

Statement for Scottish school leavers and university applicants in 2021

The pandemic has disrupted much of the last year's school education and has necessitated a second year of alternative arrangements for the assessment of National 5s, Highers and Advanced Highers. This has been a very challenging time for pupils in the senior phase. We want to acknowledge and commend those learners for their resilience and commitment to their studies throughout a time of considerable academic pressure.

The disruption and this year's adaptations to the assessment process have a number of implications for school leavers hoping to go onto university and universities would like to offer some clarity and some reassurance to those pupils and their families and support networks.

- **Universities are confident that assessments will reflect pupils' ability and potential.** Universities fully recognise the circumstances of the last year have made alternative assessment arrangements in schools a necessity. We are confident that teachers will reflect learners' ability and potential in their assessment and universities are comfortable using this process as the basis for entry into university in 2021/22.
- **Confirmation of university places based on conditional offers cannot happen before results day.** The assessment and certification process this year creates an unusual situation whereby school pupils will be advised of their grades, via their assessment centre, from as early as late May/June, several weeks before this grade is officially confirmed and published by the SQA on results day on 10 August. Universities need the verified grade data for all offer holders. This will be provided to them by the SQA via the admissions body UCAS in August. This means that during this interim period, of several weeks, universities are not able to confirm offers or otherwise act on unofficial grade information as provided by applicants or their schools. We recognise this will feel like a long wait and will be frustrating for some, but it is the only way universities can ensure fairness for everyone.
- **Our advice to those who are concerned they have not met the conditions of their offer.** We recognise that this interim period will be particularly worrying for any university applicant who thinks they have missed the terms of their conditional undergraduate offer. This is certainly a difficult consequence of the adapted arrangements for school assessment put in place this year. Our advice to anyone in this situation is to use this time to research alternative options and speak to teachers, careers advisors and universities for advice. We do not recommend that you take any further action, such as withdrawing your application, because you may still be eligible for a place. You will find this out once your results are confirmed on 10 August.
- **Information, advice and guidance is available from universities.** Every university in Scotland will be writing out to offer holders over the coming weeks to provide further advice and information for applicants. Whilst universities can't confirm offers until results day on 10 August, university admissions teams are available to give general information, advice and guidance to any applicant, as well as to those learners who are planning to apply to university in the future and would like advice on, for example, subject choices. UCAS is a helpful resource and can provide [further](#)

[information](#) to candidates who have not yet applied or those wishing to explore other options and [Skills Development Scotland](#) can provide information on all post-16 options. Universities Scotland will work very closely with the Scottish Government, UCAS and Skills Development Scotland over the coming weeks to ensure that applicants receive the same consistent advice and guidance.

- **We want to ensure that information, advice and guidance reaches applicants most in need of support.** Under these changed and uncertain times, universities want to be sure that the right information and guidance reaches those university applicants who don't have access to the same informal and personal support networks in the form of parents, carers or wider family with experience of higher education. Universities Scotland is reaching out to organisations such as Who Cares? Scotland and Stand Alone with a view to reaching applicants through their networks.
- **Universities will endeavour to hold places for applicants appealing their grade(s).** Some learners wishing to appeal their grade(s) may be holding a conditional offer for a place at university that depends on the outcome of the appeal. Candidates can register for an appeal from 25 June and should do so by 12 August to get a priority appeal which SQA will process by 3 September, in time to meet the relevant UCAS advisory deadline. Universities will endeavour to hold places for applicants making a priority appeal. Applicants should contact the university to inform them of the appeal as soon as they decide to submit, and get further advice on their options. SQA have published [guidance](#) on their appeal process which has further information.

June 2021

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