

Preparing References for UK University Applications

References can be an important part of a UK university application. Requirements vary between universities, courses and levels of study, so students should check exactly what is required and provide complete, accurate referee information where a reference is requested.

Why References Matter

Universities may use references to help assess an applicant's academic or professional background, suitability and readiness for further study. A useful referee should know the student well enough to provide informed and independent comments relevant to the application.

What Referee Details May Be Required?

Where referee details are requested, universities may ask for the referee's full name, professional or institutional email address, telephone number, occupation or position, and their relationship to the applicant. Students should follow the requirements of the individual university or application system.

Academic and Professional References

Reference type	Who should provide it?	Often relevant for
Academic reference	Teacher, tutor, lecturer or professor who knows the student academically	Undergraduate, postgraduate and research applications where an academic reference is requested
Professional reference	Manager, supervisor or other appropriate professional contact who knows the applicant through work	Some postgraduate and professional programmes, depending on university requirements

Choosing the Right Referee

An academic referee should know the student in an academic or intellectual capacity. A professional referee should know the applicant through their employment and be able to comment meaningfully on relevant experience, skills and suitability.

Students should not use relatives, friends or anyone who cannot provide an independent reference. Where possible, use an institutional or professional email address rather than a personal account, and ask the referee for permission before providing their details.

Check the Requirements Carefully

Reference requirements are not identical across UK universities. Some applications require one reference, others may require two, and the acceptable type of referee can vary. Undergraduate applications made through UCAS also follow UCAS reference

procedures. Students should therefore check the current requirements before submitting an application.

WorldStudentAdvisors can help students understand the reference requirements for their chosen university and check that the appropriate referee details have been provided.

The Key Message

Choose referees who know you well enough to provide an informed and independent assessment of your academic or professional background. Provide complete and accurate details, obtain the referee's permission and follow the specific requirements of the university or application system.

Disclaimer: This information is provided in good faith and was believed to be accurate at the time of publication. Fees, dates, entry requirements, visa regulations and other information may change. Students should check current requirements before making any financial or study commitments.