



Headstart Parents' Guide

A quick 'heads up' for Headstart parents

We realise that parents are sometimes the last to know what their sons or daughters are planning! As parents ourselves we understand that you might like to know a bit more than they're willing to share, so you can help them make necessary plans or at least be aware of what's going on – especially if you are trying to book holidays, or have other children to organise. We've put together this informal, friendly paper to guide you, but would urge you to please read this in conjunction with the rest of our website, so that you are well-informed. We also ask that you encourage your son and daughter to "own" their application, and take this chance to use their initiative to make their own decisions and arrangements in the run up to (hopefully) attending a course.

The early stages - applying:

Your son or daughter may be told at school that a Headstart course is a good idea for them, or they may have found out about these opportunities on our website, so they could apply online without mentioning anything to you. When applying they'll have expressed a preference for up to 5 courses. They'll have been able to save a copy of their application, so if they log in again, you can both be reminded which courses they've selected if they've forgotten. It's really important that they understand this is a preference and not a booking for a course and you can see how we select students in [apply online](#).

Once they've submitted their application to us online, we'll check it and make sure that we have all the information we need. We take every application very seriously and we start making provisional allocations when they come through and so it's helpful if we receive applications as soon as possible after 1 September. This is because we receive around 3,100 applications, and it takes time to read them all and decide who we can offer a place to. We don't make a final decision on who'll be offered a place until the point of offer (see below).

My son or daughter is exceptionally talented and only wants the Headstart Oxford or Cambridge courses – our suggestions on course preferences

Oxford and Cambridge would love to welcome everyone, but they have limited places and they simply can't! Some parents think that Headstart is a type of open day and their son or daughter will have time to wander around a uni, chatting to admissions tutors and gain an advantage in that way. Headstart is an intense experience, intended to give students a flavour of Engineering, Maths, Science and Technology subjects and this is what we try to explain to parents who see the location of a Headstart course as key.

What's truly important is that young people are excited and passionate about the subject they take. We encourage students to be open-minded with their Headstart course preferences, so they can be well equipped to make informed decisions when they apply for their under-graduate studies. Perhaps an exciting Headstart course at a venue they'd not considered before might be just perfect for them to get the information they need for their UCAS application?

We acknowledge receipt of the application:

Once we've checked we have all the information we need, we send an email to the student to acknowledge their application. It's really important that they look out for this acknowledgement email, as we also use it to check their email address is working ok and that they are able to receive information from us (e.g. that our emails don't bounce back). Do please check that they've received this email (it may take up to 3 weeks to come, so please wait until then before checking with us) and that they have added our email address headstartteam@etrust.org.uk to their address book or safe senders list and join our Facebook group  [Headstart EDT](#). We'll use Facebook to announce important information or updates, but we'll also post these on our website. They can also follow us on Twitter  [@HeadstartEDT](#)

We know that if students don't store our address, their computers might reject our emails, or divert them to their trash. If that happens, the student could **miss out on a place**, so you can see why we stress this point. It's also important for students to remember which email address they've told us to use. Sometimes students have several different email addresses, and we've experienced students who've checked the wrong account, again missing our emails.

When we make an offer:

If the student is lucky enough to get an offer, we will send it in March 2016 by email to the email address they've given us when they submitted their application. The acceptance deadline date will be one week later, by which time we will need to receive full payment online. Please note that once a payment has been made, this is non-refundable (please see our [cancellation policy](#)).

How will the students know?

We will send a text the same day as we email the offer to the student to let them know an offer has been sent – but they must look out for the email and treat it seriously, otherwise they will lose the offer of the place because we won't hold the offer open past the acceptance deadline.

How will a parent know an offer has been issued to their son or daughter?

We will send a text the same day as we email the offer to the first emergency contact the student has given us on their application. In many cases, the person named is a parent. Please look out for this text which will be from "Headstart" and ask your son or daughter if they have received their course offer email. We do not chase up "no replies" so if we don't hear back by the acceptance deadline, we will assume the student doesn't want the place and it will be offered to someone else.

Holidays, gigs and parties with friends – these are some of the clashes we hear about!

We do understand that people have lots going on during the summer and that this period seems to be the worst time for commitments clashing. However, once a student has told us which courses are their preferences, we do ask that they try to keep those dates free so they can accept a course if it's offered to them. It's unlikely that we will be able to find an alternative course if your son or daughter declines the offer of a place on a course they've told us is one of their five preferences. However, if they have submitted their application and they subsequently find out that they are on a DoE expedition which causes a clash please ask them to email headstartteam@etrust.org.uk urgently (before an offer is issued) so that we can make a note on their application and try avoid this date.

What if our contact details change or we move house?

We cannot stress more strongly that it's essential we know how to get in touch with your son or daughter, so please ask them to tell us by email to headstartteam@etrust.org.uk if an email address, contact phone number or postal address changes.

Joining instructions

Once a student has accepted a course place and made a payment, we tell the university that they are definitely coming. Normally around 3 weeks before the start of the course, the university will email the student and send them joining instructions, which will include information about what to bring and where to go. We recommend that you don't book travel arrangements that incur a cost before you get the joining instructions.

Please, please don't ask if it's ok to arrive late or leave early – it's not!

Headstart courses are very over-subscribed (1,100 students didn't get a place last year) and universities use these summer schools as part of their outreach programme. They are keen to have students who are truly committed to taking part and do not look favourably on students who arrive late or leave early. It disturbs the programme and makes it very difficult to run the course. We display all the details of start and finish times on our website (and in our offer emails) so that students and parents can be fully informed. Universities would prefer not to negotiate with parents and students who phone to organise "a special favour" and feel embarrassed and awkward about these calls. If you or your son or daughter cannot commit to the timings of a particular course, please make an alternative selection.

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Headstart Team

Email us at: headstartteam@etrust.org.uk