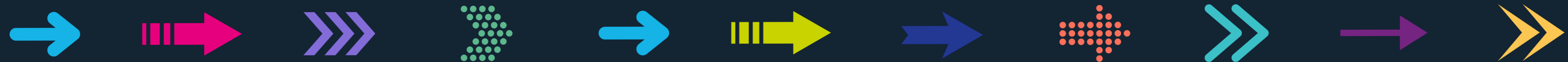


MAXIMISING THE REFERENCE TO BEST SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS



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Workshop outline

1. How do we use the reference in the admissions process?
2. Case study: how we create effective references
3. Examples of what is and is not useful to decision making
4. Q&A

Introductions

Robert Hodgson, Head of Admissions, Oxford Brookes University

Georgia Mason, Academic Lead, Oxford Spires Academy

James Seymour, Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment,
University of Northampton

Carolyn Mindos, Principal Admissions Reform Lead, UCAS

How do we use the reference in the admissions process?

Oxford Brookes decision making

- 1) Initial assessment - reference is expected and will be read as part of overall review

 Unlikely to impact decision to offer

- 1) Confirmation - individual review of contextual offer near miss

 Can make the difference in borderline cases

Case study: How we create effective references at Oxford Spires Academy

How we source and construct references

Our aim is to create an individual narrative for each student.

Teachers	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">. Avoid generic and unsubstantiated comments. Provide 'sentence starters' to guide and direct content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">. Explain the purpose of extenuating circumstances. Draw on pastoral knowledge and relationships. Standardise format and wording for personal and academic issues

Examples

What can help universities make decisions?

Clear and concise information that sets the context of your school or college.

“ A large proportion of our students come from backgrounds with little prior family history of accessing higher education and live in areas represented in the lowest two TUNDRA quintiles. A quarter of our students are in receipt of our Bursary. ”

“ Latest pass rates for A Levels at [College] sit at 96% and a significant proportion of our vocational students achieved high grades. ”

What can help universities make decisions?

Specific and honest information about your school or college that has impacted a student's performance.

“ Jo was impacted by an unexpected staffing challenge in Geography, which led to her class having two changes of teacher during year 12. Over the past year, there was a period of over a month where course delivery was not possible. Jo has worked hard throughout this disruption, however her final grade in the subject may not truly reflect her intellect and ability. ”

What can help universities make decisions?

Information about the impact or relevance of personal information that may have been shared by the applicant.

“ Outside of school, Munroe takes on significant responsibilities within his family by supporting his mum in caring for his three young siblings. It's to his credit that he does this, but early in his National 5 studies it did create pressure when he had competing deadlines for internally assessed work. He has been very open with us about balancing his home life and studies and we have been delighted to support him with flexibility on deadlines. ”

What can help universities make decisions?

Personalised information about subject level knowledge and skills.

“ In Physics, he is a diligent learner who works hard in the lesson to make sure he fully comprehend topics. He has on multiple occasions excelled in difficult problem-solving tasks, due to his strong subject knowledge and ability to apply it to explain unfamiliar phenomena. This ability to thrive when the answer is not clear is what makes Eric stand out from his peers. ”

Rather than....

“ Over the last year Daisy has studied the following topics in the OCR Physics Specification A course; Forces and motion, Electrons, Waves and Photons and she has shown equal ability in all aspects of the course. ”

What can help universities make decisions?

- Information on school policies around number of, or combinations of subjects, where these might have impacted the applicants' choice.
- Clarity over whether extenuating circumstances have been accounted for within assessment or grading.
- Leaving the extenuating circumstances blank - many (most?) students will not have any.

Examples that are less helpful to decision making

- Generic information about units of study.
- Detailed personal or medical information that is historic or that has not impacted on their academic achievement.
- Links to extra information - URLs aren't hyperlinked.

Resources

Provider

Adviser

Student

UCAS

News


Events

Help and training

Guides, resources and training

[Home](#) / [Advisers](#) / [Help and training](#) / [Guides, resources, and training](#) / [Writing references](#)

UCAS REGISTERED CENTRE LINKED APPLICANTS UNDERGRADUATE REFERENCES

Explore this section 

The following guidance is for completing undergraduate references for applicants who are linked

UCAS

UCAS Reference examples

UCAS reference

The UCAS reference has three structured sections. These changes were designed with providers, allowing the reference to focus on the areas they want to know more about.

These examples have been supplied by providers and advisers and are designed to show the range of different references that have supported students in gaining places at their chosen courses and universities. Provider feedback over the 2024 cycle has emphasised that references are only one part of the admissions process and are useful in supporting the application by supplying additional context about the applicant. There is no one best or good way to write a reference – the key thing is that the information is concise, relevant and factual.

Please see our additional advice and guidance on how to complete the reference for 2024 and access further support materials. <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/writing-references/changes-undergraduate-references-2024-entry>

As with all aspects of the application process, we also suggest you continue speaking to universities and colleges, who will be able to give specific advice and guidance if required.

Examples for Establishment Details

Enter a general statement about your school/college/centre

[There is a reference template (under centre management) in the adviser portal that can be used to create a standard statement which can be quickly added to each student's reference.]

UCAS College is an open access sixth form institution with a full-time student body of c.2,000. We recruit primarily from the borough's varied comprehensive schools, but also attract students from further afield. Level 3 students undertake 3 A levels or applied general equivalents, together with an enrichment programme. We offer a wide range of BTEC and Cambridge Technical courses at all levels. A number of our university applicants will have enrolled on Level 2 programmes with us before embarking on study at Level 3. We base predicted grades on end of first year exams where available, alongside internal assessments and a range of other work students have completed.