

UNCONDITIONAL OFFERS: A PiXL GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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WHAT IS AN UNCONDITIONAL OFFER?

An unconditional offer is just that: the student has been offered a place at university **no matter what grades they achieve**. There are no conditions attached.

An unconditional offer used to be a rare thing. Five years ago there were 3,000 unconditional offers; in 2018 there were 68,000!



Receiving an unconditional offer is good...isn't it?

It can certainly relieve the pressure that a student will feel as they approach their exams.

The student may well start to relax a little and this could make them perform better than if they were overly stressed, and worried about their grades.

So, are there any downsides?

Unfortunately, accepting an unconditional offer may NOT be a cause for celebration.

A temptation for many students is to think that they **no longer have to work hard** – their motivation has gone. Research shows that **students with unconditional offers perform worse than other students**. A study from UCAS, the university admissions service, shows that in 2015 students with unconditional offers were significantly more likely to miss their targets by two or more grades.

Claire Marchant, the head of UCAS, also warned students not to forget the importance of A Level grades and not to rush making spontaneous decisions on unconditional offers that might not be the right one. She said, “our advice to students is two-fold. First, keep your foot on the gas because those A Levels and other qualifications **stay with you for life**. You will have them on your CV when you are 40-plus and applying for a job. Second, don't make the choice on the back of an unconditional. Think about what choice you would have made anyway.”

What could it say about your son or your daughter if they gave up, because they had the unconditional offer?

When thinking about this question it may be worth actually imagining what answer they may give when explaining to a future employer why they got poor grades – even if they went on to achieve a reasonable degree. As the Head of UCAS said, A Level results can follow you for life!

What may their answer be?

- I went for the easy option because I received an unconditional offer.
- Didn't see the point of working hard.
- Wasn't bothered about pushing myself....



Interestingly, those students who rejected an unconditional offer did significantly better than their peers who accepted an unconditional offer! Many students are actually starting to think differently about unconditional offers. They instead want to prove to themselves that they CAN achieve and they recognise that good A Level and BTEC results will open doors for them throughout their life – and give them self-belief for when they actually start university!

Receiving an unconditional offer doesn't have to be a bad thing. It only becomes an issue if the student gives up on their studies!

What can you do as a parent?

- Discuss with your child the merits of all university offers that they receive.
- If you feel unsure, arrange a meeting with teachers – what do they think?
- Do attend any university offer days. Ask questions about the support students receive, future employability rates and even drop-out rates.
- Accepting an unconditional offer is not automatically a wrong decision – talk it through and simply make sure that everything is in place to ensure that the final grades achieved are the very best possible. It'll feel so good in August!



