

## Telling your story to UCAS

Children from military service families are under-represented in the higher education population. Up to 4 out of 10 children who, if in the general population would go to university, do not go if they are from a military family. This has recently been recognised by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), which now identifies children from military families as a target group to be addressed by universities and colleges in their access arrangements. You can find out more about this on OFFA's website and view each university's access arrangements here: <https://www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/guidance/target-groups/>

The Naval Families Federation is working with its partners in the Service Children's Progression Alliance to improve further and higher education outcomes for Service children, and to encourage universities to include them in their access arrangements.

### **What do I need to do as a potential university applicant, or the parent of a young person applying to go to university?**

You can, if you wish, make the university aware of your status as a child of a military family. Very often we find that young people from Armed Forces families do not consider themselves to be particularly 'different'. You may not see any reason why your characteristics should be of any special interest to your chosen university. On the other hand, there may be aspects of being part of an Armed Forces family that have influenced your choices and outcomes. Your UCAS application gives you an opportunity to say something about these if you wish to do so. Obviously you are your own person, and not defined by your parent's military service, but it may have had an influence – positive, negative or neutral – on your educational journey and your personal growth.

### **My UCAS application**

There are 3 areas of your UCAS application where you may identify as a young person from a military family:

#### **Parental Occupation**

On your UCAS application, there is a parental occupation box with a drop down menu from which you can select 'Armed Forces'. This enables UCAS to collect data which will help build a clearer picture of what is happening for Armed Forces families nationally.

#### **Personal Statement**

There is plenty of information on the UCAS website about writing your personal statement. We particularly like the writing tool which leads you through the sections and explains what to include. You can find it on the UCAS website here:

<https://www.ucasdigital.com/widgets/personalstatement/index.html#/main>

Section 1 – the course



The first section of your personal statement will explain:

- why you are applying for your chosen course;
- why the subject interests you;
- why you are suitable for the course;
- how your current or previous studies relate to the chosen course;
- and what other activities you have undertaken that demonstrate your interest in the course.

## Section 2 – your skills and achievements

In the second section you will write about the skills and achievements that will help you on your chosen course of study and with life at university in general, giving evidence to support why you are right for your course. There is an opportunity to say something here about particular skills that you may have gained from being part of an Armed Forces family. Keep it positive. Include skills that are relevant to the course you are hoping to study and make the link. For example:

*I moved schools frequently as a result of my parent's service, and have learnt to settle in quickly in new places and cope with change.*

*My parent has been away from home a lot with the Armed Forces. I have needed to be responsible for my younger siblings at times, and this has helped me to organise my time and be reliable.*

*I have learned to cope with stress and be more resilient as a result of my parent being injured whilst deployed on combat operations. Although it was hard at the time, I worry less now about big challenges because I know I can cope with difficult situations.*

*I am a young carer for my brother who has special educational needs. When my dad is serving away from home with the Armed Forces, I take on additional responsibility for my brother while my mum is at work. This shows that I am independent and resourceful.*

*As someone from an Armed Forces family, I have had to be adaptable and flexible as roles and routines in our home change a lot depending whether my dad is away.*

## UCAS Undergraduate Reference

You can give your permission for your school, college or registered centre to include information in your reference about your circumstances that may have affected/have affected your academic work.

For example:

- School moves that disrupted your learning for a particular course of study;
- A parent deployed on combat operations during examinations;
- Being a young carer;

- Having a serving parent who is affected by a life-changing injury or medical condition.

This information can help the admissions staff at the university to consider your achievements and potential in context. It is best if you let your referee see a copy of your personal statement so that they can avoid duplicating what you said, but they can comment on what you wrote if they wish.

**Good luck!**

We wish you every success with your application. If you want to tell us about your journey into higher education, please do get in touch with us at [contactus@nff.org.uk](mailto:contactus@nff.org.uk) . We would love to hear your story!

