# Middlesex doubles down on vocational revamp as UCAS entries slump 55% since 2016



Middlesex University faces a stark contrast between falling undergraduate application numbers and a sustained programme of curricular and campus investment designed to boost employability and widen access. The Daily Mail’s university guide reported that UCAS admissions at Middlesex in September 2024 fell for the seventh time in eight years, representing a cumulative decline of about 55% since 2016. Yet the same review documents a university that has reworked courses, timetables and facilities to respond to the demands of an increasingly vocational and digitally shaped labour market. (The university told the guide: “Our aims [are] to make sure our students benefit from new ways of teaching and technology and from our global campuses and links.”)

Alongside conventional undergraduate provision, Middlesex has been expanding its degree‑apprenticeship offering. The university hosts roughly 1,200 degree apprentices on campus and says it has several new pathways awaiting validation, including data science and cyber‑security technical professional roles. Separately, Middlesex received an Office for Students grant of £600,000 spread over two academic years to develop six digital degree apprenticeships — programmes that the university says will be co‑designed with employers to widen access and address local digital skills shortages identified by the London Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Those employer links are reflected in Middlesex’s recent pedagogic overhaul. The institution’s learning framework, introduced from the 2024/25 academic year and branded internally as the 2031 framework, restructures teaching so students usually take two modules at a time, blends three days of in‑person teaching with interactive online resources and makes regular use of flipped learning. According to the university, assessments are being spaced differently — with fewer high‑stakes exams and more small‑group, industry‑relevant tasks — and postgraduate programmes will align with the model from September 2025 in an effort to improve outcomes.

Middlesex also leans on an established international footprint to enrich student experience. The university points to long‑standing branch campuses in Dubai and Mauritius — opened in 2005 and 2009 respectively — where many programmes are shared and UK validation and quality‑assurance arrangements are retained, enabling students to take parts of their degrees overseas as part of mobility and exchange options.

Practical and vocational training is a clear priority in the health disciplines. Middlesex’s clinical training provision now includes high‑tech simulation suites and a four‑bed simulation ward housed in the West Stand at StoneX Stadium, with lifelike mannequins, intensive‑care and paediatric scenarios, video‑recording for feedback and virtual‑reality tools to practise procedures in realistic but risk‑free settings. The university says the facilities are designed to better prepare nursing, midwifery and allied health students for placements and employer expectations.

Financial support for students has been reshaped too, though the scale has drawn scrutiny. Middlesex is introducing an Undergraduate Excellence Support Pack for high‑achieving UK entrants from 2025–26 that includes a laptop or iPad and a one‑off £150 grant; sports scholarships of between £200 and £1,000 remain available and the university has added named awards, particularly within business and law. The university’s own pages note it is finalising its 2025 financial‑support package, while the Daily Mail’s guide recorded total spend on bursaries and scholarships in 2023–24 of just over £110,000 — a sum the guide characterised as lower than many peer institutions. Middlesex also operates a Living Costs Fund and a financial hardship fund of around £700,000 that, the university says, supported roughly 2,200 students in extreme need during the same period. Complementary measures include free on‑campus printing, widespread access to reading lists, a kit hub that loans video equipment, and discounted food offers to reduce day‑to‑day costs for students.

Residential provision is described as competitively priced by London standards. The university’s accommodation information lists Usher Hall, Platt Hall and Writtle House as principal halls; the typical 40‑week contracts and the weekly rates published for 2025–26 translate to the figures quoted in the guide for those tenancies. The accommodation pages also confirm utilities, internet and basic contents insurance are included, and set out reception and security arrangements.

Student welfare, access and outreach remain a central theme. Middlesex says it goes beyond grades when considering applicants, assesses portfolios and life experience, and runs an outreach programme aimed at local schools and areas of higher deprivation — including an expanded online personal statement review service. On campus, UniHelp serves as a single front door for enquiries, while a range of mental‑health services, group therapy, workshops and free sports and wellbeing activities are promoted during induction. The university also partners with Brook Sexual Health to provide advice and monthly drop‑ins around healthy relationships and consent.

Taken together, Middlesex’s curriculum redesigns, employer partnerships, international campuses and targeted student support amount to a coherent strategy to make courses more vocationally relevant and accessible. But the decline in UCAS entries presents a pressing reputational and recruitment challenge. According to official announcements and the university’s own materials, the measures now being deployed are intended to bolster recruitment and graduate employability; whether they will reverse the long‑term admissions trend remains to be seen and will be measurable only when future cycle data are published.

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* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/learning-framework/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://t4.mdx.ac.uk/news/2024/3/digital-degree-apprenticeships--students-awards/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/learning-framework/), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.mdx.ac.ae/about-us/our-campuses), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/facilities/health-and-education-facilities/), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[2]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/scholarships-and-bursaries/), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 7 – [[7]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/student-life/accommodation/), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/learning-framework/)
* Paragraph 9 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/scholarships-and-bursaries/), [[3]](https://t4.mdx.ac.uk/news/2024/3/digital-degree-apprenticeships--students-awards/), [[5]](https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/learning-framework/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/university-guide/article-14914807/Middlesex-University.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/fees-and-funding/scholarships-and-bursaries/> - Middlesex University’s Scholarships and Bursaries web page outlines financial support available to incoming and current students. It details the Undergraduate Excellence Support Pack for high-achieving UK entrants starting in 2025‑26, which includes a laptop or iPad and a one‑off grant of £150, and describes sports scholarships ranging from £200 to £1,000. The page lists numerous awards, regional and international merit schemes, specific named scholarships and eligibility criteria, plus support while studying such as the Living Costs Fund. It explains application rules, restrictions on holding multiple awards, and notes the university is finalising its 2025 financial support package for prospective students.
3. <https://t4.mdx.ac.uk/news/2024/3/digital-degree-apprenticeships--students-awards/> - The Middlesex University news item announces an Office for Students grant of £600,000 over two academic years to develop six digital degree apprenticeships. It lists intended programmes including Data Scientist, Digital User Experience Professional and Cyber Security Technical Professional alongside digital marketer and creative design pathways. The release emphasises co‑design with employers, widening access for under‑represented groups and addressing regional digital skills needs identified by the London Local Skills Improvement Plan. It highlights Middlesex’s experience in work‑integrated learning and explains how the funding will support curriculum development and employer engagement to increase apprenticeship starts across the region.
4. <https://www.mdx.ac.ae/about-us/our-campuses> - Middlesex University’s Dubai campus site describes the institution’s international footprint and history. It states the Dubai campus opened in 2005 and that a Mauritius campus followed in 2009, confirming longstanding overseas provision. The page explains that many programmes are shared across campuses, with UK validation and quality assurance arrangements maintained, enabling students to study part of their degree abroad. It names Dubai Knowledge Park as a location and summarises the aim to deliver consistent teaching standards and facilities across global sites, reflecting Middlesex’s strategic commitment to an international, multi‑campus approach to higher education worldwide.
5. <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/learning-framework/> - Middlesex University’s Learning Framework page summarises a new teaching and learning approach introduced from 2024/25. It explains curriculum redesign to embed employability, digital literacy and wellbeing, and to structure modules so students usually study two modules at a time. The framework seeks timetables that support students balancing work, family and other responsibilities, with a model of three days of in‑person teaching complemented by interactive online resources and flipped learning. The page states assessments are spaced with fewer exams, small group study and industry‑relevant assessments, and that postgraduate programmes will align with the framework from September 2025 to improve student outcomes.
6. <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/study/facilities/health-and-education-facilities/> - The Health and Education Facilities page details Middlesex University’s clinical and simulation resources for nursing, midwifery and allied health programmes. It highlights the West Stand at StoneX Stadium as the site of new clinical health facilities including high‑tech simulation suites, lifelike mannequins and video recording for feedback. The page describes a four‑bed simulation ward, intensive care and paediatric scenarios and virtual reality tools used in training, emphasising hands‑on practice in realistic environments without risk to patients. These facilities support practical skills development, placement preparation and employer‑facing training, reinforcing Middlesex’s vocational and industry‑aligned provision in health disciplines for students and employers.
7. <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/student-life/accommodation/> - The Middlesex University accommodation pages describe halls of residence, room numbers, weekly costs and 40‑week contract lengths for 2025‑26. Usher Hall is listed with 182 ensuite rooms and a weekly price of around £230.23; Platt Hall is shown as 540 ensuite rooms at about £219.59 per week; Writtle House is a smaller hall with weekly rates around £203.98. The pages confirm contracts run for 40 weeks and include utilities, internet and basic contents insurance. They outline locations relative to the Hendon campus and management arrangements, and explain booking, terms and student safety measures such as reception and security provision onsite.