# What to include in your personal statement

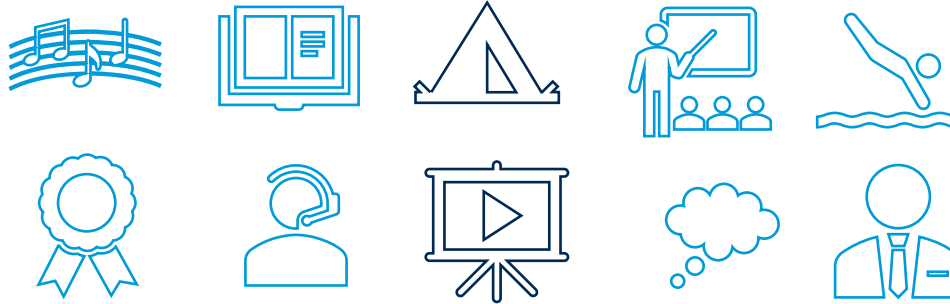
Future  
ambitions

Skills and  
attributes

Demonstrate  
your passion

'Cover letter'

Hobbies and  
interests



Subject  
modules

Positions of  
responsibility

Part-time job

Outside  
research

EPQ

# Understanding the new personal statement format

Three Structured questions:

**1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?**

- Show evidence of passion for the subject, how interest developed, and what you hope to achieve.

**2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare for this course?**

- Link academic achievements to the skills needed for the course (Most recent and relevant experience where possible).

**3. What else have you done to prepare, and why are these experiences useful?**

- To include any activities outside school—such as work experience, volunteering, or personal projects—and how these experiences have prepared them for university.



# Think A.B.C



## **A** **Activity**

I study Business Studies



## **B** **Benefit**

Studying Business allowed me to develop my extended writing and analysis skills



## **C** **Course**

During my studies I have had the opportunity to explore how business decisions impact all stakeholders, improving my research and evaluative skills in order to reach a solid conclusion which will help me in my degree course

# What we see when providing feedback to students

- Do not give themselves enough time to plan, draft or edit before their school deadlines... and hence, miss out on useful teacher feedback
- A lot of students have no idea what they want to study
- Who they are writing for
- Do not know the character limit
- Unsure of their writing ability
- Tell us a story





# Do...

- Be positive
- Always link back to your course
- Keep it neutral
- Research the courses
- Sell yourself
- Make several drafts
- Proofread

# Don't...

- Lie
- Plagiarise - **Chat GPT**
- Use fancy formatting
- Repeat information elsewhere on the form
- Make lists or overload with skills
- Use vague or generic statements
- Use clichéd quotes

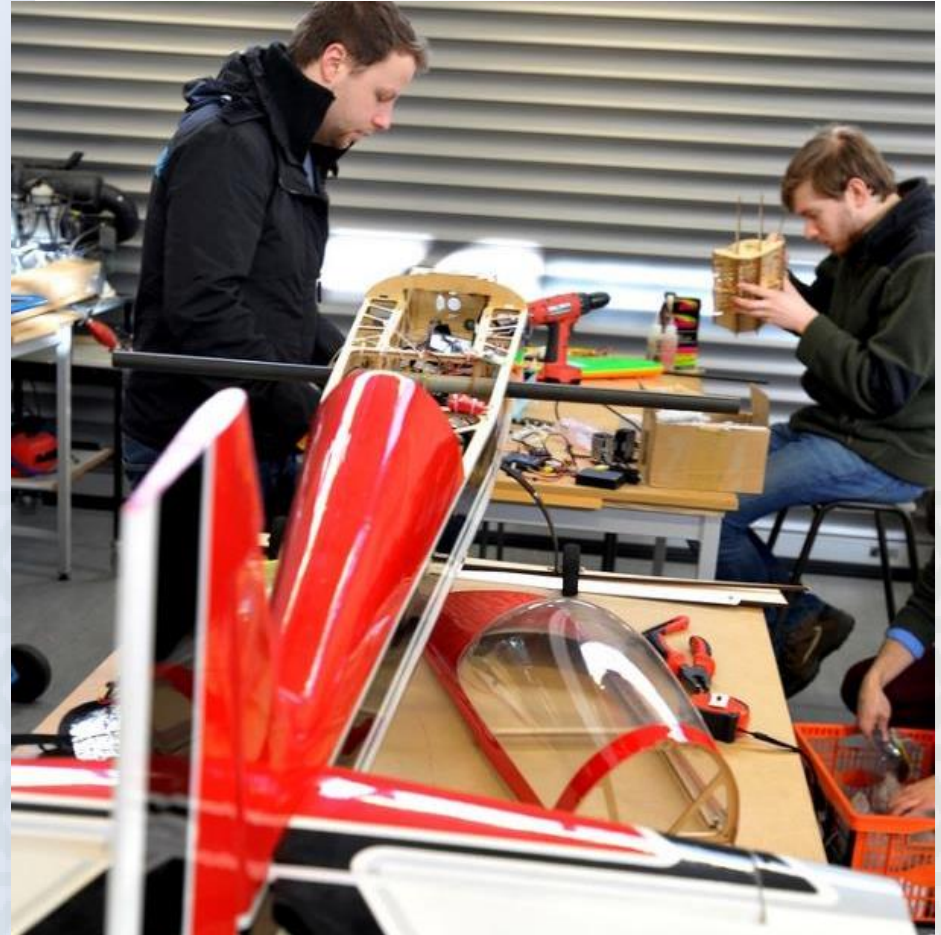
# What can your child do now?

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- **Take this time to do some further research...** Attend **career and UCAS fairs** and speak to recruiters from different universities to gain a better understanding of the courses offered.
- **Attend Open Days and campus tours...** This is a chance for you to meet Academics and get an idea of what they look for in a student.
- **Look out for opportunities...** Use online tools like the National Careers Service and vinspired.com to find work experience opportunities. Use the job adverts to see what skills are required for specific careers.
- **Continue to draft and edit your Personal Statement...** Get peers to read through it and provide feedback. Read through the statement aloud and make sure to correct grammatical errors.
- **Use social media platforms to find key tips...** Many universities have profiles on TikTok and Instagram etc. where they post useful advice.
- **Read through the UCAS website...** They have a UCAS Personal Statement tool which is to help with structuring.

# What Happens Next?

- Once students have completed their application, they'll be shown their full application – make sure to review this carefully.
- There is an application fee of **£28.95** for up to five choices (excluding Free school meals application fee waiver)
  - To find out if you are eligible head to: [Students eligible for free school meals \(fsm\)](#)
- Once paid, your application will be sent to your school/college to check and submit.



# Understanding offers and decisions

**After receiving an application, universities will make a decision**

- **Unconditional** - The place is theirs if they want it. They still might have to meet non-academic conditions
- **Conditional** - Your child needs to meet some conditions, usually exam results.
- **Unsuccessful** - The university has decided not to offer them a place
- **Withdrawn** - The choice has been withdrawn, either by your child, or by the university

**They can also**

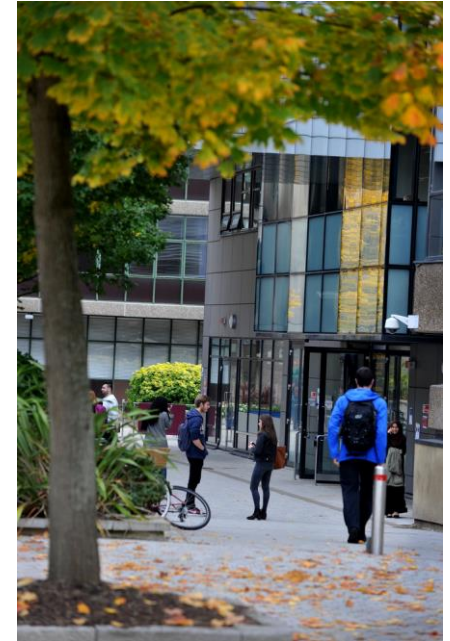
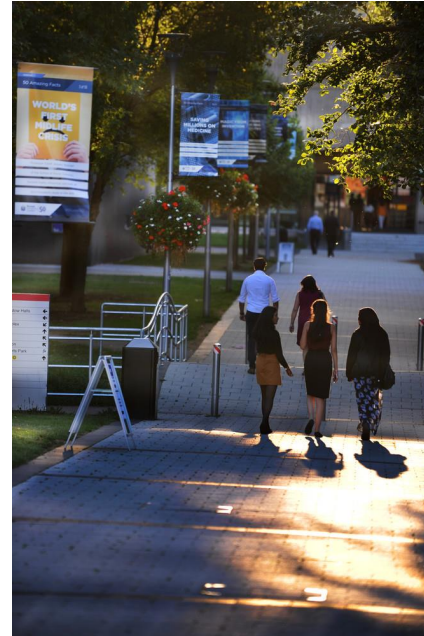
- Offer a place on a different course, Request you attend an interview, ask to see your portfolio or ask you to take an admissions test



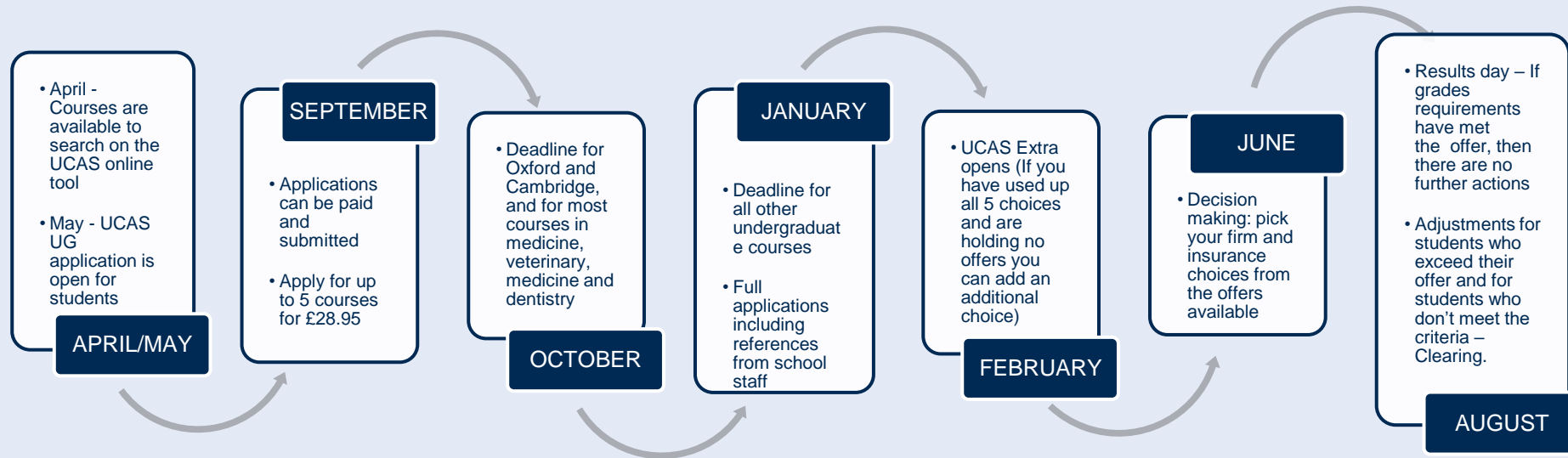


# What to do with UCAS offers

- Once you have received decisions from all of your choices, you must narrow your choice to **TWO**:
    - **Firm** – your first choice
    - **Insurance** – your back-up
  - Any remaining offers must be declined
  - If you do not receive any offers, you may be able to use Extra or Clearing to find available places.
  - The deadline to reply to offers can depend on when they received the last one.
- E.g. University decision received on or before 14 May 2025, their reply date is early June 2025



# Application process



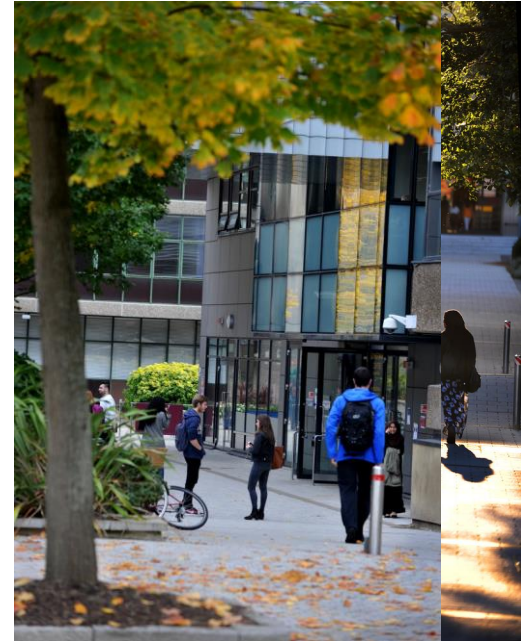
# What is Clearing?

Clearing matches applicants to university places that are yet to be filled. If you have made a UCAS Undergraduate application and do not hold any offers, you can apply using your unique UCAS ID. Alternatively, you can apply direct to some universities.

Running from 6 July to 18 October, you'll be eligible for Clearing if:

- They have no offers
- Their firm and insurance choices have made them unsuccessful
- They applied after 30 June 2026
- They've declined their firm place using the 'decline my place' button in their application

**There is no additional application fee to use Clearing.**



# Student Finance



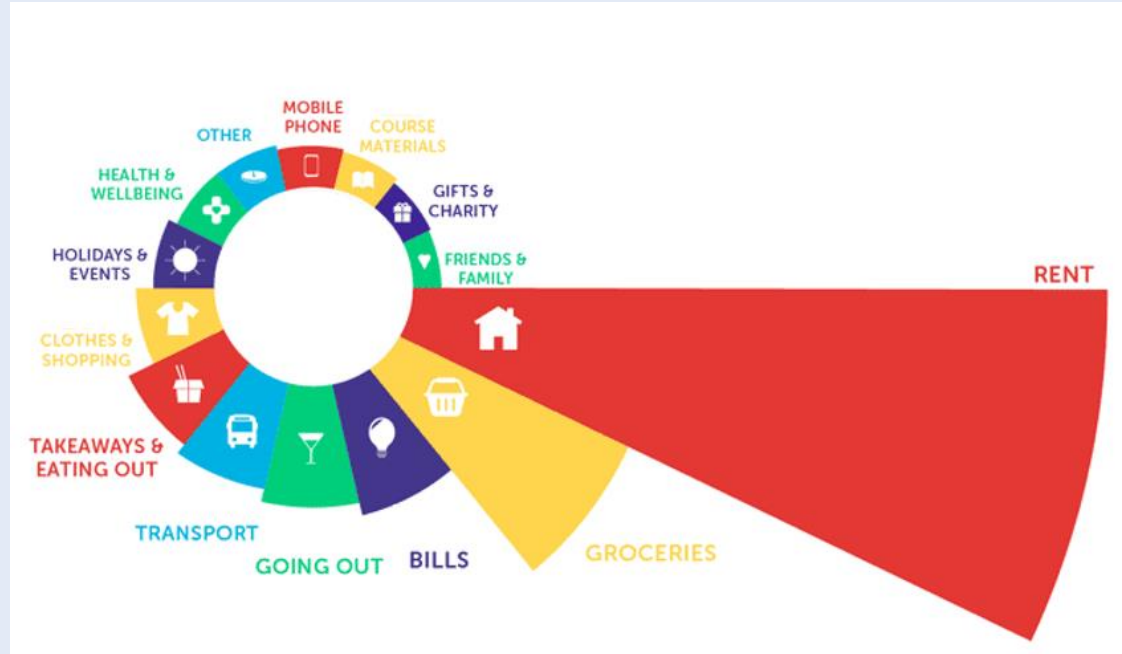


# What do you pay for at university?

There are also 'hidden' costs. Some that you might not think about until much later.

For example:

- University accommodation
- Joining clubs and societies
- Course related trips and visits
- Deposits for housing
- Renting your graduation gown and mortarboard
- Professional photography
- Social activity



# Can I apply for student finance?

You may be eligible for funding from Student Finance England if:

- You're a UK national or you have settled or pre-settled status in the UK under the EU settlement scheme
- You normally live in England
- You've lived in the UK for 3 years before starting your course
- You'll be studying an eligible higher education course at a UK college or university
- You do not already have a higher education qualification
- Plan 5 (New plan for 2023+ entry)



# Tuition Fee loan

1. SFE will pay the Tuition Fee Loan **directly to your university** or college.
2. You **won't have to pay** any tuition fees up front.
3. You'll have to start paying your Tuition Fee Loan back when you've **finished or left your course**, but only if your **income is over the repayment threshold**.
4. Brunel currently charge **£9,250** for all undergraduate full-time courses (increasing to **£9,535 – 2025/26**)

# Maintenance Loan

1. Available to eligible **home students**
2. To cover your **day-to-day** living costs
3. The amount you get is **means tested** on your parents'/household income
4. Paid in **three instalments** in September, January and April into your bank account
5. You'll have to start paying your Maintenance Loan back when you've **finished or left** your course, but only if your **income is over the repayment threshold**.

# Applying for Student Finance

## Apply online:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance>

- Valid UK passport or other identity and residency information
- Email address, Bank account details and National Insurance Number
- School, university and course details
- Household income information – your parents will need to provide this so give them plenty of time to find the relevant documents
- Information about any support you receive already
- Applications take up to 6 weeks to process

**You don't need a confirmed place – apply with your preferred choice!**

**Applications are expected to open in March 2026. Apply by May to be paid on time**



# Proposed Maintenance Loan 2025/26

All eligible students can apply for a loan

The amount you receive is means tested on your parents'/household income

<u>Full Time Student</u>	<u>Maximum Loan 25/26</u>	<u>Minimum Loan 25/26</u>
Living at home	£8,877	£3,907
Living away from home (outside of London)	£10,544	£4,915
Living away from home (Inside of London)	£13,762	£6,853
You spend a year of a UK course studying abroad	£12,076	£5,838



# Example of confirmed finance letter

00100  
John Smith  
12 University Way  
LONDON  
SW1 2YZ

**sfe**  
student finance england  
the student finance experts

You need to write your Customer Reference Number on every document you send us.

Student Finance England  
PO Box 210  
Darlington  
DL1 9HJ  
www.gov.uk/studentfinance  
0300 100 0607  
@sfe\_england sfeengland

1 April 2022  
Customer Reference Number: 12345678910

Dear Mr Smith

**Student Finance for Academic Year 2022/23**

**Your current course details:**  
University or College: MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY  
Campus name: MANCHESTER  
Course: Biomedical Science  
Course year: 3

This offer of student finance replaces any offer you have received in the past.

The total amount to be paid to your university or college:	£9,250.00
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The total amount to be paid to you:	£9,329.00
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This letter details how your student finance total is made up and when to expect payments. We have also included a list of Frequently Asked Questions to help answer any questions you might have about student finance and a University or College Payment Advice.

**Did you know...**  
Even if you qualify for the maximum possible loan for living costs (known as Maintenance Loan), it might not cover all your living costs, so you may need other sources of income while you're studying.

To learn more about living costs during study, how we calculate your funding and how you can make up the difference, go to [where you'll also find further links to guidance about budgeting.](#)

We've outlined below the maximum amounts of Maintenance Loan for students in different situations:

- For students living with their parents while studying - £7,689.00

Student Finance England is the student finance service provided in England by the Student Loans Company.  
Borrower Loans Company Ltd. VAT Reg. No. 958 4582 20 Registered in England No. 30131004  
Registered Office: Memphis Building, Lingfield Road, Midsallam Road, DARLINGTON, DL1 1TW

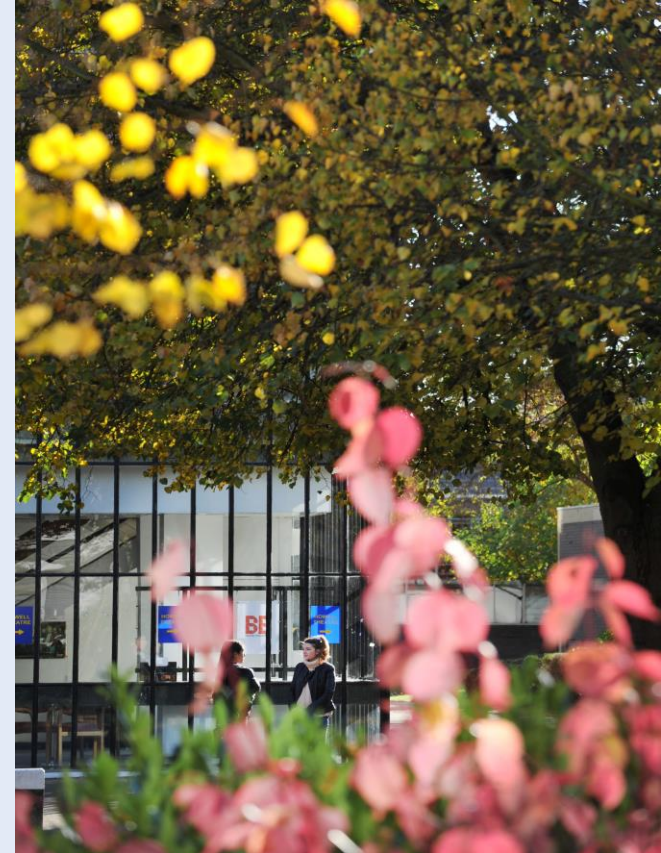
Total amount to be paid to your University of College  
(Tuition Fee Loan amount)

Total amount to be paid to you  
(Maintenance Loan amount)

# Additional funding

There may be some additional support available for students:

- **Disabled Students Allowance** - If you have any disability, including mental health difficulties and other unseen disabilities such as dyslexia and medical conditions, you may be eligible for a DSA.
- **Childcare grants** - If you have children under the age of 17
- If an adult depends on you financially
- If you are on low income, for example find it hard to pay for basics like food and accommodation
- If going overseas is part of your course/ clinical placement
- If you are studying for courses for:
  - Teaching training
  - Dental, Medical or Healthcare roles
  - Social Work



# Scholarships and Bursaries at Brunel University London:

Each year, scholarships, bursaries and discounts are available to students

Most scholarship awards require an application, but most bursaries do not as they are means-tested

Care Leaver & Estranged Bursary

Urban Scholarship

Brunel Family Discount

Brunel Sanctuary (Refugee) Scholarship

CEDPS Academic Excellence Scholarship

Music Awards

Sports Scholarship Programme

Ealing Trailfinders (ETF) Rugby Academy Scholarship

Fee Reduction for Partnership Schools

# How are student loans repaid? (Plan 5)

Through the tax system from April following Graduation

- Only start repaying once you earn over £25,000 (take 9% of earnings above this)
- £30,000 salary repay £37.50 per month
- £40,000 salary repay £112.50 per month

Loan interest rates: Whilst studying: **RPI (Retail price index)**

**Student loans that remain unpaid after 40 years will be written off**



# What can students be doing?

- Start early to avoid missing deadlines!
- Research
- Attending open days and university-led events
- Extracurricular activities, volunteering, and work experience
- Focus on their studies
- Discuss financial options with parents/guardians
- Ask questions





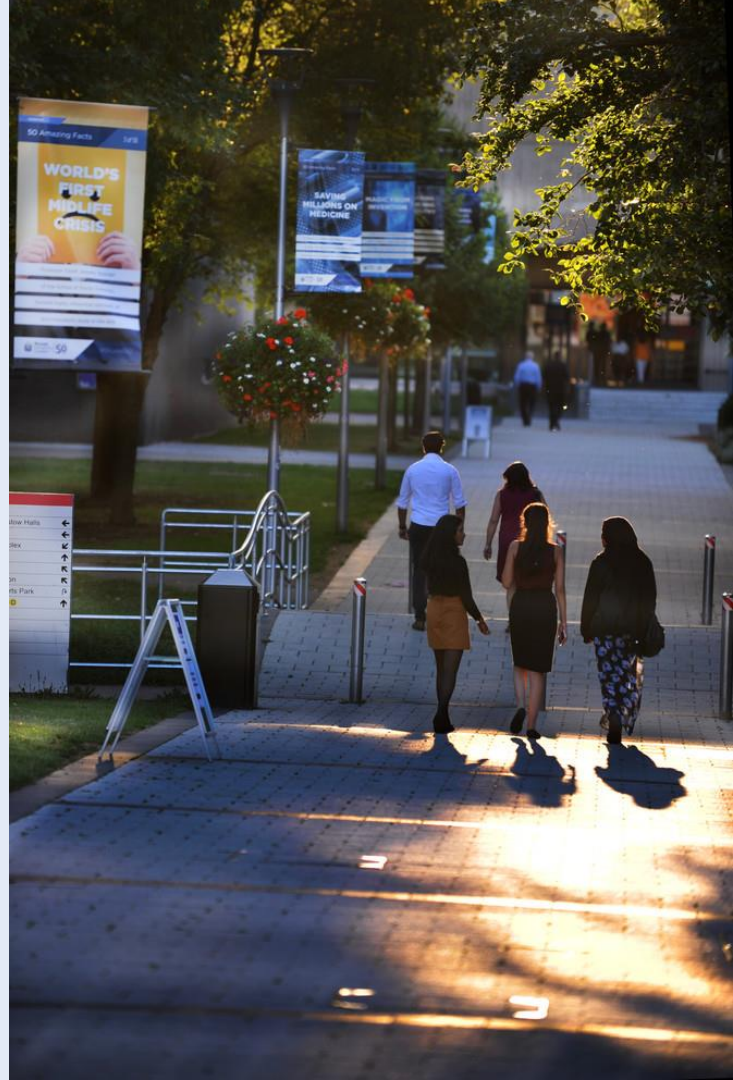
# Useful Links

## Brunel University of London

- Information for Parents and Carers - <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/study/information-for-parents-and-schools>
- Undergraduate fees and funding - <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/study/undergraduate-fees-and-funding>
- Parents', Family and Friends' newsletter – <https://goingto.brunel.ac.uk/form/parentscomms>

## UCAS

- Downloadable Parent, Guardian and Carer Guide 2026 entry – <https://www.ucas.com/discover/advice-for-parents-guardians-and-carers/parent-guardian-and-carer-guide>
- Supporting your child in writing their personal statement for 2026 entry - <https://www.ucas.com/discover/advice-for-parents-guardians-and-carers/helping-your-child-write-a-great-personal>







# Any Questions?

[Schoolvisits@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:Schoolvisits@brunel.ac.uk)