



STUDENTS WITH INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT NEEDS

How you can help

UCAS

CONTENTS

For some students, their individual circumstances can have a significant impact on their decision to go to university or college – and on their ability to succeed when they are there.

To make sure they're aware of the range of support available, we've pulled together some tips and key resources for you to share with them throughout the different stages of the application process.

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Disabled students, and those with

SEN, or a mental health concern

Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students with a disability, SEN, or mental health concern, and let them know about the support available to them at uni/college. There's lots of advice on ucas.com and in Disability Rights UK's [Into Higher Education guide](#) to get them started.
- > When going to open days, get students to visit student services to discuss any support needs. If they're unable to attend an open day, they could try to book an independent visit and appointment with the uni's student services.
- > Remind students to check if courses have work placements and consider what support they might need.
- > Explain what [Disabled Students' Allowances \(DSAs\)](#) are.
- > If a student currently accesses health or social care, suggest they explore the services they can expect to be transitioned to with their home support, as this can vary between different areas.
- > Read the [Student Minds 'Know Before You Go' guide](#) to help you support all students making the transition to uni/college – and share with your colleagues.
- > Check if the uni/college holds summer schools or taster courses for those thinking of applying.
- > Before picking their final choices, encourage students to email the disability or wellbeing support office at their chosen unis/colleges to double-check the support they offer.

When they're applying

- > Encourage students to tick the box on their UCAS application to tell the uni/college about their support needs – remind them this is not used to judge their application, but to give them an equal chance to reach their potential. Student Minds has written a [blog about disclosing a mental health concern](#), and this [guide to disclosure from AHEAD](#) may help.
- > With the student's permission, use the reference to explain any mitigating circumstances or challenges they've faced, to help the uni/college consider their achievements in context.
- > Check what diagnostic evidence is required for the students to apply for DSAs – (e.g. a form 8 is not enough evidence).
- > Inspire students to make aspirational choices.

Post-application

- > Remind students to apply for a Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) as early as possible.
- > Prompt them to make enquiries about accommodation if they have particular requirements (e.g. accessibility).
- > Encourage students to visit the ['My Study My Way' platform from Ability Net](#) to start thinking about how they can get the most out of uni/college.
- > Make sure they're fully prepared to attend interviews, admissions tests, and auditions – and contact the uni/college in advance if they require any adjustments (e.g. disabled parking, extra time, BSL interpreters, materials in different formats).
- > Develop a list of alternative choices that have appropriate support in place, in case they need to use Clearing.



During Confirmation and Clearing

- > For students who require significant support or adjustments, Clearing can present a challenge – advise them to speak to the uni/college directly before making any decision.
- > Check that students with mental health concerns are supported, especially if they miss their grades.

Transition to university or college

- > Contact the disability adviser or mental health adviser at the uni/college to discuss support needs ahead of moving in.
- > Check if the uni/college holds summer schools or courses to prepare students for transition (e.g. for autistic students).
- > Check students with mental health conditions have spoken to their doctor about ongoing care and support if they are moving away.
- > Ensure a care package is organised through social services, if required.
- > Check they know who to contact at uni/college if they have any questions or problems.
- > Signpost students to Student Minds' **Transitions** and **Know Before You Go** resources to help them take their next step.

For more support

- > [Information and advice onucas.com](#)
- > [National Association of Disability Practitioners \(NADP\)](#)
- > [Disability Rights UK](#)
- > [Ability Net](#)
- > [Student Minds](#)
- > [University Mental Health Advisers Network LINKS\(UMHAN\)](#)



Refugees and asylum seekers

Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students who are refugees or asylum seekers, and flag that they may be able to get help if they want to go to uni/college. Two good starting points are Refugee Support Network's '**I Just Want to Study**' [resource](#) and their [FAQ pages](#). There is also information on [ucas.com](#) to help.
- > Make asylum seeker students aware they're ineligible for student finance, but they can research what scholarships are available using the [STAR Network scholarships information](#).
- > Get students under humanitarian protection to check their eligibility for student finance in England – [read more on the UKCISA website](#).
- > Check whether refugee students are also care experienced, as they may be eligible for care leaver support ([see information for care leavers](#)).



When they're applying

- > Make sure students select the correct residential category on their UCAS application, to help the uni set the correct fee status. [Visit the UKCISA website for more information](#).
- > Use the reference to flag if a student is unable to provide proof of achieved qualifications. Contact unis directly to discuss this, as there is diversity in how each one addresses the issue.
- > Encourage eligible students (including those seeking asylum and those with refugee status, discretionary leave to remain (DLR), and humanitarian protection status) to tick the care leaver box.
- > Advise students use their UCAS personal statement to outline their previous study, particularly if they are unable to provide proof of qualifications, or did not complete the course.

Post-application

- > If a student's status changes after they've submitted their application, they need to update the uni/college immediately, as this can affect their fee status and eligibility for student finance.
- > If the student is unhappy with, or unclear about, the fee status set by the uni/college, they should contact them to discuss this. [UKCISA](#) can also help, and [Coram Children's Legal Centre](#) gives free legal advice to young people.
- > Remind them to apply for scholarships and grants as early as possible.

During Confirmation and Clearing

- > Finding a course through Clearing may be a challenge for asylum seeker students who are relying on a scholarship to go to uni/college. If they're looking at alternatives, get them to contact the uni/college directly to discuss this.

Transition to university or college

- > See if the uni/college offers any summer schools or courses to help students prepare for HE, improve language skills (e.g. IELTS), etc.
- > Research what MOOCs are available to help students prepare for HE. FutureLearn offer a course specially designed for refugees and asylum seekers, but there are lots aimed at international students, which would be very useful.
- > Check they know who to contact at uni/college if they have any questions or problems.

For more support

- > [Information and advice on **ucas.com**](#)
- > [Refugee Support Network](#)
- > [STAR Network](#)
- > [Coram Children's Legal Centre](#)
- > [UKCISA](#)



Care experienced students

Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students with care experience and let them know that support is available to help them go to uni/college – Become's **Propel website** is a good starting point as it shows what each university offers. Their '**Helping you reach higher factsheet**' also outlines the support students are entitled to at all stages.
- > On the **Propel website**, they'll find details of the named contact at the uni/college. Encourage students to get in touch to find out about the specific support they offer – they may even invite the student to visit the campus before they commit to making an application.
- > They should research bursaries and grants for care leavers, such as from **Unite Foundation**.
- > In Scotland, make sure students are aware of articulation and that they could enter university directly into the second or third year after studying at college for one or two years. If this applies, they should contact the uni to see if they offer this option.
- > Remind students to discuss their plans with their care worker (usually their social worker or personal adviser) as part of their pathway plan. It's a good idea to discuss this with anyone else who gives them support too.



When they're applying

- > Encourage aspirational choices – students with care experience may be considered for contextualised offers, and in Scotland, care experienced students are eligible for minimum entry requirements – **find out more**.
- > In Scotland, all care experienced students are entitled to a bursary, so signpost them to the **SAAS website** to get their application underway.
- > Use the reference to highlight anything which may have affected a student's attainment or performance, such as disruption as a result of school moves, or moving placement during the exam period.
- > Encourage students to tick the care leaver box on their UCAS application, and ensure they understand that this information is used positively to help support their success. **This blog** explains why it's so important.

Post-application

- > Check students can attend open days and interviews – they may be able to access support from the local authority to help with any costs. Sometimes the uni/college can help too.
- > Remind students to apply for accommodation that allows them to remain over holiday periods, if available. Some unis/colleges offer financial support to help with the extra cost, so they should get in touch with the named contact there to see what is available.
- > If the student intends to stay in their local area, they should speak to their local authority about access to suitable housing.
- > Get students to update their contact details if they move after they have submitted their application.

During Confirmation and Clearing

- > It may be hard to secure year-round accommodation in Clearing so, if this is required, students should speak to the uni/college first.

Transition to university or college

- > Ask if students have started thinking about budgeting – **the Blackbullion website** offers tools and resources to help with this.
- > Plan out what they need to buy and find out what is provided – some universities offer starter packs to care leavers.
- > Check they have planned with their care worker how they will make the move to uni/college.
- > Make sure they know who to contact at uni/college if they have any questions or problems.

For more support

- > [Information and advice onucas.com](#)
- > [Propel website](#)
- > [Become website](#)
- > [Who Cares? Scotland](#)



Estranged students

Pre-application and research phase

- > Where possible, identify students whose relationship with their parents has broken down, or those who have a difficult relationship which could potentially break down. Flag that support is available, and information can be found on [the Stand Alone website](#) and the [UCAS estranged student hub](#).
- > Make sure you understand what estrangement is, and mention it alongside care experience when talking about HE support – as not all estranged students will be known to the school or college.
- > Let students know what ‘estranged’ means as they will encounter this terminology when applying to universities, student finance, etc.
- > Research bursaries, grants, and other support at universities, and through charitable trusts, such as [Buttle UK](#).

When they're applying

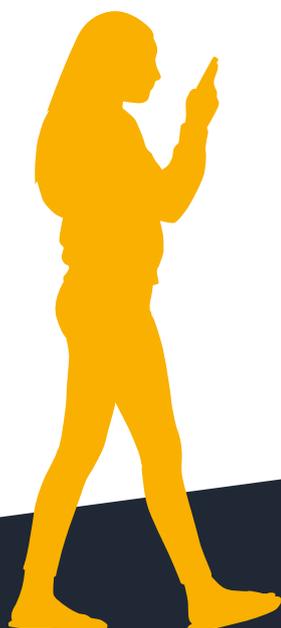
- > Encourage aspirational choices – students may not realise they can access support that would enable them to move away.
- > Use the reference to highlight anything which may have affected a student's attainment or performance.

Post-application

- > Ensure they apply for student finance as an independent student, and check what evidence they need to provide – they may need help with this – take a look at [Stand Alone's student finance guide](#).
- > Contact the Independent Team at the Student Loans Company at independent_student_enquiries@slc.co.uk or the [Student Awards Agency for Scotland \(SAAS\)](#), for advice on supporting applicants.
- > Locate and contact the uni/college's support team or dedicated adviser – [Stand Alone lists some details on its website](#). If a contact isn't listed, get in touch with the designated member of staff for care leavers ([see the Propel website](#)), or email Stand Alone at contact@standalone.org.uk.
- > Check students can attend applicant visit days and interviews – the uni/college may be able to help if cost is a barrier, and [Buttle UK offers grants](#) to help students without family support.
- > Remind students to update their contact details if they change address.
- > Be aware of new family breakdowns, and contact the uni/college if there is a change of circumstances.

During Confirmation and Clearing

- > It may be hard to secure year-round accommodation in Clearing, so if this is required, students should speak to the uni/college first.



Transition to university or college

- > Check students have started thinking about budgeting – the **Blackbullion website** offers tools and resources to help with this.
- > Get students thinking about how they will move to uni/college and buy the equipment they need. **Buttle UK offers grants** to help students with costs, and some universities offer starter packs.
- > Remind them to take key documents, such as their passport and driving licence.
- > Ask if they have made plans for the Christmas holiday period. This is often a difficult time for estranged students, so they may need help from their uni/college with accommodation and wellbeing support.
- > Make sure they know who to contact at uni/college if they have any questions or problems – and why they should do so. Bear in mind that not all universities will be equally understanding of estrangement and a student's circumstances, so it's important to support them with their transition by liaising with the uni/college's student services.
- > Suggest students follow **@StandAloneHE on Twitter** to connect with other estranged students.

For more support

- > **UCAS' estranged student hub**
- > **The Stand Alone student portal**



Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students who have caring responsibilities and flag that support is available. The **Carers Trust website** and the **information onucas.com** are good starting points.
- > Be mindful that that not all students with caring responsibilities will be known to the school or college. Some students do not think their caring 'counts' and many don't fully understand their rights. To find out how you and colleagues can help, read the **Carers Trust report into the experiences of young adult carers at school**.
- > Check if work placements or off-site learning are likely to cause a problem for the student, and encourage them to discuss this with the uni/college before they apply, to understand how they will support them with any difficulties.
- > Encourage the student to contact the local authority to find out what support is available – this can include information and guidance, and individual and group support. Some services have links with widening participation and outreach teams at universities – **find services near you**.

When they're applying

- > Encourage aspirational choices – the local authority has a responsibility for those in need of care, and carers have a right in law to receive support that allows them to meet their own personal goals, including education.
- > Use the reference to highlight anything which may have affected a student's attainment or performance.
- > Advise students to use the personal statement to highlight skills gained as result of their caring role (e.g. independence, determination, juggling priorities).

Post-application

- > Help students to apply for any bursaries or grants either from the uni/college or through a charitable organisation – and start this process as early as possible.
- > Check students can attend applicant visit days and interviews – they may be able to access support from the local authority to help with costs.
- > Prompt students to start thinking about planning respite and additional care, as there may be logistic and financial implications they need help managing.

During Confirmation and Clearing

- > If students don't achieve their grades, check the uni/college is aware of any mitigating circumstances.



Transition to university or college

- > Remind students to contact the uni/college to discuss their academic support needs (e.g. anxieties about workload) and practical support (e.g. on-site parking).
- > Let students know there are tools available to help with budgeting, such as the **Blackbullion website**. They may also be able to access advice through their local carers service.
- > Get students thinking about how they will move to uni/college and buy the equipment they need (e.g. bedding, kitchen equipment).
- > Check they know who to contact at the uni/college if they have any academic or pastoral questions.

For more support

- > **Information and advice on ucas.com**
- > **Carers Trust**
- > Statutory support for young carers in **England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland**
- > **Hope Support** offers help and advice for students with a terminally ill family member



Students with parenting responsibilities

Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students who are responsible for the care of a child aged 17 or under, and flag that support is available. UCAS' **information for students with parenting responsibilities** is a good starting point.
- > Prompt students to check if they are eligible for government support (e.g. Childcare Grant, Parents' Learning Allowance).

When they're applying

- > Encourage students to make aspirational choices.
- > Assure students that their UCAS personal statement is a good place to highlight their skills and experience, especially those gained through their parenting responsibilities (e.g. communication and organisation skills).
- > Remind students to check what support is available at the uni/college to support their studies before making their final decisions (e.g. childcare facilities or family accommodation).

Post-application

- > If family accommodation is required, get students to apply early as there is often limited availability.
- > Remind students to apply for student finance as an independent student, and apply for any government support they are eligible for.
- > Suggest they book childcare facilities (on campus or elsewhere) well in advance, as places will be limited. They can cancel later on, if necessary.

During Confirmation and Clearing

- > If they are using Clearing, check they have researched the facilities at prospective unis/colleges before accepting an offer.

Transition to university or college

- > Remind students to contact the uni/college to discuss any academic support needs or anxieties about workload.
- > Encourage students to take a look at the **Blackbullion website** for tools and resources to help with budgeting.
- > Make sure they know who to contact at the uni/college if they have any questions or problems.
- > Suggest they check for any societies or support groups for student parents.

For more support

- > [Information and advice on ucas.com](#)
- > [NUS' information for student parents](#)
- > [The Childcare Grant](#) and the [Parents' Learning Allowance](#)



Children from UK Armed Forces

families (service children)

Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students with a parent or carer currently serving in the regular UK Armed Forces, or as a reservist or former service personnel. Flag that support is available – **the SCiP Alliance website** is a good starting point for more information. There is also **information and advice on [ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)**.
- > Be mindful that not all service children may be known to the school or college, especially if their parent(s) or carer(s) are no longer serving personnel.
- > If a service child has been bereaved, they may be eligible for the **Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme (AFBSS)** – it may be a good idea to signpost this with the student's parent or carer.
- > Check if students have any caring responsibilities (**see [information for carers](#)**).

When they're applying

- > Encourage aspirational choices, especially if a student's mobility has impacted their attainment as this may be taken into context.
- > Use the reference to flag high mobility, learning gaps, parental deployment, and any care responsibilities – especially where this has affected the student's attainment or performance – **SCiP Alliance has [guidance for advisers](#)**.
- > Advise students to use their personal statement to highlight the skills and strengths gained through their experiences – point them towards **SCiP Alliance's [guidance for students](#)** for help.

Post-application

- > Prompt students to apply for student finance. If in doubt about which funding body they should apply to, **check this [guidance from GOV.UK](#)**, or contact the funding body directly.

During Confirmation and Clearing

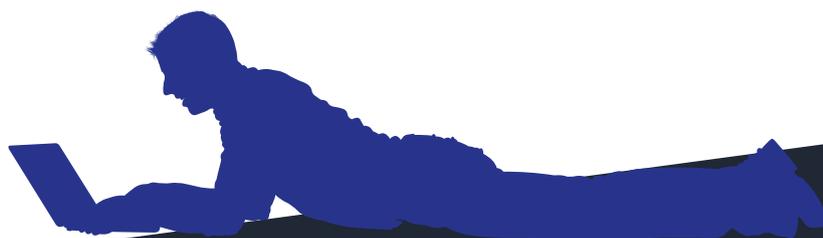
- > Be aware of any additional stress for those with a deployed parent or an impending move. Make sure students know where to get support.

Transition to university or college

- > Check if they have concerns about leaving home, especially if parents are deployed or need care. It's a good idea for them to contact student services and find out what help is available should they need it (e.g. counselling, support groups).
- > See whether academic support is offered to fill any gaps in skills caused by mobility.
- > Make students aware of MOOCs to help them prepare for HE – such as the **'[Preparing for university course](#)'** from FutureLearn.
- > Make sure they know who to contact at uni/college if they have any questions or problems.

For more support

- > **[Service Children's Progression \(SCiP\) Alliance](#)**
- > **[The Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme \(AFBSS\)](#)**



UK Armed Forces veterans

and service leavers

Pre-application and research phase

- > Identify students who have served in the regular UK Armed Forces, or as a reservist. Flag that support may be available – a good starting point is the **MOD's ELCAS website**, which outlines the different schemes and funding available. There is also **information and advice on [ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com)**.
- > Check what stage the student is at – are they still in the resettlement phase, or have they made a full transition to civilian life? Some support is specifically only available to those in the resettlement phase – the **MOD's Career Transitions Partnership (CTP) website** provides more guidance.
- > If they also have caring or parenting responsibilities, see the sections above to help with their specific needs.
- > For those who have been affected by mental or physical injury through conflict or training, **Walking With the Wounded's (WWTW) First Steps programme** helps with access to education and training opportunities through specialised advice – students can apply for this online. You can also find support through the **College for Military Veterans and Emergency Services (CMVES)**.

When they're applying

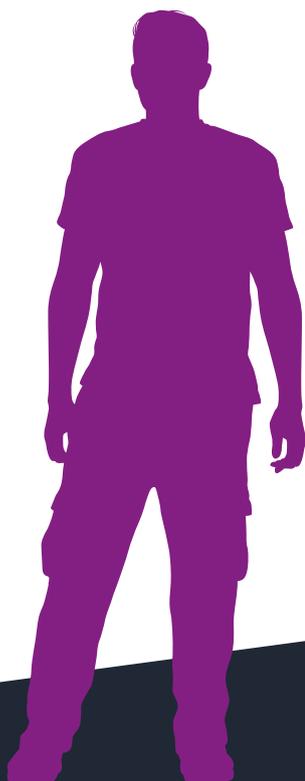
- > Be aware that not all unis/colleges or courses are ELC approved – the **ELCAS website** has a search tool, to help the student find a suitable uni/college and approved course.
- > Remind students to use their UCAS personal statement to highlight the skills, experience, training, and qualifications gained during their time in the UK Armed Forces.
- > Ensure students receive their reference from their commanding officer on discharge, and suggest they seek an additional reference from their educational resettlement officer, if possible.

Post-application

- > Prompt students to apply for any funding through student finance or MOD schemes as soon as possible.
- > Make sure they have spoken to the uni/college about any other support needs (e.g. if they are a carer, are disabled, or have a mental health condition).

During Confirmation and Clearing

- > Make sure they know where to get support – pastoral support will be especially important if any results they are awaiting are lower than expected, or if their application is unsuccessful.



Transition to university or college

- > Ask if they have practical matters in hand (e.g. personal arrangements with finances, travel, childcare, accommodation).
- > Check whether any academic support is offered to fill gaps in skills, or to boost confidence and readiness.
- > Make students aware of MOOCs to help them prepare for HE – such as the **'Preparing for university course'** from FutureLearn.
- > Encourage them to arrange a meeting with the academic tutor before the course begins, to discuss any questions or concerns they may have.
- > Make sure they know who to contact at uni/college if they have any questions or problems.

For more support

- > [Information and advice onucas.com](#)
- > [Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Service \(ELCAS\) website](#)
- > [MOD's Career Transitions Partnership \(CTP\) website](#)
- > [Armed Forces Covenant](#)
- > [College for Military Veterans and Emergency Services \(CMVES\)](#)
- > [QUEST online magazine](#)
- > [Royal British Legion's Veteran' Gateway](#)



