

UCAT Bursary Scheme Policy 2026

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Overview

The UCAT Consortium is the operating name of the UKCAT Consortium. Our admission tests are delivered on our behalf by our business partner Pearson Professional Assessments ('Pearson').

The UCAT Consortium has 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.

UCAT Bursaries

The UCAT Consortium recognises that the cost of the UCAT test may act as a barrier to some candidates required to take the test as part of university selection processes. In recognition of this, the UCAT Consortium provides full fee bursaries for test takers from low-income backgrounds who meet certain criteria.

Support for candidates from low-income backgrounds is core to the work of the UCAT Consortium and part of its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion which is further outlined in its EDI Policy.

In 2025, 16.6% of UK test takers were in receipt of a UCAT bursary (2024, 17.1%).

Candidate Data

The UCAT Consortium Office uses candidate data to assess applications for UCAT Bursaries. Candidates consent to these data being used for this purpose. Where evidence includes the data of any third party, candidates also confirm that consent to share these data has been obtained. Data are retained for the duration of the relevant admissions cycle (usually September the following year).

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

Data collected may also be used for research purposes. Further details can be found in the Data Privacy Policy.

Consortium Universities and Bursary Candidates

When UCAT results are delivered to Consortium universities, a candidate's result is flagged to show they were in receipt of a bursary.

This will not disadvantage their application. Some Universities may use this information to help identify candidates from backgrounds under-represented at university.

A bursary must be redeemed by 17:00 (BST) on 16 October 2026 for results to be flagged in this way.

Applying for a UCAT Bursary

Candidates are advised to apply for a bursary before booking their test. Candidates who have already paid for their test may still apply.

Candidates must submit an application via their UCAT account and upload their supporting evidence (as a PDF, JPEG, PNG).

Applications (with correct supporting evidence) must be received by the published deadline, or they will not be processed.

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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bursary scheme opens | 20 May 2026 (14:00 BST) |
| Application and evidence deadline | 24 September 2026 (15:00 BST) |
| Bursary redemption deadline | 16 October 2026 (17:00 BST) |

Once the application and evidence deadline has passed, candidates who have applied by the deadline with insufficient evidence may be given a short grace period (usually 1 working day after their application is processed) to provide additional evidence requested by the UCAT Consortium Office.

Applications are usually processed within 3-5 working days. Candidates receive the outcome by email and their application status is updated on their UCAT account dashboard.

Candidates are advised to submit a Help Request via their UCAT account if they have not received an outcome within this timeframe (after checking junk/spam folders). UCAT will not normally take action if a candidate fails to follow this advice and misses a key deadline.

Candidate eligibility

The bursary scheme is open to UK candidates that meet the UCAT eligibility and bursary criteria.

Candidates over the age of 21 and no longer in full-time secondary or undergraduate education must be personally in receipt of a qualifying award or means-tested benefit to qualify for a bursary.

Candidates are only permitted one bursary each test cycle. UCAT will not issue another bursary if a candidate misses their test for any reason (see [Missed Tests](#)).

Bursary criteria and supporting evidence

Bursary criteria are reviewed by the UCAT Consortium Office on an annual basis and are subject to change.

Candidates must be able to meet at least one of the bursary criteria detailed below and provide one piece of evidence to support their application.

UCAT reserves the right to request additional evidence if, in its view, the initial supporting documentation is not sufficient to verify eligibility. On occasion UCAT may consider alternative evidence on a case-by-case basis.

| Eligibility | Criteria | Evidence Required |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Candidate in receipt of: | Free School Meals | An official letter or communication from the candidate's school/college confirming they currently receive free school meals (Local Authority funded only) for academic year 2025/26 or 2026/27. It must include the candidate's full name, the name of the school/college and the full date. |
| | 16 to 19 Bursary (England), or EMA (Scotland, Wales or NI) | An official award letter for academic year 2025/26 or 2026/27 which must include the candidate's full name, the name of the school/college and the full date of the award. |

| Eligibility | Criteria | Evidence Required |
|--|--|--|
| | Learner Support (FE 19+) or equivalent for Scotland, Wales or NI | An official award letter for academic year 2025/26 or 2026/27 which must include the candidate's full name, the name of the college/place of study and the full date of the award. |
| | Undergraduate Student Finance maintenance award (full rate) | <p>An award letter for academic year 2025/26 or 2026/27.</p> <p>This includes a full rate (means tested) undergraduate:</p> <p>Student Finance England Maintenance Grant/Loan</p> <p>Student Awards Agency Scotland Young / Independent Students' Bursary</p> <p>Student Finance Wales or Northern Ireland Maintenance Grant</p> <p>Candidates who cannot take out student finance loans for religious or cultural reasons should submit a Help Request via their UCAT account for advice on alternative evidence.</p> |
| Candidate or Parent/Guardian (living at the same address) in receipt of: | Universal Credit | The first page of a Universal Credit statement, dated within the last 3 months, which includes the name and address of the claimant, the date, and the award amount. |
| | Income Support, or Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA), or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) | <p>An award letter from a UK Jobcentre Plus, dated 2026.</p> <p>Parent/guardians in receipt of JSA or ESA must be entitled to the income-based benefit (e.g. means-tested) and not a contribution-based award.</p> |
| | UK Government Asylum Support | An official award letter, dated within the last 12 months. |

Awards/benefits or evidence not accepted

The following awards / benefits or evidence are not accepted under any circumstances:

- Scholarships, bursaries or free school meals at independent or fee-paying schools
- Postgraduate Loan
- Advanced Learner Loan
- Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- Council Tax or Housing Benefit
- Child Benefit

- Annual accounts or a P60 end of year certificate

This list is not comprehensive.

Processing Bursary Applications

Application Outcome

Candidates will be advised of one of the following Application Outcomes. These decisions are usually made by one member of the UCAT Consortium 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.

Outcome 1: Approved

Applications for bursaries supported by correct evidence in line with this policy will be approved.

Successful candidates will have their bursary automatically applied when they book their test.

Candidates may also obtain a refund if they have already paid for or sat their test by submitting a Help Request via their UCAT account.

The deadline to redeem a bursary is 16 October 2026 (17:00 BST).

Outcome 2: Rejected

Applications may be rejected for these reasons:

- If (in the opinion of the UCAT Consortium Office), a candidate is not entitled to a bursary.
- The candidate has failed to provide sufficient evidence to support their application (in line with this policy).

Candidates whose applications have been rejected are provided with a written explanation of the decision made by the UCAT Consortium Office.

If evidence is missing, unclear, or does not meet the stated requirements, the candidate will be given further opportunities to meet the evidence requirements. New evidence must meet the usual deadlines.

The UCAT Consortium Office will process all applications, make a final decision, and respond in full to the candidate.

Appeals

In certain circumstances the [Appeals Policy](#) allows candidates to appeal the final decision in relation to their application. Appeals should be submitted in a timely manner, normally within

5 days of receiving a final decision from the UCAT Consortium Office. New appeals will not be considered after 31 October.

Missed tests (no-shows) paid for by bursary

Candidates who book a test using a bursary can reschedule their test (giving the required minimum notice).

Candidates who used a bursary to pay for their test and then decide not to sit the UCAT, must cancel their test (giving the required minimum notice).

If a candidate misses a test ('no-show') paid for by a bursary for any reason they will have to pay the test fee to book another appointment. Failure to present correct ID and missing the deadline to reschedule/cancel a test counts as a 'no-show'.

UCAT will not issue another bursary to cover this cost as UCAT will have incurred a charge for the missed test.

In these circumstances, UCAT reserves the right to request repayment from a candidate of the full test fee. UCAT may also prevent such candidates from applying for a bursary in future years.

UCAT Consortium
March 2026