

UCAT Fitness to Test Policy

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1. Overview

The UCAT Consortium is the operating name of the UKCAT Consortium. Our admission tests are delivered by our business partner Pearson VUE (PVUE).

The UCAT Consortium has a number of official policies which guide its work in specific areas. Each policy is reviewed on an annual basis and any updates reflected in operational processes, website information and other communications to candidates. Where appropriate, policies are made available on the UCAT website.

UCAT policies are underpinned by its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Any substantial amendments to policies are considered in the light of their impact on EDI.

1.1. UCAT and Fitness to Test

UCAT has a Fitness to Test Policy to ensure that candidates who sit their test are fit to do so and that their result should stand.

UCAT places the responsibility on candidates to decide whether they are fit to test.

Candidates have the flexibility to test over a period of 12 weeks. UCAT also permits free reschedules up to 24 hours before an appointment time. A period of contingency testing also takes place once the main testing window has closed.

The fitness to test policy is clearly communicated to candidates in their appointment confirmation email, at key points through the website and in the exam rules (which are read before entering the test room) and introductory exam screens.

On occasion, candidates may make a case to UCAT that they will not be fit to test for a period of time or were not fit to test when they sat their test. This policy outlines how we consider various circumstances and the advice and possible outcomes for these situations.

1.2. Principles of this Policy

- Candidates who attend their test are declaring that they are fit to test.
- Candidates experiencing illness/injury or personal circumstances that might adversely affect their performance on the day, should not sit the test. This applies even if they fall ill or experience issues on the day of their test.
- Candidates unable to declare themselves fit to test, must contact the [UCAT Office](#) for advice and support before sitting their test.
- If a candidate chooses to sit their test against this advice, UCAT will not normally take any action.
- On occasion, UCAT may allow a candidate to withdraw a fitness to test declaration after testing if they experienced exceptional mitigating circumstances very close to their test where their judgement was impaired, and they were unable to make a rational decision about whether they were well enough to test.

1.3. Candidate Data

The UCAT Office uses candidate data and evidence to consider claims from candidates around their fitness to test. Information may be shared with Pearson VUE. Candidates consent to these data being used for this purpose. Where evidence includes the data of any third party, candidates also confirm consent to share these data has been obtained. Candidate data is retained for the duration of the relevant admissions cycle (usually September the following year).

Information from candidates is held in the strictest confidence unless the candidate agrees for information to be shared with third parties such as Consortium Universities.

2. Process for candidates who are not fit to test

2.1. Candidates who contact the UCAT Office *before* sitting their test

Candidates experiencing illness/injury or personal circumstances who are unable to declare themselves fit to test, must contact the UCAT Office for advice and support before sitting their test.

Below is a list of circumstances that may affect fitness to test declarations for the purposes of this fitness to test policy. These have been drawn up in line with JCQ guidelines. This list is not exhaustive.

- Candidate illness or injury at or near the time of testing.
- Flare-up or significant worsening of a candidate's existing disability or medical condition (i.e. difficulties over and above those related to any previously approved access arrangements) at or near the time of testing.
- Death of a member of the candidate's immediate family (parent/carer, spouse, sibling or child), usually within 6 months of the latest test date.
- Death of a member of the candidate's extended family (grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin) or close friend, usually within 2 months of the latest test date.
- A member of the candidate's immediate family (parent/carer, spouse, sibling or child) or extended family (grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin) is affected by a significant illness at or near

the time of testing. This would normally involve a recent diagnosis of a life-threatening illness or the family member being towards the end stage of a terminal illness.

- Serious crisis or incident leading to distress at or near the time of testing.
- Safeguarding concerns at or near the time of testing.

Circumstances which are foreseeable or preventable are not considered.

Candidates contacting the UCAT Office should provide the following information in order that appropriate advice and support can be offered:

- Candidate ID
- Full name
- Test date
- The precise nature of the circumstances affecting them, including when the circumstances first began to affect them and when they are likely to end or if they are ongoing.
- The impact these circumstances are having on their ability to test.
- Independent supporting evidence such as one of the following:
 - a letter from their school/college/university;
 - a doctor's letter or fit note or evidence related to hospital treatment;
 - a statement from a mental health or disability adviser;
 - a death certificate.

On occasion UCAT may permit a candidate to self-certify a sudden but minor illness that prevents them from attending their test appointment but does not require immediate medical attention.

Candidates should contact the UCAT office in a timely manner (before testing) unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances which prevent this. Lack of evidence should not delay candidates making contact.

If a candidate chooses to sit their test against this advice, UCAT will not normally take any action.

2.2. Candidates who make contact *after* sitting their test

If a candidate has sat their test, UCAT will not normally take any action.

On occasion, UCAT may allow a candidate to withdraw a fitness to test declaration after testing if they experienced exceptional mitigating circumstances very close to their test where their judgement was impaired, and they were unable to make a rational decision about whether they were well enough to test.

Below is a list of circumstances that UCAT consider exceptional mitigating circumstances for the purposes of this fitness to test policy. This list is not exhaustive.

- If a candidate receives a notification about a significant bereavement immediately before their test it could reasonably be considered to result in a temporary lack of capacity to determine if they should take the test or not.
- If a candidate experiences a mental health crisis such as a psychotic episode that leads to them lacking the capacity to make decisions in their best interest.
- A candidate witnesses or is involved in a serious or fatal accident immediately before their test which seriously impacts on their capacity to make decisions.
- The candidate takes a new type of medication on the morning of the test, and they do not immediately recognise that the side effects have had an impact on their cognitive function.
- The candidate is a victim of a crime, such as theft and assault, immediately before their test and this has a severe impact on their mental state.

Candidates should make contact in a timely manner after testing unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances which prevent this. Cases will not normally be considered more than 5 working days after a test date.

Candidates contacting the UCAT Office to request a withdrawal of their fitness to test declaration should provide the following information in order that their case can be considered:

- Candidate ID
- Full name
- Test date
- The precise nature of the circumstances affecting them, including when the circumstances first began to affect them and when they are likely to end or if they are ongoing.
- An explanation of how the circumstances impaired their judgement regarding their fitness to test and why they appeared for testing and made the fit to test declaration.

UCAT will normally require independent supporting evidence to support their claim. This will be discussed with the individual candidate. Evidence must be supplied by the stipulated deadline.

3. Process for dealing with fitness to test cases

The UCAT Office aims to respond to candidates by email within 3 working days.

Initial decisions regarding fitness to test cases are made in the UCAT Office. On occasion, advice from the UCAT Board and/or **external advice** may be requested to support decision making. UCAT reserves the right not to approve any recommendations made in the evidence supplied by the candidate. UCAT may request additional evidence if, in our view, the initial supporting documentation is not sufficient.

3.1. Stage 1: Initial Outcome

Candidates will be advised of one of the following **Initial Outcomes**. These decisions are usually made by one member of the UCAT Office staff. On occasion, cases will be discussed with more than one member of staff and/or advice sought from the UCAT Board or externally.

3.1.1. Outcome 1: Candidate *confirmed as not fit to test* before sitting their test

If a candidate has contacted the UCAT Office in advance of their test and the UCAT Office supports their claim that they are not fit to test, the candidate may be offered one (or more) of the following options

- deferring a test until the contingency test window.
- annotating their test result, to inform their university choices of their circumstances.

If appropriate, a candidate may also be advised to make a separate application for [Access Arrangements](#).

Some circumstances may be so significant that a candidate is unable to test during the testing window. In these cases, the candidate will be advised to speak to their university choices about their application.

On occasion the UCAT Office might offer to communicate with an applicant's chosen universities to provide an explanation of the candidate's specific circumstances.

3.1.2. Outcome 2: Candidate *confirmed as not fit to test* after sitting their test

If having sat their test, a candidate is permitted to withdraw their fitness to test declaration, they will be offered the opportunity to retest.

If the candidate is unable or does not wish to retest, an annotation can be added to their result, to inform their university choices of their circumstances.

3.1.3. Outcome 3: Candidate's claim that they are not or were not fit to test is rejected

If (in the opinion of the UCAT Office), a candidate is fit to test or does not meet the requirements to withdraw their fit to test declaration, their claim will be rejected. The candidate will receive a written explanation of the decision.

3.2. Stage 2: Review by the UCAT Office

Candidates whose cases have been rejected are provided with a written explanation of the decision made by the UCAT Office and, if appropriate, advised of alternative arrangements which could be put in place. They are further advised to email the UCAT Office if they wish to have this decision reviewed.

As part of this review candidates may be invited to provide further evidence to support their claim that they are or were not fit to test. The UCAT Office will review the original decision (made at Stage 1) in the light of additional information provided by the candidates, make a final decision, and respond in full.

More than one member of staff will be involved in the review.

3.3. Appeals

If a candidate is unhappy with the final decision from the UCAT Office in relation to their fitness to test, they may [appeal to the UCAT Board](#).

UCAT Consortium
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