

UPREP TALK

University Placement and Preparation

Every other Wednesday

08:30 - 09:15 am

Secondary Hall, Chaofah City Campus

Presented by



Emily Graham
Deputy Head of
Upper Secondary School



Simon Thomas
University Guidance
Counsellor



Neil Roscoe
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Alternative Pathways and Gap Years

UPREP
TALK 2026



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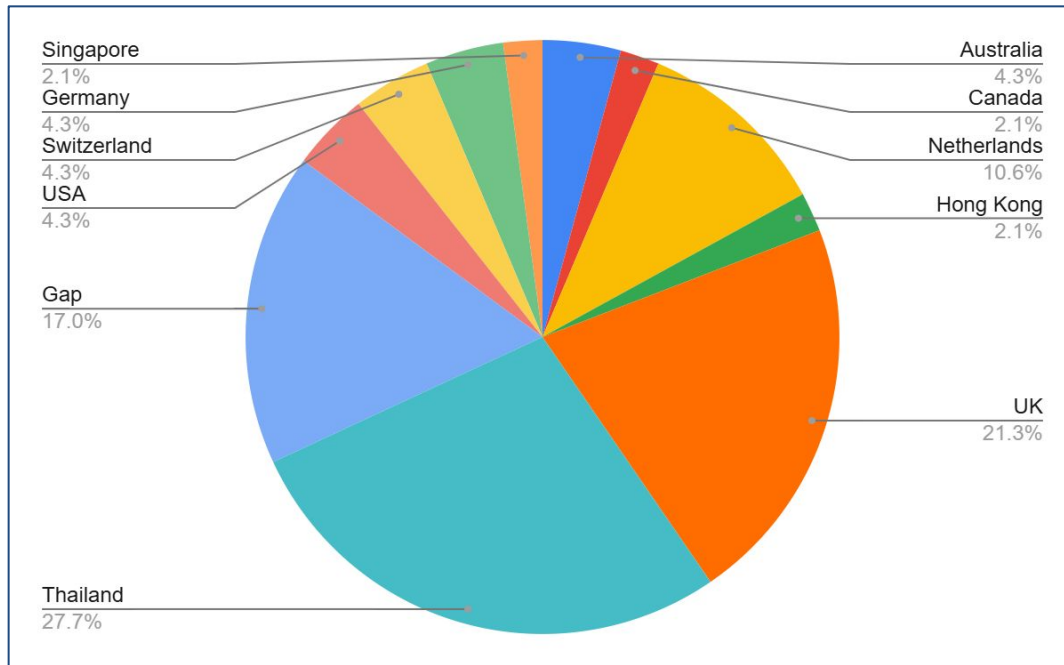
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Why are alternative pathways increasing?

Destinations of our 2025 graduates



- Rising academic pressure and competition
- Student wellbeing and burnout
- Financial considerations of overseas study
- Universities valuing maturity and experience
- Changing global job market

Reality: Universities are more open to non-linear pathways than ever before.



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What do we mean by 'alternative pathways'?



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Gap Years: the good, the bad, and the misunderstood

What universities <i>like</i> about gap years	The risks
✓ Maturity ✓ Independence ✓ Clear motivation ✓ Real-world experience ✓ Stronger personal statements	⚠ Unstructured “drift year” ⚠ Loss of academic momentum ⚠ Poorly chosen programmes ⚠ Social comparison pressure



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A GUIDE TO GAP YEARS

START ▶



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What is a Foundation Course?

- A one-year academic programme
- Subject-specific preparation
- Often linked directly to a university

Successful completion usually leads to:

- Entry into Year 1 (or sometimes Year 2) of a degree

Who Are Foundation Courses For?

Foundation courses may suit students who:

- Miss entry grades narrowly
- Wish to change subject area
- Come from a different curriculum background
- Need additional academic or language support

They are not a “second-best” option.

Foundation courses & pathway programmes





Popular Foundation Destinations



Many highly ranked universities actively recruit from foundation programmes.



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Modern apprenticeships often include:

- Paid employment
- Professional training
- Recognised qualifications
- Degree apprenticeships (UK)

Students earn while they learn.

Who Do Apprenticeships Suit Best?

Apprenticeships may suit students who:

- Prefer practical, hands-on learning
- Have clear career interests
- Are ready for adult working environments

Considerations:

- Limited subject availability
- Highly competitive
- Fewer international options

Apprenticeships



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Employment

- Work full-time for a period
- Save money
- Gain independence and responsibility
- Apply to university later with stronger motivation



Common in Australia and New Zealand pathways.

How Do Universities View Alternative Pathways?

Universities focus on:

- Academic readiness
- Evidence of growth and reflection
- Motivation and commitment
- Clear explanation of choices

They care less about speed, and more about readiness.

What Universities Do NOT Want to See

- Unexplained gaps
- Passive or unstructured time
- ‘I just needed a break’ without reflection

It's not the pathway – it's how it's used and explained



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Parent role: How to support without panic

Helpful parent behaviours	Unhelpful (but common!)
✓ Ask curious questions ✓ Encourage planning ✓ Focus on skills gained ✓ Keep communication open	✗ Comparisons ✗ Timelines based on other children ✗ “Wasted year” language ✗ Panic applications



Gap Year Links

WWOOF - www.wwof.net

Gapforce - www.gapforce.org

Operation Wallacea - www.opwall.com

Semester at Sea - www.semesteratsea.org

The Year in Industry - www.etrust.org.uk/the-year-in-industry

Project Trust - www.projecttrust.org.uk

Camp America - www.campamerica.co.uk

City Year - www.cityyear.org

Restless Development - www.restlessdevelopment.org

CIEE Gap Year Abroad - www.ciee.org

EF Gap Year - www.efgapyear.com

Turing Scheme -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/turing-scheme-international-study-and-work-placements/overview-of-the-turing-scheme>

Prospects - www.prospects.ac.uk

Year Out Group - www.yearoutgroup.org

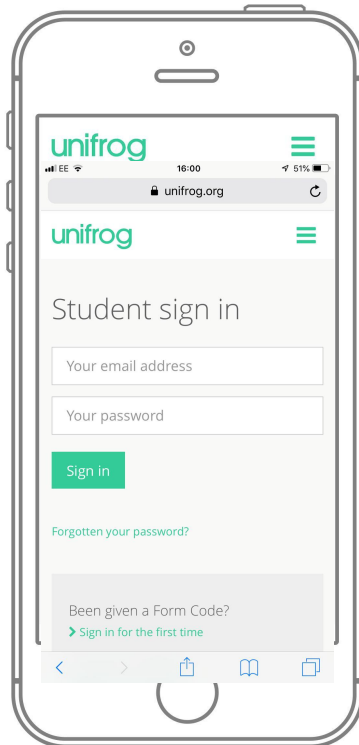
Go Overseas - www.gooverseas.com

Teaching Abroad Direct - www.teachingabroaddirect.co.uk

The Gap Network - www.thegapnetwork.org

Letz Live - www.letzlive.org

Students, Parents & Guardians, Get signed up!



Go to www.unifrog.org/student and click 'Sign in for the first time'

You'll be asked for some details and a form code. This is what you need:

HSISparents

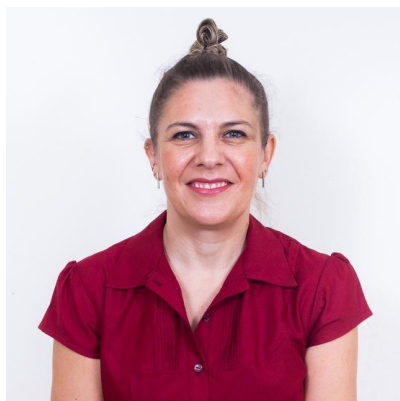
After signing up, log into Unifrog using your email address and password via the sign-in page! Try using a search, eg.

<https://www.unifrog.org/student/search?search=australia>

UPrep Parent Sessions

Dates 2025/26	Topic
1: 27 th August 2025	Introduction to UPrep
2: 10 th September 2025	Your child's 5 year plan
3: 24 th September 2025	Choosing subjects and careers
4: 8 th October 2025	Comparing different university systems
5: 29 th October 2025	Applying to Thai universities
6: 12 th November 2025	Application and standardised testing
7: 26 th November 2025	Applying to the UK and Europe
8: 10 th December 2025	Applying to USA and Canada
9: 7 th January 2026	Applying to Australia, New Zealand
10: 21st January 2026	Applying to Asian universities
11: 4 th February 2026	Alternative pathways and gap years
12: 4th March 2026	Fees, funding and finances
13: 18th March 2026	UPrep For Parents by Parents going to the Netherlands and/or the UK
14. 29th April 2026	Applying to Oxbridge
15. 13th May 2026	Applying to Ivy League and top US universities

Book an appointment with one of us!



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Can you help?

We are looking for volunteers

Do you (or a contact) have expertise in these areas?

- Hospitality / Tourism
- Engineering / Architecture
- Computing / Digital Media
- Charities / Development
- Food and Beverage
- Entrepreneurship
- Medical / Psychology
- Art / Design
- Entrepreneurship / Marketing / Commerce



JOIN US FOR

TALKING HEADS

A YEAR 12 PUBLIC SPEAKING SHOWCASE!

THURSDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY

17:00 - 19:00

 Secondary Hall (4th floor)
HeadStart Chaofah City Campus

ENJOY DRINKS, SNACKS AND MINGLING WITH THE SPEAKERS IN THE EVENT INTERVAL.



QUESTIONS?



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