



## How TSA supports undergraduate admissions at UCL



### The admissions process

Since 2008, University College London (UCL) has been using the Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA), from Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, as a key part of its selection process. TSA is a test of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, both widely identified as among the most important skills for study and employment.



TSA is currently taken by students applying to UCL's highly regarded European and International Social and Political Studies degree courses. These are challenging programmes in which students study History, Law, Philosophy and Politics, specialise in a humanities and social science subject and gain fluency in another language. Very few applicants are awarded a place on grades alone, and the majority are asked to take TSA. TSA test scores are then used to help the admissions team identify students with the potential to do well in their studies.

'Most of our applicants apply with A Level grades of A\*AA or higher (or equivalent) and having an admissions test such as TSA seems a fairer means of selection,' says UCL's Tessa Robinson, Administrative Manager for the European Social and Political Studies course. 'It also helps us standardise our application procedure,' she adds.

“ TSA helps us identify those who will thrive at UCL. ”

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## About UCL

Founded in 1826 in the heart of London, UCL is London's leading multidisciplinary university, with more than 13,000 staff and 42,000 students from 150 different countries.

## About TSA

The Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA) helps you identify an applicant's potential for academically demanding undergraduate and postgraduate study. It is designed to help select students with the right skills for entry to a wide range of degree courses, including engineering, economics, politics and psychology. TSA tests the problem-solving and critical thinking skills essential to success in higher education, university study and employment.

## About Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing

We are part of the University of Cambridge and have been working with UK and worldwide universities, governments and employers for more than 15 years. Our admissions assessments are a global mark of excellence that set the quality standard. Backed by extensive research, our admissions tests give your applicants the opportunity to prove they have what it takes and help enhance your selection process. We have a global network of centres that spans 150 countries, making it easy to assess applicants wherever they may be.

## The skills for success

Tessa's team uses TSA scores to identify candidates' future potential – as well as current ability – and is particularly interested in the Critical Thinking component: 'Critical thinking is essential for university study and not something students may necessarily focus on at school,' she says. 'TSA helps us identify those who will thrive at UCL as it allows students to demonstrate their potential to develop this skill. We pay particular attention to the overall TSA score but also the Critical Thinking score, and use these in conjunction with our assessment of the whole application.'

TSA is a 90-minute test, and students answer 50 multiple-choice questions covering a range of problem-solving and critical thinking tasks including selecting information, finding procedures, drawing conclusions and identifying assumptions. In common with many universities using TSA, UCL does not provide specific guidance on the test. Instead, applicants are encouraged to use the free preparation materials – including practice tests – available on the Admissions Testing website.

TSA is available in both online and pen-and-paper formats. In 2021 UCL was one of the first institutions to use a remote-proctored version of TSA, which allowed students to take the test at home. This version was developed by Admissions Testing in response to the impact of Covid-19 on university admissions, and resulted in positive feedback.

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