

What is a UCAS reference?

UCAS references are designed to provide UK universities with an informed and academic assessment of an applicant’s suitability for further study.

Unlike in Canada, UK universities depend on the reference to determine whether a student should be offered a seat at their school or not. Therefore, UK references **will be read** and, in some cases, will be scored to assess whether the applicant has the necessary skills and academic ability to study the course they applied for.

What are universities looking for?

- That the reference is written by a teacher or staff member who knows the candidate and his/her performance
- Supports the candidates in their personal statement
- Gives an honest, fair, and relevant assessment of the candidate’s potential to succeed at a higher level in the chosen subject

How to write a reference?

- Read over the student’s whole application so that you can understand the applicant’s intended career direction, chosen courses and preferred places of study.
- All universities that students apply to will see the SAME reference. Therefore, do not refer to any particular university or program in your reference. This could compromise the application. Make general statements about the field of study that the student has applied to, but **don’t specifically name universities or programs**.
- The reference is submitted through a text box on UCAS’ referee’s page. So it is recommended that you write your reference first on Word, and then copy and paste it into the text box after you have complete it. The reference cannot exceed 4,000 characters (including spaces), or 47 lines (including blank lines), whichever is shorter. There is no formatting (bolding, underlining, italics) in the reference.

Example Format of a Reference

1) Information about Rosedale Academy and the OSSD program
2) Student’s suitability for the chosen program, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The student’s academic performance b. Their potential for academic success in higher education c. Why the program/field of study they have chosen is suited for them d. Any personal qualities which will benefit them at university, such as skills, aptitude, enthusiasm e. What they can bring to the university, such as extracurricular activities and interests
3) Predicted grades (listed separately) for all the students’ courses

Specific details for each section:

1) Information about Rosedale Academy and the OSSD program

Include **brief** detail about Rosedale Academy and the OSSD program.

You may paraphrase or take parts from the profile below to add into your reference! Please make sure that it is in your own words though, as UCAS uses a plagiarism software to screen references.

“Rosedale Academy is a private, Ministry-inspected high school that works with schools around the world to offer the Ontario Secondary School Diploma curriculum. The curriculum is online and delivered in English by on-site native English-speaking teachers. All work is graded by Ontario certified teachers in Canada. To receive the diploma, 30 credits are required and students must fulfill the Ontario literacy requirement by passing a standardized English Literacy Test or completing the Ontario Literacy credit course.”

2) Student's suitability for the chosen program.

The most important part of your reference is your assessment of the applicant's suitability for the higher education courses that they have chosen. You should include the following points:

- a) Existing achievements and details of performance from subject teachers with reference to subjects related to the field of study for which the student is applying for, and any information you might want to add about performance in individual units.
- b) Comment on their English aptitude (point out specific examples regarding their English communication skills, or writing skills, etc.).
- c) Highlight unique, out-of-the-ordinary information. All your students are unique because they have both the Canadian education experience and their local country education experience! Talk about how that makes them a better student.
- d) Why they're suited to their chosen subject, including a description of the key skills and aptitudes they possess.
- e) Potential of student to study at their program at university.
 - Are they motivated to learn?
 - Are they capable of independent study?
 - Do they have an enquiring mind?
 - Are they able to present an argument?
 - Can they talk and discuss confidently in class?
 - Are they good at problem solving?
- f) Relevant voluntary work, extracurricular activities, work placements, etc.
- g) Proposed career plan, and where relevant, their suitability for their desired profession.
- h) Any factors, such as personal circumstances, that may have affected or might affect their performance.

TIPS:

- Read the student's whole application in detail. Especially the personal statement. Have a strong knowledge in the field of study the students are applying to, do a bit of research if necessary.
- Give solid examples. Don't just write clichés. Give tangible examples. Call out specific work the student has done that shows certain academic characteristics.
- Don't repeat what the students already said in their personal statement. Add more detail and draw links between your reference and their personal statement, but you do not need to repeat if the student has already written it in their statement.
- Speak to the student! Take notes and ask questions about what extracurricular activities the students have, ask them why they're passionate about the field of study they've chosen, etc.
- Use only academic attributes, not necessary to include personality attributes (i.e. she is a charming, exceptionally polite and well-mannered student). Only use attributes that are relevant.

3) Predicted grades (listed separately) for all the students' courses

These are requested in a separate box and is not part of the reference text box.

For this section, you can use your best estimate based on midterm marks and past grades.

- If the student is applying through Rosedale's UCAS centre, and Rosedale has arranged for you to write the reference, you can submit your best estimate, and Rosedale's Guidance Team will double confirm the predicted grades and make alterations if necessary.
- If the student is applying as an individual and NOT through Rosedale's UCAS centre, then please contact leslie.chan@rosedaleacademy.com to receive a document with the student's current midterm marks, and student's past marks.