

NEW

UCAS

UCAS DISCOVERY EVENTS:
**FAIR ACCESS
MISSION CARDS
GUIDANCE FOR
EXHIBITORS**

**THE BIG
Q&A**

UCAS DISCOVERY **UK TOUR**



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BACKGROUND

For 2025, UCAS is introducing a new range of 'mission cards' aimed at students from under-represented backgrounds who may be considering higher education. This is part of our work to help students with additional considerations or challenges in their journey to make informed decisions and start their research earlier.

Each mission card contains five prompt questions with the aim of:

- ▶ raising awareness around support for different circumstances in HE;
- ▶ encouraging students to consider what their support needs might be;
- ▶ nudging students to start asking questions about university-specific support provision.

We do not expect exhibitors to have detailed knowledge about all the questions on the cards but we ask that everyone does prepare some high-level responses to signpost students to the right people, or perhaps some handouts or QR codes that help students find the specific information they need or the contact details of the relevant people in your organisation who can offer more detailed information.

We suggest engaging with the colleagues at your institution who will be able to provide you with information – and perhaps any resources you can share. This might include:

- ▶ widening access and participation team
- ▶ school outreach team
- ▶ student support team
- ▶ mental health and wellbeing team
- ▶ disability and mental health advisers
- ▶ admissions teams (e.g. around contextual offers)
- ▶ Students' union or student ambassadors

Over the following pages, we will outline which questions appear on the mission cards, some key information about these under-represented groups, and space for you to drop in information from your institution ready to consult as needed.





DISABLED STUDENTS MISSION CARD

Definitions

Disability covers learning differences (such as dyslexia), neurodiversity, mental health conditions, and long-term health conditions/illnesses, as well as physical disabilities or mobility challenges.

Secondary education tends to use the term SEND (special educational needs and disability) - it's important students know the language in HE is different so they don't miss important support.

Five important things to know when talking to disabled students:

1. Disability is a protected characteristic so students are legally protected by the Equality Act and legally entitled to reasonable adjustments to access the course/campus/facilities.
2. Some students will not identify as 'disabled' but it is important they know this term or they may miss out on support, e.g. Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).
3. Sharing a disability via UCAS will not affect their chances of receiving an offer.
4. You do not need to have a diagnosis to share a disability via UCAS, but you may need evidence to access some types of support (e.g. DSA).
5. Where to find support at the event.

UCAS resources to support disabled students

- ▶ [Information and advice pages for disabled students](#)
- ▶ [Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\) guide](#)
- ▶ [Student guide to mental health and wellbeing support](#)
- ▶ [Adviser toolkit for supporting disabled students](#)
- ▶ [Adviser toolkit for supporting students with mental health conditions](#)

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ Disability Rights UK: www.disabilityrightsuk.org
- ▶ Diversity and Ability: www.diversityandability.com
- ▶ Student Minds: www.studentminds.org.uk (mental health)
- ▶ Charlie Waller Trust: www.charliewaller.org (mental health)



THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a disability adviser in the student support team I could contact with any questions, or to find out more information about support for my disability or condition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the disability adviser, student support team or widening access and participation team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for disabled students, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?▶ Does the student support team or disability adviser have flyers about support for disabled students you can take with you?▶ Has your institution signed the Disabled Student Commitment – can you explain what this means for your students?	
<p>2. Would I be able to speak to the course tutor before applying to find out more about the teaching and assessment methods and discuss my individual support needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the disability adviser or course leader	
<p>3. Are there disabled student representatives or peer support groups that I could contact about their experiences of being a disabled student at this university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the disability adviser, student support team or student ambassadors.▶ Are there opportunities to meet students at open days or other events?	
<p>4. If I share details about my disability or condition in the UCAS application, will the university or college contact me for more information or should I contact them myself?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the disability adviser or admissions team	
<p>5. Are there any pre-arrival events or courses available to help familiarise myself with the campus, the teaching, or my surroundings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the disability adviser, or student support team, events team, or student ambassadors▶ This could include individual campus visits, orientation events, summer schools, etc	



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING MISSION CARD

Three important things to know when talking to students about mental health and wellbeing:

1. Mental health falls under the umbrella term of 'disability' in HE so the disability information above will also apply in most cases – including reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act.
2. Students may not identify as 'disabled' (this is why we have a separate Mission Card) but it is important they know this term or they may miss out on important support, such as the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) – if you can, try to make them aware of this.
3. Sharing a mental health condition on the UCAS application will not affect your chances of receiving an offer and sharing early means the university will have support ready for the start of term.

UCAS resources to support student mental health

- ▶ **[Student guide to mental health and wellbeing support](#)**
- ▶ **[Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\) guide](#)**
- ▶ **[Adviser toolkit for supporting students with mental health conditions](#)**

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ Student Minds: **www.studentminds.org.uk** (mental health)
- ▶ Charlie Waller Trust: **www.charliewaller.org** (mental health)



THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a mental health adviser, disability adviser or support team I could contact with any questions, or to find out more information about support?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the disability adviser, mental health adviser, mental health and wellbeing team or student support team ▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for mental health and wellbeing can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand? ▶ Are there any flyers about your mental health and wellbeing support services? 	
<p>2. What support could I get with managing my mental health and wellbeing while at university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the mental health adviser, disability adviser, mental health and wellbeing team, or student support team 	
<p>3. Are there student representatives or peer support groups that I could contact about their experiences of mental health and wellbeing support at this university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the disability adviser, student support team or student ambassadors. ▶ Are there opportunities to meet students at open days or other events? 	
<p>4. If I share details about a mental health condition in the UCAS application, will the university or college contact me for more information or should I contact them myself?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the disability adviser or admissions team 	
<p>5. Would I be able to speak to the course tutor before applying to find out more about the teaching and assessment methods and discuss my individual support needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the disability adviser, or course leader 	



CARE-EXPERIENCED STUDENTS MISSION CARD

Definitions

A student is 'care experienced' if they have any spent time living with foster carers under local authority care, in residential care (e.g. a children's home), looked after at home under a supervision order, or in kinship care with relatives or friends, either officially (e.g. a special guardianship order) or informally without local authority support.

Care experience is sometimes confused with a caring responsibility (people who offer unpaid care to another person) but they are very different. There is a separate Mission Card for students with caring responsibilities.

Three important things to know when talking to care-experienced students:

1. Students currently in care should speak to their Personal Adviser at the local authority about their plans to go to university – they will be able to help with organising accommodation, applying for the government's Care Leavers' Bursary, applying for student finance and scholarships, etc. They can check their 'local offer' online.
2. This can be a very sensitive and personal matter, so young people may be nervous or reluctant to talk to a stranger about their background – is it possible to have something they can pick up or scan for more information without having to ask someone directly?
3. This group of students often doesn't know there is support available in HE and, as a result, may reject this pathway because they think the barriers are too high – how can we make support more visible early on?

UCAS resources to support students with care experience

- ▶ **[Information and advice for care-experienced students](#)**
- ▶ **[Information about finance and funding for care-experienced students](#)**
- ▶ **[Adviser toolkit for supporting students with care experience](#)**
- ▶ **[Step-by-Step Guide for supporting care-experienced students \(for non-UCAS specialists\)](#)**
- ▶ **[Good practice for higher education providers: care-experienced students](#)**

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ NNECL: **www.nnecl.org**
- ▶ Unite Foundation: **www.thisisusatuni.org**
- ▶ Become's Propel pages: **www.becomecharity.org.uk/get-support/propel**
- ▶ Who Cares? Scotland: **www.whocaresScotland.org**

➔ THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a named contact for care-experienced students in the support team? Can you give me their details so I can contact them with any questions or get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team ▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for care-experienced students, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand? ▶ Does your institution have the NNECL Quality Mark? Are you able to explain what this means for students? 	
<p>2. Does the university or college offer a bursary or other financial support for people from a care background? If so, where can I get more information about eligibility criteria?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team ▶ What does any scholarship, bursary, or support package include? ▶ Is there a website with more details and information about applying? 	
<p>3. Is there any support with accommodation for care-experienced students? If so what type of help is available? (e.g. 365-day accommodation, help with guarantors, priority access to university accommodation)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the widening access or participation team, student support team, or accommodation team ▶ Is accommodation included in any scholarship or support package? 	
<p>4. Are there any outreach activities or programmes I could participate in – either specifically for care-experienced students or otherwise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the outreach team or widening access and participation team ▶ How can students find more information (e.g. is the outreach programme listed on the UCAS Outreach Connection Service)? 	
<p>5. What support is available to help me manage my mental health and wellbeing at university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the mental health and wellbeing team, disability adviser, or student support team ▶ If there is a page on your website outlining your mental health and wellbeing services, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand? 	

STUDENTS WITH CARING RESPONSIBILITIES MISSION CARD

Definitions

A carer is anyone who gives unpaid care to a family member, partner or friend who could not cope without their support. This may be due to a long-term illness, disability, a mental health condition, or an addiction. Young adult carers are aged 16-25.

Carers are often confused with students with 'care experience' (people who have been in the care system) but they are very different. There is a separate Mission Card for care-experienced students.

Three things to consider when talking to students with caring responsibilities:

1. Not all students with caring responsibilities recognise themselves as carers, or know that there is support available to help them access HE.
2. Some of the challenges they have faced may include educational disruption and lower attainment – is there any support at your institution to help students prepare for HE, catch up on missed learning, or are they considered for contextual offers?
3. Students sometimes feel guilty because they are thinking about HE because they are worried what will happen to their family member (The Carers Trust can help advise). They may prefer to live at home and apply locally as a result.

UCAS resources to support students with caring responsibilities

- ▶ [Information and advice for students with caring responsibilities](#)
- ▶ [Personal statement guidance for students with caring responsibilities](#)
- ▶ [Adviser toolkit for supporting students with caring responsibilities](#)
- ▶ [Good practice for higher education providers: students with caring responsibilities](#)

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ Carers Trust: www.carers.org



THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a named contact for carers in the support team? Can you give me their details so I can contact them with any questions or get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for carers, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?▶ Has your institution signed the Young Carers Pledge? Are you able to explain what this means for students?	
<p>2. Does the university or college offer a bursary or other financial support to students with caring responsibilities? If so, where can I get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team▶ What does any scholarship, bursary, or support package include?▶ Is there a website with more details and information about applying?	
<p>3. Does this university or college take caring responsibilities into account when setting the conditions of an offer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access or participation team, student support team, or accommodation team▶ Is accommodation included in any scholarship or support package?	
<p>4. Are there any outreach activities or programmes I could participate in – either specifically for carers or otherwise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the outreach team or widening access and participation team▶ How can students find more information (e.g. is the outreach programme listed on the UCAS Outreach Connection Service)?	
<p>5. What support is available to help me manage my mental health and wellbeing at university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team, outreach team or admissions team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining your mental health and wellbeing services, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?	



STUDENTS ESTRANGED FROM THEIR PARENTS MISSION CARD

Definitions

Estrangement is when a student's relationship with both their parents has broken down, leading to ceased contact and support. These students are usually not known to the local authority (like students who have been in care) and will be supporting themselves in HE.

Young people may not be familiar with the word 'estranged' but it's important they know it to make sure they can find support.

Three things to consider when talking to students who are estranged from their parents:

1. If are no longer supported by their parents, they can apply for student finance as an independent student to access the maximum maintenance loan.
2. Estrangement can happen at any time, but it is more common between ages 16-19 so their relationship may be in the process of breaking down, even if it is still currently ongoing.
3. This can be a very sensitive and personal matter, so young people may be nervous or reluctant to talk to a stranger about their background – is it possible to have something they can pick up or scan for more information without having to ask someone directly?

UCAS resources to support students estranged from their parents

- ▶ [Information and advice for estranged students](#)
- ▶ [Personal statement guidance for estranged students](#)
- ▶ [Adviser toolkit for supporting estranged students](#)
- ▶ [Good practice for higher education providers: estranged students](#)

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ NNECL: www.nnecl.org
- ▶ Unite Foundation: www.thisisusatuni.org
- ▶ The EaCES Handbook: www.sites.google.com/view/eaces-handbook



THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a named contact for estranged students in the support team? Can you give me their details so I can contact them with any questions or get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for care-experienced students, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?▶ Does your institution have the NNECL Quality Mark? Are you able to explain what this means for students?	
<p>2. Does the university or college offer a bursary or other financial support for students who are estranged from their parents? If so, where can I get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team▶ What does any scholarship, bursary, or support package include?▶ Is there a website with more details and information about applying?	
<p>3. Is there any support with accommodation for estranged students? If so what type of help is available? (e.g. 365-day accommodation, help with guarantors and deposits, help with extra costs)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access or participation team, student support team, or accommodation team▶ Is accommodation included in any scholarship or support package?	
<p>4. Does this university or college take estrangement into account when setting the conditions of an offer?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team, outreach team or admissions team	
<p>5. What support is available to help me manage my mental health and wellbeing at university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the mental health and wellbeing team, disability adviser, or student support team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining your mental health and wellbeing services, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?	

▶ **DISPLACED STUDENTS** MISSION CARD

Definitions

There are several different immigration statuses that displaced students might have, most notably:

- ▶ **Refugee or humanitarian protection** – someone who has been given permission to stay in the UK, and granted official ‘refugee’ or ‘humanitarian protection’ status. Students are eligible for student finance and ‘home’ fees.
- ▶ **Asylum seeker** – someone applying for asylum, or waiting for a decision. This can include Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC).
- ▶ **Insecure statuses** such as limited leave to remain (LLR) or discretionary leave to remain (DLR) mean someone has permission to stay temporarily in the UK. They are usually ineligible for student finance and charged ‘overseas’ fees.

Three things to consider when talking to displaced students:

1. Ineligibility for student finance and being charged ‘overseas’ fees can be a huge barrier for those who do not have official refugee status. Direct them to someone who can provide more information at your institution as this can be a complex discussion.
2. Young refugees may undergo status changes at age 18 as they apply for refugee status independently – this may cause some uncertainty so point them to expert help at your institution or via the charities below.
3. Some students will be getting used to a new culture, language and education system – try not to make assumptions about their understanding of how the application works.

UCAS resources to support displaced students

- ▶ **Information and advice for displaced students**
- ▶ **Personal statement guidance for displaced students**
- ▶ **Adviser toolkit for supporting displaced students**
- ▶ **Good practice for higher education providers: displaced students**

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ Refugee Education UK: www.reuk.org
- ▶ Student Action for Refugees (STAR): www.star-network.org.uk
- ▶ UKCISA: www.ukcisa.org.uk
- ▶ Coram Children’s Legal Centre: www.childrenslegalcentre.com
- ▶ We Belong: www.webelong.org.uk

▶ THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a named contact for refugee or asylum seeker students in the support team? Can you give me their details so I can contact them with any questions or get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team ▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for displaced students, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand? 	
<p>2. Does the university or college offer a scholarship scheme to help students with my immigration status (e.g. Universities of Sanctuary)? If so, where can I get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team ▶ What does any scholarship, bursary, or support package include? ▶ Is there a website with more details and information about applying? 	
<p>3. Are there any pre-arrival events or courses available to help me familiarise myself with higher education in the UK or to boost my study skills in preparation for the start of my course?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the widening access or participation team, student support team or outreach team ▶ This can include summer schools, preparation activities, and online courses 	
<p>4. Are there any outreach activities or programmes I could participate in – either specifically for displaced students or otherwise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the outreach team or widening access and participation team ▶ How can students find more information (e.g. is the outreach programme listed on the UCAS Outreach Connection Service)? 	
<p>5. What support could I get with managing my mental health and wellbeing while at university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check with the mental health and wellbeing team, disability adviser, or student support team ▶ If there is a page on your website outlining your mental health and wellbeing services, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand? 	



UK ARMED FORCES FAMILY MISSION CARD

Definitions

This is when a student's parent or carer is serving as a Regular or Reservist in the UK Armed Forces, or has done in the past. Students in this group are sometimes referred to as 'Service children'.

Three things to consider when talking to students from UK Armed Forces families:

1. Service families may change location frequently (both within the UK and overseas), which can cause educational disruption, limited post-16 options and uncertainty about their future plans.
2. Many military bases are located in rural areas and students may need to travel further to a university or college. This can affect their ability to attend open days, interviews and visits – is there any help available to allow them to consider your institution?
3. Mental health and wellbeing can be a particular challenge for this group, and they may be reassured by the services available to them in case their circumstances change (e.g. parental deployment).

UCAS resources to support students from UK Armed Forces families

- ▶ **Information and advice for students from UK Armed Forces families**
- ▶ **Adviser toolkit for supporting students from UK Armed Forces families**
- ▶ **Good practice for higher education providers: students from UK Armed Forces families**

Where to signpost students for expert information and advice:

- ▶ Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance: **www.scipalliance.org**
- ▶ Forces Children Scotland: **www.forceschildrenscotland.org.uk**
- ▶ Army Families Federation (AFF): **www.aff.org.uk**
- ▶ Naval Families Federation (NFF): **www.nff.org.uk**
- ▶ Royal Air Force Families Federation (RAFFF): **www.raf-ff.org.uk**



THE MISSION CARD QUESTIONS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION CARD QUESTION	NOTES	SECTION TO TYPE NOTES
<p>1. Is there a named contact for students from UK Armed Forces families in the support team? Can you give me their details so I can contact them with any questions or get more information?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team or student support team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining the support for care-experienced students, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?▶ Has your institution signed the Armed Forces Covenant? Are you able to explain what this means for students on your courses?	
<p>2. What clubs, societies or other social opportunities are available to help me get to know new people and make friends? Is there anything specifically available for those from UK Armed Forces backgrounds?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access and participation team, student support team or students' union	
<p>3. Are there any pre-arrival events or courses available to help me boost my study skills or fill any knowledge gaps in preparation for the start of my course?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the widening access or participation team, student support team or outreach team▶ This can include summer schools, preparation activities, and online courses	
<p>4. Are there any outreach activities or programmes I could participate in – either specifically for students from Service families or otherwise?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the outreach team or widening access and participation team▶ How can students find more information (e.g. is the outreach programme listed on the UCAS Outreach Connection Service)?	
<p>5. What support could I get with managing my mental health and wellbeing while at university or college?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Check with the mental health and wellbeing team, disability adviser, or student support team▶ If there is a page on your website outlining your mental health and wellbeing services, can you share the link or a QR code, or show them the page live on your stand?	