

UCAS Applicants and Acceptances latest release

November 2018

Today UCAS has issued the first instalment of the End of Cycle Report for 2018 on undergraduate Applicants and Admissions data that will conclude at the end of January.

This release is divided in three sections, with the third being the most relevant for our subject groups Q, R, and T. However, the data released with this instalment remains still quite general for monitoring the health of our sector. More relevant data will be released throughout December and January.

First section: it addresses general data for all higher education courses in all subjects with emphasis on **applicants, acceptances, and the acceptance and entry rates alongside acceptance routes**. Data shows that, despite the recent fall in the 18-year-old population, and consequently a fall in the number of overall UG applicants nationwide, the acceptance rate has remained fairly stable. Overall, however, UCAS data shows that despite small ‘decreases in applicant and acceptance numbers, the appetite for higher education remains strong, and continues to grow year-on-year among the largest group of applicants’. Of interest is the fact that both UK and EU acceptances are on the rise. Noteworthy is also the increase in applications for UK-domiciled mature students (6.7%). As far as acceptances are concerned, the route through Clearing has increased to 9% (70% main application scheme; 7% insurance choice).

The complete report can be accessed at

<https://www.ucas.com/file/196141/download?token=7YGpHk71>

Second section: it explores issues relative to **offer making**. Data in this section mirrors the findings in Applications (small decrease in offer making nationally, offer rate increase for mature students). Interestingly, the offer rates for candidates with predicted low grades is on the up, whereas predicted high-grade student offers are stable. The offer rate has also increased for lower-tariff providers, whilst high-tariff providers are experiencing a small decrease.

(Data for Scotland only includes the providers using UCAS therefore it should be treated with caution)

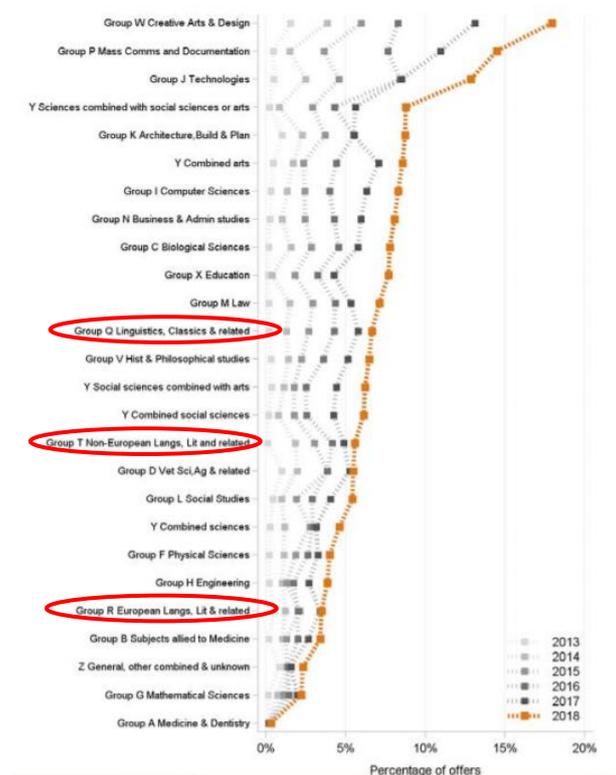
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<https://www.ucas.com/file/196146/download?token=VGsWCAzp>

Third section: this section analyses **offer making trends and the impact** of Unconditional offers on the national acceptances landscape. Data shows that the use of Unconditional offers in HE is on the rise; however, two main consequences have also been observed and reported in the section’s appendixes. Students who are offered a UF offer, tend to miss their predicted A-Level grades

compared with students holding a CF offer, and just under 2% of students who hold a UF tend to miss their predicted grades by 2 or more grades. Amongst many other factors, such as previous GCSE attainment and subject studied, this trend is potentially linked to the fact that once applicants have been made a UF offer, they tend to adopt a more relaxed attitude to A-Level examinations once their HE placement is guaranteed. Data also reveals that the highest number of UF offers is made in Creative Arts and Design whilst the lowest number is found in Medicine.

As far as our groups are concerned, interestingly group Q (Linguistics and Classics, 12th/26th position overall) offers the most UFs, followed by group T (non-European languages, 16th/26th) and group R (European languages, 22nd/26th) as the figure below shows.



Another general trend also shows that students who have been made a UF offer are more likely to select the provider that made that offer and less likely to switch provider after confirmation.

The conclusion from this section highlights that Unconditional Offers are used in a variety of ways in HE: as a recruitment tool, as a tool to support participation and access, as a tool to support vulnerable students, and as a tool through which applicants can demonstrate their sets of skills (especially in the Arts) through interviews or presentation of portfolios; in the latter instance, providers tend to get a better indication of applicants' potential compared to considering grades alone.

(Data for Scottish applicants in Scotland are not included given the different context through which applications and offers are made. Data for applications and offers from Scottish institutions the rest of the UK student population is included.)

The complete report can be accessed at

<https://www.ucas.com/file/196151/download?token=jzRAY4kS>

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