

GAP YEAR Information

Deferring UCAS Applications?

Are you thinking of deferring your UCAS application because you want to take a gap year?

In short, around 8% of applications to UCAS are for deferred entry.

If you want to defer, this is something you can indicate on your UCAS form before it is sent to UCAS. If you decide after applying that you wish to defer you must contact the university to gain their agreement. It is a matter of communicating with UCAS and the university. Our advice is to pick up the phone and speak to someone at UCAS and the University of your choice.

The advice from UCAS is as follows;

“If you decide to delay your studies you can still apply now and defer your start date by a year. This way you can get your results confirmed and hopefully receive an unconditional offer for the following year.

- If you're applying for deferred entry in 2017 you need to meet offer conditions by 31 August 2016. However, make sure you check with the university or college that they're happy to consider an application for deferred entry – otherwise your choice might be wasted.
- Make sure you're sure about the course though, because if you secure a place you'll be committed to it, and could only be released from the course if the course provider agrees to let you.”

What is a Gap year?

A gap year is a period of time taken out by students at any stage, for varying amounts of time.

Some things to consider

- Will you be able to settle back into your studies?
- How will you fund your gap year?
- Will it be advantageous to your university course or future employment?
- What skills do you hope to acquire from your chosen gap year activity?
- If planning to travel should you go on your own, with friends or in an organised group?

What skills can you develop from a gap year?

- Improve your transferable skills, including communication, leadership time management and decision making
- Increase your work experience, through paid employment or voluntary work
- Learn a new craft, such as filmmaking, teaching English as a foreign language or cookery
- Hone your existing skills, for example basic language skills, IT skills and teamwork
- Increase your confidence and independence, by taking yourself out of your comfort zone.

What sort of things can you do on a gap year?

- Travel
- Teach abroad
- Volunteer to work on a project at home or abroad
- Work in a paid position to save money for university
- Gain some unpaid work experience
- Undertake further study or training
- Get a working holiday visa to work and live abroad

How to plan and prepare for your gap year?

- Make sure you understand your reasons for taking a gap year
- Decide what you want to do – plan to your strengths
- Do considerable research
- Plan it carefully

Choose your destination

- If you are unsure of where to go, seek inspiration from others. Thailand was the number one country of choice for those taking a gap year in 2013, followed by Australia, the USA, South Africa and Peru (according to ABTA)
- Visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website to check that the country you want to travel to is classed as safe for visitors. Also check if there are any special entry requirements, such as visas, length of time left on your passport (some countries require you to have at least 6 months left on your passport at the date of entry) www.gov.uk/government/foreign-commonwealth-office

Apply for visas and work permits

- Depending on where you are travelling to a visa or work permit may be necessary. These can take time to process so do your research and apply well in advance. If you are unsure whether or not you require a visa or work permit contact the embassy of the country you wish to travel to.

Visit your GP

- Before booking your trip check with your doctor to see if you need any travel vaccinations, as some need to be planned well in advance. Your GP will also be able to advise you on whether you need to take malaria tablets.
- If you are spending time in Europe apply for a Free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which will enable you to get state healthcare at a reduced cost or even for free. This should **not** act as a substitute for comprehensive medical insurance.

Choose what to take

- Decide what to pack particularly if you're spending your gap year abroad. To help you choose your essentials visit www.gapyear.com/packing-list

Find Budget Accommodation

- Make sure you pre-book accommodation for the first few nights of your trip. This will help you to acclimatise to your new surroundings and give you the chance to rest before you start to explore. Most gap year travellers choose to stay in hostels as they are an affordable option and often provide the opportunity to meet like-minded people. Find and book suitable accommodation at:
Hostel World - www.hostelworld.com
Hostelling International – www.hihostels.com

Stay Safe

- Make a note of your passport, bank and insurance policy details and leave these with a friend or family member back home along with your mobile phone number and email address.
- Check that your next of kin details are complete in your passport.
- Produce an itinerary of where you will be when, which you can leave with someone you trust at home.
- Take a photocopy of your passport and where possible carry this with you, leaving your original in the hostel safe. Some countries however may require you to keep your original on you so check before you travel..
- Sign up to country-specific travel alerts from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to ensure you stay up to date with what is happening where you are travelling to.
- Consider completing a safety course, particularly if you are planning to travel alone.
- Write a blog. This will help you to keep a log of your experiences while allowing friends and family to keep track of your trip.

Some useful websites

There are many, many websites devoted to gap years and volunteering.

Gapadvice: An impartial site offering ideas, news and information on taking a gap year – www.gapadvice.org

VSO: The Voluntary Services Organisation organises placements around the world often related to development and environmental work
www.vsointernational.org

Vinspired/
Do-It.Org Connect you with volunteering opportunities in the UK
www.vinspired.com and www.do-it.org

Year Out Group: has a huge bank of connections to volunteering projects, work placements, training programmes and travel and expedition companies www.yearoutgroup.org

HelpX/WWOOF: Provide opportunities to work on farms, hostels, sanctuaries and much more. You typically work for a few hours a day in exchange for food and lodgings. A great way to see the world on a tiny budget and make some great new friends
www.helpx.net and www.wwooof.org.uk

STA Travel: The Student Travel Agency specialise in organising flights, accommodation, tours, projects, insurance etc for students
www.statravel.co.uk

BUNAC: Organise volunteering, internships and work abroad programmes
www.bunac.org.uk

Other websites to check out:

www.prospects.ac.uk/gap_year (underscore between gap and year)

www.projects-abroad.co.uk/gap-year-projects

www.gapwork.com

www.realgap.co.uk

www.gap360.com

www.campsinternational.com

www.onlinetefl.com

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