



# NEWSTEAD WOOD SCHOOL

*"creating opportunities for success"*

2 February 2024

Dear Students, Parents and Carers,

## UCAS Offers and Next Steps

Now that the UCAS deadline has passed and many students have received their responses back from universities, the next big question is about which universities to choose for the Firm and Insurance choice. I hope the information below is helpful.

It is important to make an informed decision and there is usually plenty of time to decide. Your deadline to reply to your offers will depend when you receive your final offer – check your application to see your personal deadline.

You researched the universities and courses you chose at the application stage. Once you have offers, there is a second research phase. Universities offer opportunities to visit – in person or virtually – and they will continue to provide offer holders with information to help you decide.

Use applicant visit days to help you decide. Current students are a great resource and every university will have student ambassadors you can talk to for a realistic idea of what it's like to study and live at the university. You can ask questions about how much choice there is on the course, whether you can specialise in a particular topic, what the teaching is like, how you will be assessed (exams, coursework, project work, etc), whether you can study abroad or do an internship and so on. You can also get details about the cost of living, part-time work opportunities and your employment prospects on graduation.

Don't forget to ask about student life too. You are going to spend the next 3 or 4 years of your life studying, living and socialising at the university you choose. You might also want to use online resources, such as The Student Room, to ask questions, but remember it's your decision and any information you gather should be used to help you to make an informed choice that's right for you.

## What should I consider when making a firm choice?

All applicants have to make a firm choice and you are encouraged to make an insurance choice, though this is actually optional.

Some important figures: in 2023 79% of applicants were placed at their firm choice (it's typically around 70%), while only 5% were placed at their insurance choice. The total number of applications last year was 757,000 and it is worth noting that 38,140 students were placed through Clearing.

So making the right firm choice is really important.

**Headteacher:** Mr Alan Blount, MA, BSc, QTS

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### **What are the considerations?**

It's a combination of do you want to go there and are you likely to get the grades needed? It really is important to consider those more emotive questions – Will I fit in? Will I enjoy living and learning there? What opportunities will I have for additional activities outside my studies? as well as the practical question – Am I going to get the grades?

### **What happens if I don't get the grades for my firm choice?**

You will need to consider what happens if you don't get the grades your firm choice is asking for. It's common practice for universities to accept applicants who have made them the firm choice even if they have dropped a grade or two. This has certainly been the case in the past, but the situation may be different in 2024 and the next few years as there is an increase in the 18-year-old population in the UK. Some universities might also plan to take fewer students in September 2024; they may have taken more than they planned in 2022 and 2023 because of the impact of CAGs and TAGs on the number of students meeting offer conditions.

Teachers and advisers will have experience of the universities that have accepted firm choice applicants who dropped a grade or two in the past, and it is advisable to discuss this with them if you are worried about meeting the offer conditions at your firm choice. **Remember that it is far less likely that your firm choice will accept you if you miss your offer conditions if you are applying for a competitive subject, such as Medicine, or you are hoping to join a competitive university with high entry requirements and high demand for places.**

### **Firm and insurance choices explained**

Making wise firm and insurance choices is really important. The key messages for students and anyone supporting them are:

- When you accept a firm choice, you have formed a contract with that university and the terms of the contract are set out in the conditions of your offer. If you meet or exceed the offer conditions, then you will be placed at that university. You have fulfilled the terms of the contract by meeting the offer conditions and the university fulfils its side of the contract by giving you a place on the course. Admissions teams call that 'confirming your place'. For example, your offer conditions were AAA and you get AAA or above – your place is confirmed.
- You must meet or exceed all the conditions of your firm choice offer to guarantee that your place is confirmed. For example, if your offer conditions are AAB with A in Maths, you must get an A in your Maths A level; it will not be enough to get AAB with B in Maths. If your offer conditions are AAA but you get A\*AB, then you have not met your offer conditions, even though you have the equivalent of AAA.
- Your firm choice university may still accept you, in other words confirm your place, if you have missed the offer conditions marginally. That depends on whether they still have places on the course once the exam results are out.
- If you miss the offer conditions for your firm choice, the university is entitled to reject your application when they get your grades. Think about the contract you formed when you accepted the offer firmly – you didn't meet the conditions of the offer (the terms of the contract), so the university doesn't have a contractual obligation to take you.
- That's when the insurance choice comes into play. If you don't get into your firm choice university but you do meet the offer conditions of your insurance choice, then you will be placed at your insurance choice.
- **That means it is really important to choose an insurance choice with lower offer conditions than your firm choice if this is possible with the offers that you have received.**
- If your offers all have the same offer conditions, which can happen, then you should make the firm choice university the one you really want to go to. It's a good idea at this point to take advice from your school or college as they may have some useful insight based on their past experience of supporting students in this situation.

**What if I change my mind after making my firm and insurance choices?**

There is a 14 day 'cooling off' period after you have updated your UCAS account with your firm and insurance choices . You can make changes during this period, though it's really important to be sure about your reasons when making a change.

If you change your mind after the cooling off period, it is best to take advice from UCAS. Universities are likely to agree to making a change only in exceptional cases.

It's not unusual for students to think that the insurance choice is a second choice and that they can go there if that is their preference when they get their grades. However it doesn't work that way. If you are placed at your firm choice on results day and you don't want to go there, the only option you have is to decline that place and look for another in Clearing. Declining your firm choice place does not mean that you will be given a place by your insurance choice, even if you met the offer conditions. If you actually want to go to your insurance choice, you should contact them as soon as possible on results day to find out if that is an option for you.

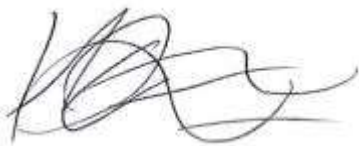
**Some general information:**

**Most universities will only allow firm choice students to apply for university accommodation.** Many won't have room for students admitted via the insurance choice, though it varies, so you might want to check this before making your choices.

According to UCAS rules, universities should only communicate proactively with applicants who make them their firm choice. Applicants might get friendly 'good luck for your exams' communications from their insurance choice, but only your firm choice should engage in regular and more proactive communication about the benefits of joining the university and with details to support transition later in the year.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me at [hdalton@newsteadwood.co.uk](mailto:hdalton@newsteadwood.co.uk).

Yours sincerely,



**Ms H Dalton**  
**Deputy Headteacher – Head of Sixth Form**