

A background image showing a group of students in a classroom. In the foreground, a young woman with glasses and a blue sweater is looking towards the right. Behind her, another student with glasses is visible, and further back, a woman in a purple top is looking forward. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a modern educational environment.

# UCAS Impact

# Report 2017

The UCAS Impact Report 2017 gives an overview of how UCAS supported students, teachers, parents, universities, and colleges in 2017.

**UCAS**



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## Welcome

Public interest in higher education has never been greater. Undergraduate admissions in 2017 was characterised by the first students from England applying to university with reformed A levels, national debate about the value of a degree and access to more selective universities, and changing patterns of applications as a market develops.

This year, more than 699,850 students applied to study a full-time undergraduate programme at UK universities and colleges, and 533,890 were accepted. The largest ever number of UK 18 year olds entered higher education in 2017 using UCAS' services – 241,585, up 1.1% from 2016. This happened despite an ongoing fall in that population demographic.

2017 was an exciting year for me personally, as I started working for UCAS just before SQA and A level results days in August. It's been a real privilege to join an organisation of people so committed to helping others realise their ambitions to enter higher education. We start 2018 with a refreshed strategy, which will enable us to focus and prioritise our resources on what we are best at – helping students successfully explore and realise their higher education choices, and enabling universities and colleges to connect with and recruit the students they want.

All the best

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clare Marchant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Clare Marchant**  
**Chief Executive**



## Who we are

UCAS is an independent charity providing information, advice, and admissions services to inspire and facilitate educational progression. Our vision is to be at the heart of connecting people to higher education – whether this is young people looking to enter higher education, older people wanting a career change or to boost their qualifications, or international students wanting to study in the UK. We aim to equip all students with the information they need, to support them through every step of the application process.

Our services are funded by the application fees paid by students, capitation fees paid by universities and colleges for each student placed, and by our wholly owned commercial subsidiary, UCAS Media, which gift aids its profits to the charity. UCAS Media helps universities, accommodation providers, and businesses connect with interested, verified students.

## What we do

We are best known for providing the UK's national undergraduate admissions service, and timely analysis and insight about demand for higher education and students' outcomes. Our undergraduate admissions service handles almost three million applications from 700,000 UK, EU, and international students. We're proud to help more than half a million students secure a full-time place at one of over 395 universities and colleges across the UK every year. We also offer information, analysis, and admissions services for conservatoire, teacher training, and postgraduate courses.

## Highlights of 2017

**UCAS has six key objectives:**

1. Students know UCAS is where you find out about progression in education, and make applications.
2. UCAS is a trusted partner for attraction, recruitment, and admissions services.
3. UCAS provides comprehensive resources to support students who want to progress.
4. UCAS is the trusted and authoritative source of intelligence about achievement, progression, and participation in education.
5. UCAS is an exemplar of an efficient and effective national shared service.
6. UCAS Media is the premier channel for education providers and commercial customers for marketing to potential students.

These are the highlights of how UCAS met these objectives in 2017.

**Students know UCAS is where you find out about progression in education, and make applications.**

- Held 53 exhibitions across the UK, enabling 174,000 students to discuss their futures with universities, colleges, and employers.
- Launched a new, multi-destination search tool, which enables students to explore over 50,000 undergraduate and conservatoire courses, and 10,700 taught postgraduate courses.
- Published information about degree apprenticeships.
- Introduced personalised messaging and communications, which reflect students' interests and application journeys.
- Introduced the new Tariff, which enables more qualifications to receive points, helping support widening participation.
- Provided UCAS' student advisers with mental health awareness training, in partnership with Student Minds.



**UCAS is a trusted partner for attraction, recruitment, and admissions services. In 2017, we:**

- partnered with 38 awarding organisations to process over 4.7 million examination results across 216 qualifications, to facilitate decisions about admissions to higher education
- delivered a successful undergraduate admissions cycle, enabling UK universities and colleges to recruit over half a million new students
- launched a new courses data collection service
- ran a major project with universities and colleges to secure the embargo of examination results
- published new insight about how English schools and colleges have responded to A level reforms and new GCSEs, to help admissions teams understand the reformed qualifications

**UCAS provides comprehensive resources to support students who want to progress, including:**

- information to explain the new Tariff, how and why universities use contextual data in admissions, and reforms to A levels and GCSEs
- a campaign to encourage teachers to inform UCAS of changes in qualifications being taken by students. This increases the speed of admissions decisions for students
- a new service which tells teachers which of their students have not secured a place post-results to enable them to support the students who need the most help

## Applicant feedback

Applicant satisfaction with UCAS services was **89%** in 2017, up 3% on 2016.

“ It (UCAS) made my university application incredibly easy, and much less stressful.”

“ UCAS was completely easy and simple for us to use. It was the quickest and most effective way of being able to see your application, and accessing the site was available for everyone.”

Source: End of cycle undergraduate applicant satisfaction survey (2017 entry)

## Adviser feedback

Adviser satisfaction with UCAS services was maintained at **95%** in 2017.

“ Fundamentally, UCAS offers an outstanding and professional service.”

“ Every year, there are new things and up-to-date information, which is useful to both staff and students.”

Source: Adviser experience 2017 survey

## Provider feedback

Provider satisfaction with UCAS services was **89%** in 2017, up 11% on 2016.

“ The customer service from all departments I have accessed is excellent, both on the telephone and via email.”

“ Regular webinars, regional meetings, and trainings are all very helpful and critical in keeping us up-to-date with what is going on in HE. Keep them coming...”

Source: Higher education provider experience 2017 survey



## UCAS ready to help

In 2017, UCAS supported students and parents with:

- 430,000 inbound phone calls
- 133,000 social media queries
- 21,000 email queries

We attracted:

- more than 110,000,000 page views on [ucas.com](https://ucas.com)
- 417,670 social media followers
- 40,000,000 Twitter impressions

**UCAS is the trusted and authoritative source of intelligence about achievement, progression, and participation in education. In 2017, we:**

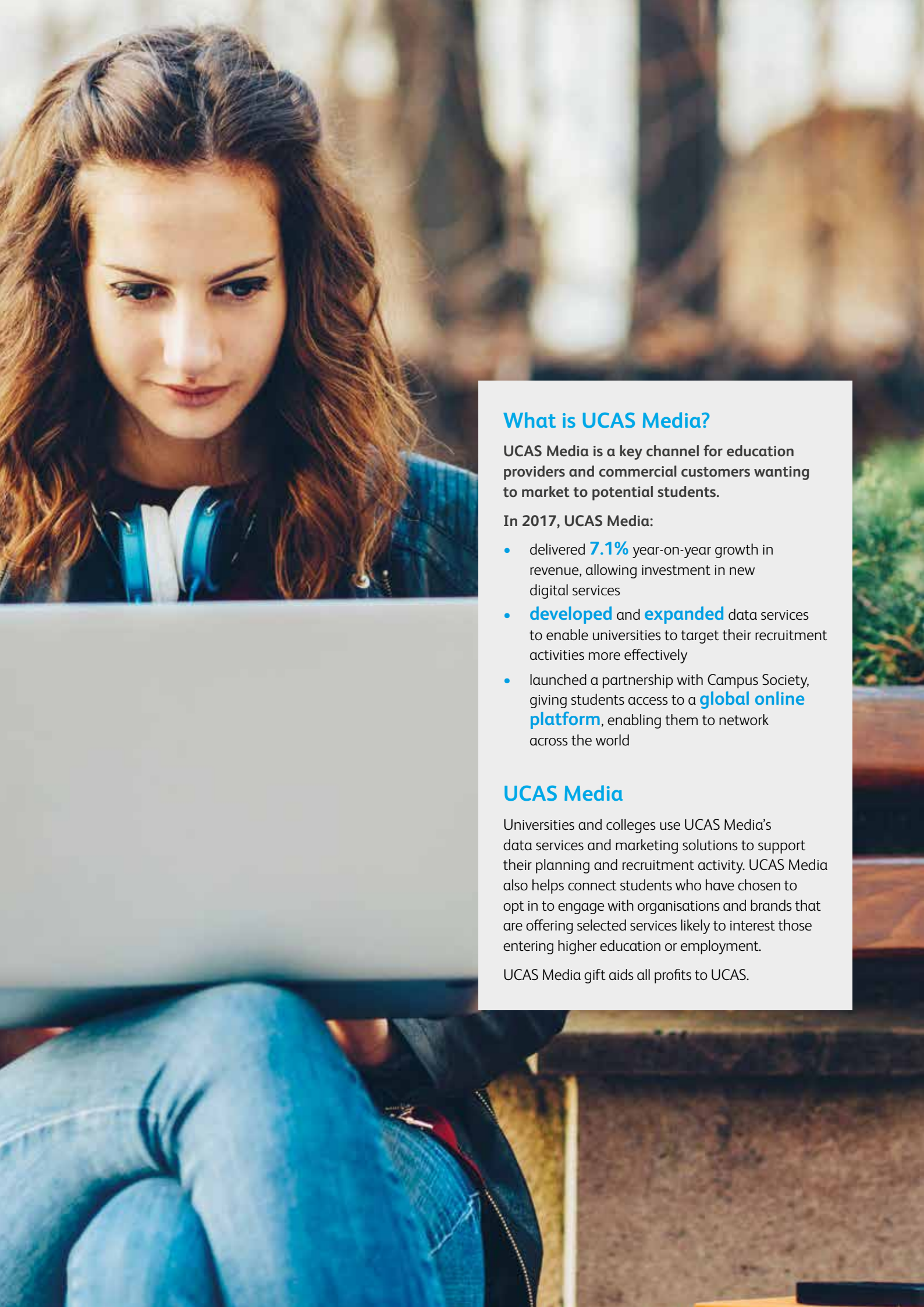
- published a series of analytical reports on demand for undergraduate courses during the year
- published the End of Cycle Report 2017 about the undergraduate cycle, six weeks after the cycle closed, showing trends in admissions and participation
- published a wide-ranging report about the alternatives to full-time undergraduate study ('Progression pathways')
- made admissions data available to researchers via the secure Administrative Data Research Network
- published, on behalf of the university sector, a major set of equalities data, exploring applications, offers, and acceptances for UK students, according to sex, ethnic group, and socio-economic background

**UCAS is an exemplar of an efficient and effective national shared service. In 2017, we:**

- contributed to Universities UK's review of higher education sector organisations. The review noted that 'UCAS is very highly regarded, an exemplar of a collaborative approach to a shared need that provides huge benefits to potential students and higher education institutions alike'
- introduced a new, digital telephony platform, providing greater resilience in busy periods, and features to enable customers to self-serve more effectively
- made further technology improvements to integrate and increase efficiency of communications within the business, and with customers
- secured a 'one to watch' rating in the national Best Companies Survey, reflecting good employee engagement

## Our future focus

In 2017, we carried out a refresh of our strategy to strengthen our business to 2020 and beyond. Our 450 employees, and more than 1,000 customers, helped us focus on the greatest value we bring to our students, universities, and colleges – progression into higher education. This will be published in spring 2018.



## What is UCAS Media?

UCAS Media is a key channel for education providers and commercial customers wanting to market to potential students.

In 2017, UCAS Media:

- delivered **7.1%** year-on-year growth in revenue, allowing investment in new digital services
- **developed** and **expanded** data services to enable universities to target their recruitment activities more effectively
- launched a partnership with Campus Society, giving students access to a **global online platform**, enabling them to network across the world

## UCAS Media

Universities and colleges use UCAS Media's data services and marketing solutions to support their planning and recruitment activity. UCAS Media also helps connect students who have chosen to opt in to engage with organisations and brands that are offering selected services likely to interest those entering higher education or employment.

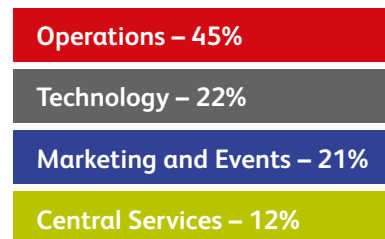
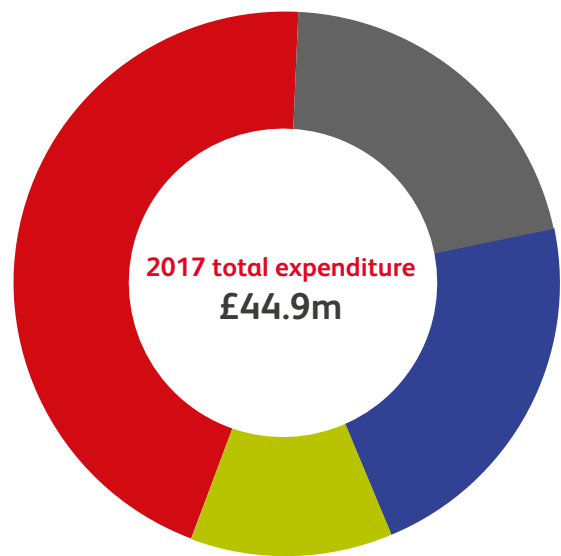
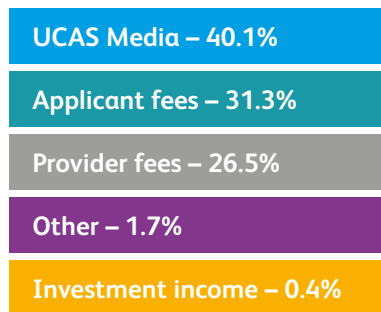
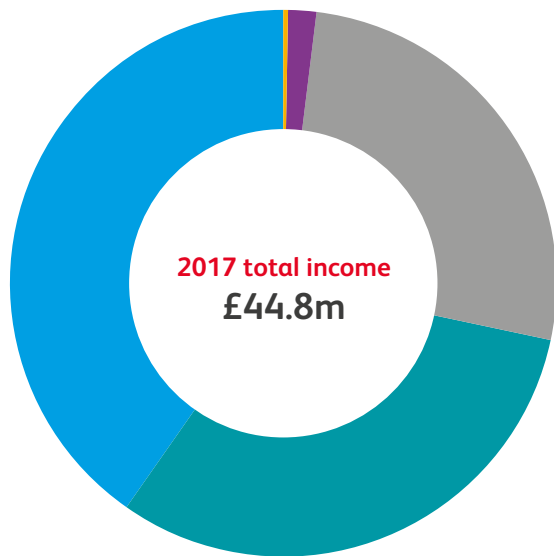
UCAS Media gift aids all profits to UCAS.



## Financial highlights

In the financial year 2016/17, UCAS' income increased by 5.6%, to £44.8m. An increase in income was seen from both charitable and UCAS Media activities, with revenue generated by the commercial subsidiary increasing by 7.1%. Strong stewardship of our budget and cash flow delivered an end of year surplus, and £1.4m better than budget.

Total income and expenditure in 2017 is shown below.







## Progression to higher education in 2017 –

### key facts and figures

#### 2017 Undergraduate headline figures



**699,850** applicants in 2017, a fall of 2.6%, but the fourth highest on record.



Over **1.9** million offers made.



Offer rates to 18, 19, and 20 year olds highest on record: **77.3%** of 18 year old applicants received an offer, as did **68.7%** of 19 year olds, and **59.9%** of 20 year olds.



Offer rates to applicants aged 21 and above were the highest since 2008.



**533,890** acceptances, a fall of 0.2%, but the second highest number on record.



**76.3%** of all applicants were accepted. Applicants were more likely to be accepted in 2017 than in any year since 2008.

#### Where students came from

**462,945** UK applicants were accepted to higher education, a fall of 0.5%, but still the **third highest on record**.

Acceptances from the EU fell by 2.1% to **30,700**.

Acceptances from outside the EU increased by 5% to **40,245**.

#### Age

The largest ever number of **UK 18 year olds** were accepted to HE in 2017 – **241,585**, up **1.1%** from 2016, despite a 1.2% fall in the UK 18 year old population.

The **UK's 18 year old** entry rate (proportion of 18 year olds accepted to HE) increased to **32.6%**, the highest on record.

UK acceptances **aged over 18 fell**, most notably among **19 year olds**, which were down 2.3% (-5,185) on 2016 numbers, but those who did apply in 2017 were more likely to receive an offer and be accepted than in any year since 2008.



## Widening participation

**13.8%** of the **most disadvantaged** English **18 year olds**, according to the **multiple equality measure** (MEM), entered higher education in 2017. This compares to **53.1%** of the **most advantaged** English 18 year olds who entered HE in 2017.

Across the sector, the **gap** in representation between the **most advantaged and most disadvantaged** has remained **unchanged** since 2014.

**37.7%** of **18 year old women** and **27.8%** of **18 year old men** entered higher education in 2017.

**18 year old women** are **36%** more likely to enter higher education than **18 year old men**.

### Measuring equality

UCAS' multiple equality measure (MEM) combines a range of equality dimensions to identify individuals most and least likely to enter higher education. Therefore, it facilitates a more accurate picture of differences in entry rates to higher education than using any single measure of equality in isolation. It is the primary measure used by UCAS for reporting representation within higher education. Currently, the MEM only defines 18 year olds in England, and is not used to report patterns in other parts of the UK. In Northern Ireland and Wales, the POLAR3 measure is used, while in Scotland, the 2016 version of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is used.

## Subjects

### Top five subject groups by applications:



Business and administration studies: **356,125**



Subjects allied to medicine: **353,905**



Biological sciences: **288,950**



Social studies: **267,840**



Creative arts and design: **267,345**

### Top five subject groups by acceptances:



Business and administration studies: **67,845**



Subjects allied to medicine: **55,755**



Biological sciences: **54,240**



Creative arts and design: **53,320**



Social studies: **49,780**



## Acceptances by country

### England

**448,480** acceptances to **English providers**, down by 0.5% (-2,065).

Acceptances from England decreased by 0.7% to **391,370**.

**86.7%** of English **18 year old** applicants, and **33%** of the English 18 year old **population**, were accepted.

### Scotland

**48,685** acceptances to **Scottish providers**, up by 1.7% (+790).

Acceptances from Scotland increased by 2.4% to **36,540**.

**77.1%** of Scottish **18 year old** applicants, and **25.9%** of the Scottish 18 year old **population**, were accepted.

### Wales

**26,520** acceptances to **Welsh providers**, up by 0.9% (+230).

Acceptances from Wales decreased by 0.2% to **20,665**.

**88.7%** of Welsh **18 year old** applicants, and **29.4%** of the Welsh 18 year old **population**, were accepted.

### Northern Ireland

**10,205** acceptances to **Northern Irish providers**, down by 2.3% (-245).

Acceptances from Northern Ireland decreased by 2.9% to **14,375**.

**72.1%** of Northern Irish **18 year old** applicants, and **34.5%** of the Northern Irish 18 year old **population**, were accepted.

## Understanding the figures

All figures presented here are taken from the UCAS Undergraduate End of Cycle Report 2017, which can be downloaded from [www.ucas.com/2017-end-cycle-report](http://www.ucas.com/2017-end-cycle-report).

UCAS also publishes data and analysis for UCAS Teacher Training and UCAS Conservatoires. For the latest releases, visit [www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis](http://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis).

## Got a question? Get in touch

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