



WHEN THINGS DON'T GO TO PLAN

Application *Troubleshooting*

*Missed grades, rejections, Clearing, and second chances —
a calm, practical guide to what to do when the university
application does not go as hoped.*

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First: *Don't Panic*

Almost every problem in the application process has a route through it. The students who recover well are the ones who act calmly and quickly — not the ones who had no setbacks at all.

This guide covers the situations families dread: results lower than predicted, outright rejections, a change of heart about a course, and the scramble of Clearing. None of them is the end of the road. Each has an established path forward.

THE MINDSET THAT WORKS

A setback on results day is an operational problem, not a verdict on your worth or your future. Universities have processes for exactly these situations because they happen every single year, to thousands of capable students. Work the process.

What This Guide Covers

- Missing your Firm or Insurance offer grades
- Being rejected before results day
- Understanding and using Clearing
- Adjustment (when you do *better* than expected)
- Appeals, remarks, and resits
- The gap-year option, used deliberately

For Parents Reading This

Your child will take their emotional cue from you. If you stay calm and treat this as a solvable logistics problem, so will they. Panic is contagious — but so is steadiness.

If You *Miss Your Grades*

The most common results-day worry. Here is exactly what happens and what to do, in order.

1

Check UCAS Hub first

Before assuming the worst, check your status. Universities often accept students who narrowly miss — your place may already be confirmed despite the grades.

2

Call the university immediately

If your place shows as unsuccessful, phone the admissions office the moment lines open. Be polite, be ready with your details, and ask directly whether they will still take you.

3

Check your Insurance

If your Firm is gone, your Insurance offer may still be secure with your actual grades. This is exactly what it is for.

4

Consider a remark

If you narrowly missed a key grade, a priority remark may recover the marks in time. Move fast — there are deadlines.

THE TWO-HOUR WINDOW

The first two hours of results day matter enormously. Places move quickly. Have the phone numbers ready the night before, know your UCAS ID, and be prepared to act decisively rather than sitting in shock. **Preparation beats panic.**

Understanding *Clearing*

Clearing matches students without a place to courses with vacancies. It is not a consolation prize — excellent universities use it every year, and thousands of students find better-suited courses through it.

How Clearing Works

- 1 Get your Clearing number**
Available in UCAS Hub once you are eligible. You will need it for every call.
- 2 Research vacancies**
UCAS publishes the official list. Draw up a shortlist before calling — do not improvise.
- 3 Call the universities yourself**
The student must call, not the parent. Have your grades, Clearing number, and a few sentences on why you want the course ready.
- 4 Get the informal offer, then add it**
If they offer over the phone, add the choice in UCAS Hub to make it official.

PREPARE BEFORE THE DAY

Look at Clearing vacancies from previous years now, so you understand what tends to be available. Have a backup shortlist ready before results day even if you are confident — it costs nothing and removes panic if it is ever needed.

Rejections & *Doing Better*

If You Are Rejected Pre-Results

A rejection before results day stings, but it is rarely personal — competitive courses reject many well-qualified students simply on volume. If you still hold other offers, nothing changes. If all five reject you, **UCAS Extra** lets you apply to further courses one at a time, free of charge.

Adjustment: When You Exceed Expectations

The happier problem. If you comfortably beat your Firm offer, Adjustment briefly lets you look at courses with higher requirements — without losing your confirmed place. It is optional, low-risk, and worth a look if you have outperformed.

SITUATION	YOUR ROUTE
Missed Firm, met Insurance	Insurance confirms automatically
Missed both	Clearing
Rejected by all five (pre-results)	UCAS Extra
Exceeded your Firm offer	Adjustment (optional)
Narrowly missed a grade	Priority remark

Resits & The Deliberate Gap Year

Sometimes the right answer is to resit and reapply, or to take a purposeful gap year and apply with achieved grades. Both can lead to a *stronger* application than the original — when planned properly rather than chosen in panic.

Your Results-Day *Toolkit*

Prepare these the night before. If the day goes smoothly, you have lost nothing. If it does not, you will be very glad you did.

- ☐ UCAS ID and login details written down and accessible
- ☐ Clearing number location known (in UCAS Hub)
- ☐ Phone charged, with a backup way to make calls
- ☐ A quiet space to make calls from
- ☐ Firm and Insurance admissions phone numbers saved
- ☐ A shortlist of 3–5 Clearing backup courses
- ☐ Your predicted vs required grades noted for each choice
- ☐ A few sentences prepared on why you want each backup course
- ☐ A calm adult available to support — not to take over

FOR STUDENTS

You make the calls. Admissions staff want to speak to you, not your parent. Take a breath, be polite, and be ready — you are more capable of this than you feel at 8am on results day.

FOR PARENTS

Be the calm in the room. Hand them water, sit nearby, and let them lead the calls. Your steadiness is the most useful thing you can offer.

WE CAN HELP ON THE DAY

We support families through results day and Clearing with clear heads and experience of exactly these situations. If you would like guidance — before or on the day — reach us at apexacademicconsultancy.com.