

Clearing Q&A podcast transcript

Andrew Belt: Welcome to this week's podcast which is a Clearing special. Joining me to discuss Clearing and the options available are UCEM Admissions Manager, Jade Hersey. Hi, Jade.

Jade Hersey: Hi Andrew.

AB: And Certificate of Higher Education Built Environment Studies Programme Leader, Hazel Lobo. Hi Hazel.

Hazel Lobo: Hello Andrew.

AB: How are you both?

JH: Very good, thank you. How are you?

AB: I'm not too bad, thank you. And yourself, Hazel?

HL: Yeah, I'm very well too, thanks. Good to hear you.

AB: Students will be receiving their A level results with some going into Clearing. So firstly Jade, can you tell me what Clearing is?

JH: Yes, of course. Clearing is a period of time where UCAS applicants who have either declined their offers through UCAS or who have not met their conditions of offer will be automatically put into the UCAS Clearing Track system where they can start speaking and applying for alternative universities.

Clearing is actually already open now, so for people who might have just declined their offers, there is the opportunity to start doing it now. They haven't got to wait until on or after results day but, generally, the most popular time to get applicants through Clearing is on or after results day.

Potential applicants will ring universities and have a verbal discussion about their options and whether they could potentially get an offer. We can't give an official offer over the phone, but we can discuss the likelihood of them getting an offer with us and then if they want to study with us, they can go on to the UCAS Track system and officially apply and then we can give them the official offer through that system.

AB: What advice would you have for someone who might be going into Clearing this year?

JH: My main advice would be: do your research before you start calling universities. It can be quite an overwhelming and daunting situation to find yourself in, so I would say, first, don't worry. We get a good number of applicants through Clearing and strong applicants too so I wouldn't be too concerned [if going through Clearing].

Also, do your research. There are already vacancies open on the UCAS Track website so it's worth having a look through there. When you actually make the call (this might sound a bit silly) but it's good to do the call yourself, not to get a parent or guardian to do the call. It makes a good first impression and also I think it can be quite calming to talk through your options rather than get the information second-hand.

When you make the call, it is useful to have a few things prepared to make the call easier for you. So, if you have your UCAS number available, if you have your Clearing reference number – which is different from your UCAS number - that's a six-digit number that you will

be automatically given through Clearing – email and telephone number and also your GCSE English and maths results [that would help]. We should be able to see your A level results through the system when we log in, but it's good to have all the information available for the initial phone call.

Another thing just to mention is that it can be quite an unsettling situation so if you do find yourself struggling with the situation, there is the Charlie Waller Trust. Basically it's a page on the UCAS website focusing particularly on wellbeing during Clearing and it has some coping mechanisms for anxiety and stress that you might find useful and it might also help prepare you for the phone calls you're making to potential universities.

The final thing I'd mention is that the control is in your hands, so don't feel pressured to accept the first offer that you are given. Make the calls and take the time to think about it. You haven't got to accept an offer on results day. Just do your research and I think it will make you feel a lot calmer in the decision that you do finally make.

AB: Great stuff. So, yeah, lots of excellent advice. What kind of queries can you help with when people are calling you up?

JH: Generally, we can give a verbal offer to the course – so that's not official, it's not in writing at that point, but we can give you a strong indication of whether you would be accepted onto one of our courses or not, providing you have all the information to hand that can help you make an informed decision.

We can also help with funding. So if you haven't quite got your funding in place yet, we can go through the options on that.

AB: And now I just want to look at the academic side. So, students going through clearing can choose to study on our Certificate of Higher Education Built Environment Studies or one of our BSc (Hons) programmes in Building Surveying, Construction Management, Quantity Surveying or Real Estate Management. Bringing you in now, Hazel, why would you want to study on one of these programmes?

HL: It's a really good question and I'll answer it in three parts if I can.

Firstly, the built environment is a growth industry. No matter what else is happening in the world, we are always going to need to create places for people to design and manage those places and then to be innovating new materials and new construction techniques. So, built environment courses qualify people to do an awful lot of things.

The second reason that I'd study on one of these programmes, or somebody could study on one of these programmes, is UCEM itself. We've been delivering built environment education for 100 years. It's what we specialise in, we're really good at it and you don't have to take my word for that. There's evidence in the fact that the four largest chartered organisations in the UK – the Chartered Association of Building Engineers [CABE], the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors [RICS], the Chartered Institute of Building [CIOB] and the Chartered Management Institute [CMI] all accredit our degree programmes.

I once heard, and this is apocryphal, that if you go into any office of any national built environment company, you will find at least one UCEM alumni. I've not done the research to back that up, but that's what I've heard.

And then thirdly, it's the flexibility of our courses. With UCEM, you study online through a specially designed virtual learning environment, but you're part of a learning community. You're not alone in your studies, and you're not tied to a 9-5 study environment like you

might be on a campus. If you want to study at 2am in the morning, because that's when your brain works best, you can do that. All of the things that you need are still there, available for you. The e-Library is still open, for example. We also offer a flexibility that if something happens, you can slow down to a part-time degree from the full-time programme, but stay on your pathway and take your learning credits with you. So, there's a real flexibility to our courses that you may not find at a campus university.

AB: What careers are available within the built environment?

HL: Often when people hear built environment careers or built environment study or jobs, they think about construction sites or estate agents. And those are certainly paths that you could follow after qualifying with one of these degrees, but did you know that a quantity surveying degree or a construction management degree could also equip you for a career in dispute resolution, solving conflicts that arise in a number of built environment settings, or in expert witness or advocacy work?

The real estate management degree could lead to a career in arts and antique valuations, for example. And the building surveying degree could see you working in historic buildings conservation. There is a career section on our website. It lists 33 different career pathways and, of course, many of those then have sub-pathways.

So, I spoke about valuations a moment ago but it's not just buildings, arts and antiques. There are also intangible assets – valuation and working out business goodwill, for example. There are elements of planning and planning law, there are elements of contract law. There really are many possible options. It's not just building sites or estate agency.

AB: Say that I've signed up, I've come through clearing, and I've gone for one of those options – what can students expect to experience through studying with us?

HL: Well, first off, you'll study three modules at a time for three years in two semesters. So, 12 topics a year.

We've just stopped using exams as an assessment form so you don't have to sit any exams which means that all of our formal knowledge checks, all of the assignments that you will sit as part of your degree are assessments that reflect the types of things you might do in work, in your real life, in practice.

So, in the law modules, for example, you're asked to offer advice to a client on an aspect of law that surveyors would cover. In the planning modules, you carry out evaluations of developments. There are measurement modules, there are construction technology modules, there are management modules.

I've spoken already briefly about our virtual learning environment, but it's not just about the technology. There's a really strong support team here. We've got subject specialists who are experts in their field, many of them qualified surveyors themselves who lead the teaching. We've got academic support tutors who are learning specialists to help you get the most out of your learning, especially in that transition from A level to degree level. There's quite a difference in how you learn. And we've got people who can help you make that transition.

We've got online educationalists who are the learning design specialists. They're the people who make sure that what you're seeing in your learning environment is set up to help you do the best that you can. And we've got an amazing support network of student services, assessment, registration and admission teams. So even though you're online studying with us, you're not alone studying with us.

Yes, you've got all the practical bits that you'd experience in any degree course set out in those modules, but you've also got a huge network here to help you achieve the best that you can.

AB: So thank you both for your time. If you would like to find out more about Clearing at UCEM, get in touch with our Admissions Team by calling 0118 921 4696 and selecting Option 1 or email admissions@ucem.ac.uk. To find out more about UCEM, head to our website – ucem.ac.uk. Thank you for listening.