



Featuring expert contributions from over 50 higher education practitioners.

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Parents' Guide to University 2024-2025

Informing the influencer:
The key higher education facts for parents and guardians.

Produced in collaboration with **HELOA**

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Welcome to the Parents' Guide to University 2024-2025

This guide has been produced by UniTasterDays.com to help you support your young person with their higher education decisions. It covers many aspects of university, including: information on the application process; the types of courses available; student finance and key funding information; student life; how your young person can access additional support at university and much more.

But ultimately, this guide is here to provide you, as a parent or guardian, with the right information so that you can support your young person with their thoughts and decisions about the future. It may even encourage you to consider university yourself!

Experts on your side

The Parents' Guide features contributions from experts in higher education and has been produced in collaboration with HELOA (the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association). I am very grateful for their support and the contributions made throughout the guide by HELOA members.

I should also add that often in the guide we use the term 'university', but it's not only universities that offer higher education programmes. We just use 'university' as it avoids another acronym and the use of repeated references to 'higher education institutions' throughout.

I hope you find this to be a helpful overview and you'll share it with others who may find this useful as well.

Jon Cheek
Founder, [UnitasterDays.com](https://unitasterdays.com)

“ **This guide is here to provide you, as a parent or guardian, with the right information so that you can support your young person with their thoughts and decisions about the future. It may even encourage you to consider university yourself!** ”



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What are the benefits of going to university?

By Tasha Bodger, Senior Marketing Officer at Harper Adams University

As parents, it's natural to feel a mix of emotions as your young person prepares for university. Excitement, pride and joy are often accompanied by a sense of anticipation and curiosity about what might lie ahead. Whilst higher education is a significant commitment, both financially and emotionally, the benefits of your young person attending university can be equally as valuable – and potentially life-changing!

University vs employment

Settling on a future career is often a decision influenced by every experience, lesson and passion a person has absorbed through their years of education, and your young person is no different. University provides students with additional opportunities to uncover their future, delve deeper into subjects they touched on at secondary level and identify a well-researched career path, all within a safe environment.

This extra learning time then enhances their career prospects following graduation, with university leavers typically earning higher salaries once they're in the working world.

In some instances, students won't even have to choose between university and employment as a large proportion of universities now offer a compulsory year in industry. This additional year not only provides a first-hand glimpse into a future career, but it also develops day-one competencies, critical thinking skills and independence, as well as the basis of your young person's professional network!

University is great for personal development

University education is not just about career prospects. It also provides the perfect opportunity for students to hone crucial life skills. Whether it's managing their finances, adapting to solo living, respecting the diversity of a university campus or handling a range of domestic activities, there are plenty of non-educational lessons your young person will learn while studying.

However, these skills aren't learnt in isolation. Not only do students have their course and housemates to lean on, but there's also a whole university support network ready and waiting. From financial advisors, the Students' Union and careers services to wardens and mental health professionals, university has all the benefits of independent living, with the added security of a safe and supportive environment in which to develop.

Creating a network of friends and colleagues

Of course, personal development also goes hand in hand with building lifelong friendships – as well as having fun too! Most, if not all, universities have a whole host of societies and clubs that will introduce students to like-minded people, as well as diverse cultures, backgrounds, and pastimes. Extracurriculars can range from sports teams to art and culture appreciation groups or even social action clubs. Whatever their area of interest, societies provide a fantastic way for students to build a sense of community, friendship and belonging.

The community your young person builds has the potential to help them navigate their career path, be it through job referrals, introductions to potential employers or access to industry-specific knowledge and resources.

Ultimately, a university education is lifelong. It's both a personal and professional launchpad that could support your young person's success long after graduation!



Foundation, bachelor, sandwich years and more - what are the different types of higher education courses?

By Ella Sancassani, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Essex

While it's important for your young person to research different universities, choosing the right course should also be a crucial first step. There are over 50,000 courses to choose from in the UK alone and it can be difficult to pick a course when the language used is unfamiliar. I've created this guide to outline the types of courses available.

Foundation year

The first level of study available at university is a foundation year. These can be standalone one-year courses or part of an integrated Bachelor's degree. They're designed to improve academic skills and subject-specific knowledge, as well as prepare your young person for undergraduate study and life at university. Upon successful completion of a foundation year, they'll often progress to year one of their chosen undergraduate degree.

Bachelor's degree

A Bachelor's degree is the most common type of undergraduate degree. They are typically three-year programmes, although they can vary depending on the course and the university. There are different types available, most commonly: BA (Bachelor of Arts), BSc (Bachelor of Science), BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) and LLB (Law) programmes.

Joint honours

Joint honours degrees combine two or more areas of interest at degree level and can cross disciplines and faculties. They're a great option if your young person's interests span multiple subject areas.

Sandwich programmes

Sandwich programmes provide your young person with the ability to incorporate a study abroad or placement year as part of their time at university. Typically extending the course length by one year, this option can provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live and study overseas, gain work experience and boost their employability.

Degree apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity as an alternative route into higher education. With the support of an existing employer, your young person is able to further their career while studying and earning.

Higher National Certificate and Diploma

Available in a range of disciplines, Higher National Certificates (HNC) or Higher National Diplomas (HND) are focused on industry and incorporate practical methods of learning. These courses take one to two years to complete and can enable your young person to progress onto the second or third year of a full-time Bachelor's degree.

Integrated Master's

These courses combine undergraduate and postgraduate study to enable your young person to graduate with a Master's qualification upon completion of their course.

Tip: don't judge a course by the title

The content, assessment methods and contact time of a course can vary significantly from one with the same title, so it's important that your young person does their research and digs beyond the surface. They may wish to study something familiar or try something they haven't heard of before, but they should take the time to explore all their options.

“ While it's important for students to research different universities, choosing the right course for them should be their crucial first step. ”

With increasing costs, is university worth it?

By Mark Faulkner, Outreach and Engagement Officer at the University of South Wales

The last few years have been challenging for many people financially, and students are no exception to that. As you prepare to look at the next steps with your young person, the financial side of things can be daunting. However, it's important to take a balanced view, looking at both sides of the proverbial coin to ensure that they can seize the opportunities that come with holding a degree.

Student finance

A contentious topic when it comes to considering university is how much it's going to cost. However, as was demonstrated in Martin Lewis' article in the [UniTasterDays 2024 Students' Guide to University \(p35-37\)](#), the idea of this big 'debt' should not be as frightening as it may first appear. Student loans are only repayable once your young person is earning over a specific amount (which is different depending on where in the UK you live) and are repaid at a set percentage over this amount. A key consideration is the outcome and the difference that holding a degree has on future prospects. Graduates are less likely to be unemployed and earn more on average than those who haven't got a degree. They're therefore more likely to reap the rewards of their investment in their degree throughout their lifetime.

Parents and carers could be expected to contribute to top-up a student's income. It's important to make use of online calculators to work out what your young person might receive and to make sure that this is affordable for you. Don't forget, there are also grants, scholarships and bursaries available, so make sure your young person checks the institution fees and funding pages at their chosen universities as these will vary.

Cost of living

The current cost-of-living crisis has not escaped many people and most students now hold a part-time job alongside their studies. This means that student life can be quite different for young people now compared to a couple of decades ago. However, having a part-time job has benefits, as well as the added financial security of an additional income. Most universities have student money advice teams that can advise students on grants and loans they may be eligible for, as well as ways of managing their finances and budgeting. University is the perfect opportunity for your young person to develop the lifelong skill of money management!

Degrees open doors

A big question for you to talk to your young person about is how they picture their future career. Many jobs require a degree as a minimum, so it's worth looking at job descriptions for any vocations they may be interested in, to see whether a degree is necessary or could stand them in better stead.

Essentially, if your young person wants a job that requires a degree, student finance shouldn't stand in their way. Whether your young person is considering a profession such as teaching, or becoming a doctor, or is seeking to expand their knowledge in a certain area, gaining a degree can open so many doors. Whether it's through work placements as part of the degree, or relevant experience using industry standard facilities, the opportunities to expand their horizons are endless.

Going to university provides a brilliant experience for many young people, so it's worth doing the research early on to ensure that they make the right choice for them.

“**Graduates are likely to reap the rewards of their investment in their degree throughout their lifetime.**”

Student voice: why did I go to university?

By Emma Berwick, Business with French graduate at the University of Birmingham

I chose to go to university because I thought it would be a good opportunity to broaden my horizons and enrich my knowledge. I enjoyed my A Level subjects, albeit finding them rather challenging, so I felt university was the right choice for me. Here, I will provide a guide to how I settled in and the things to be aware of as you advise and support your young person.

What information would be helpful?

Looking back, there were a few things that I would have appreciated knowing more about before going to university. Despite watching lots of videos on YouTube and attending Open Days, I should have asked what the timetable would be like for someone studying my subject and what I could expect from assignments. It was a relief knowing that the assignments were spread out over a couple of weeks and there weren't too many early starts!

I could also have asked for more information on managing finances and scholarship opportunities, most of which your young person will need to apply for before starting their course.

Tips for starting their course

Once your young person starts at their chosen university, I'd suggest that they familiarise themselves with the different departments across the institution and be aware of what school/department they are part of. Each department has different opportunities and perhaps a separate team of wellbeing officers who make decisions about things like coursework extensions and student support services.

When I started university, I found speaking to older students incredibly helpful. There are lots of Facebook groups where people ask about modules and provide general university advice.

Now I'm a student ambassador, I meet more students across the university and it's great to hear their words of wisdom. I would strongly recommend attending events, especially freshers' events, which will help your young person settle in.

Organisation is important

As the assignments started appearing, I found that developing a good organisation system was helpful. Making a list of deadlines and adding these to my Google calendar worked well.

The Disabled Students' Allowance

Before starting at university, I would really recommend that students check if they're eligible for the DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance). Eligible students may receive help with equipment and specific software to make their learning experience easier. Students are also typically allocated a Disability Adviser who can provide help and support with study adjustments. Applications can take time, so this should be started as soon as possible. You can read more about this on page 50.

Note from UniTasterDays

For more information on the DSA and support for disabled students, check out The One in Five Podcast. A university support podcast created by disabled students, for disabled students who are considering university: <https://www.unitasterdays.com/listen-to-the-1-in-5-podcast/>

“**My final suggestion would be to regularly check emails. All the opportunities, trips and events are usually sent through email, so it's really important to stay on top of that! ,,**”

How important are post-16 option choices?

By Jen Barton, Student Recruitment Manager at Durham University

As higher education advisers, we're often asked by students and parents how important their post-16 options are for their future education and career prospects.

If your young person knows what career they want to go into, then it's important that they choose the right options to get them on the right path.

They can research their chosen occupation and find out what qualifications they need, working backwards to choose the relevant options for post-16 study. There aren't as many occupations as you might expect that require specific qualifications, other than the obvious examples such as doctors, engineers or dentists, but these professions require specific qualifications which need to be considered at Level 3.

What are the post-16 options for students?

There are so many options, it can feel overwhelming. Some of the most common post-16 qualifications include A levels, Scottish Highers, T Levels and apprenticeships.

How do students choose?

The key is to be well-informed by undertaking research, and the good news is that there are plenty of online resources that can help. If your young person wants to go to university, it's important to note that not all degrees demand a particular set of qualifications. However, your young person needs to make sure that they don't limit their areas of interest by taking the wrong subjects for their post-16 options. They can use websites, such as The Russell Group Informed Choices web page, which will help them with the pathways they could take. UCAS and UniTasterDays.com are also great sources of information.

If your young person wants to take a science pathway, then they'll almost certainly need to take at least one science subject at Level 3, whereas social sciences, arts and humanities subjects tend to have fewer prerequisites. If your young person still doesn't know the path they want to follow for post-18 study, then it's good advice to take a mix of subjects for their post-16 qualifications. Most importantly, they should study subjects they'll enjoy.

There's no wrong choice!

Reassure your young person that they don't need to have everything figured out right now; many students, even when they reach Year 13, still don't know what they want to do. All you can do as a parent or supporter is be there to help them as they make their choices. It's also important that they don't feel any pressure about making the 'wrong' choice. Remind them that if they change their mind part way through their studies, or even during their career, it's never too late to take their future in another direction.

“ **The key is to be well informed by undertaking research, and the good news is that there are plenty of online resources that can help.** ”





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What are university league tables?

By Chris Hakes, Higher Education Adviser at the University of East Anglia

Common questions parents ask me when it comes to university league tables are 'which ones should I look at' and 'how important are they for informing decision-making?' All parents want their young person to go to a university that will give them the best outcomes and where they will be the happiest. League tables are one of many tools that can be used as part of this research process.

With this in mind, it's important to understand which league tables are available, what data is used and, most importantly, how they align with what your young person is looking for in a university or course. A university might rank highly, but that doesn't make it the right university for them.

League tables and how they're calculated

There are three main national league tables to be aware of: The Complete University Guide, The Times Good University Guide and The Guardian University Guide. Each league table does the same thing in terms of ranking universities, however, each varies in terms of the criteria and weighting used to calculate them. For example, while all three will consider factors such as student satisfaction, graduate prospects and entry grades, the difference in weighting often means the tables look different when put side-by-side.

Understanding criteria and weighting is the first step towards knowing which league table might be most useful to your young person, or whether they need to crosscheck across several to get a better picture of a university's overall performance.

Overall ranking is useful, but there are league tables available that rank universities in terms of their subject areas too. This is important for students who want to attend a university that specialises in their chosen subject and can be especially useful if they want to study a technical subject or have a particular career path in mind. For example, if a student wanted to study physiotherapy, subject rankings can help determine which university has the best teaching quality, facilities and graduate outcomes. A university might sit lower on an overall league table, but it could be one of the best in the country for a particular subject.

Points to consider

League tables don't tell the whole story and will only show a university's past performance. Most league tables also don't rank things that are likely to be just as important to a student, such as module variety or assessment methods. Nor will they consider other aspects such as student life, support or what the location has to offer.

Rather than focusing solely on league tables, encourage your young person to speak to current students, attend Open Days and book onto a subject taster session. A useful activity would be to determine what their priorities are for the course and their university experience, and then use a variety of ways to research these to help them make an informed decision.

	Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3	Criteria 4	Criteria 5
Course and Institution A	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
Course and Institution B	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Course and Institution C	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Course and Institution D	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Course and Institution E	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Course and Institution F	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

Example UniTasterDays Course and Criteria Checklist

How to support your young person with their university and course choices

By Joe Glover, Pre-16 Outreach Officer at the University of Leicester

For many parents, it can be daunting as their young person decides to take the plunge into the university world. If you then add in the question of what course and where they'd like to study for the next three years, it can feel like an overwhelming decision. You may be thinking 'What can I do to help?'. These three pieces of advice will give you the confidence to offer that support.

Tip one: Explore the options

It sounds straightforward as a starting point, but it's important that your young person takes their time with their course and university research. Being so determined to make the right choice can sometimes mean they'll dive into the specifics without looking to see what else is out there.

A simple UCAS search will help your young person find all the possible universities that offer their chosen course and you never

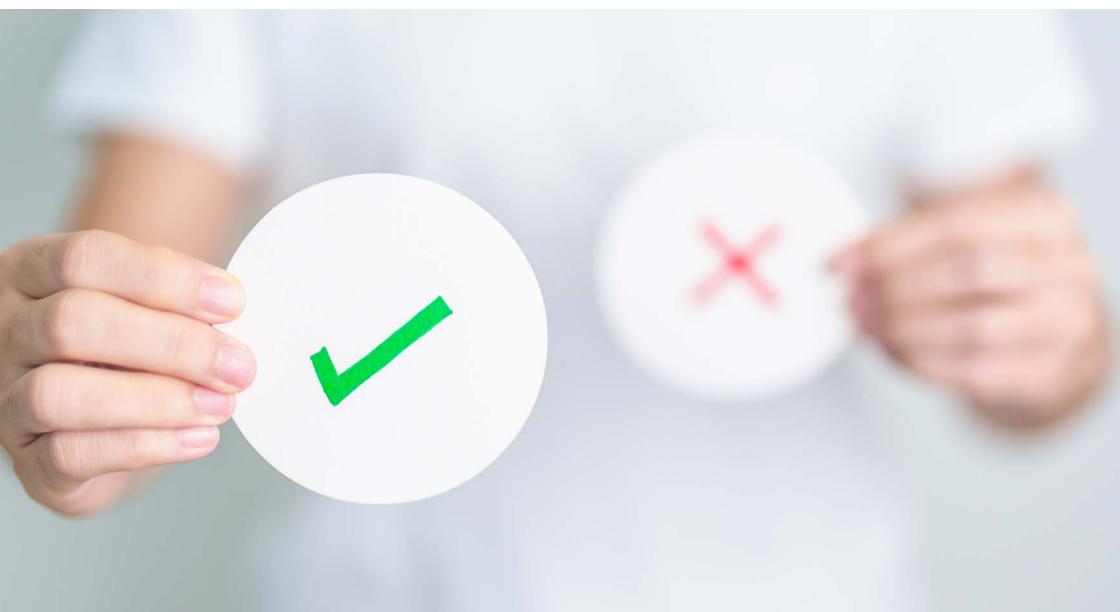
know what variations they might discover. For example, did you know that students can study a combined degree of Geography and Spanish & Latin American Studies? There are thousands of course opportunities available.

Tip two: Make a list of what's important

Create a mind map, table, spreadsheet – whatever works best for your young person to visualise all the different options. Together, you can prioritise what's most important to them, which will help them to narrow their choices. Does the course offer the modules they're interested in? Is the location exciting to them? Does the university offer the facilities they need? Whatever it is, make it clear which universities tick these boxes. During this activity, you may even start to see which are the true contenders for their UCAS application.

Tip three: Take a look around

The biggest recommendation is to visit the university if you can. It isn't always possible to do this, Open Days might not fit into calendars easily; some universities may be quite a distance away; or you just don't have the means to get there. However, if you're able to, encourage your young person to go with you for a visit. There's something about stepping onto a campus for the first time, it can't be explained, but they'll know if it isn't the right fit or if it feels like it could be their new home for the next three or four years.



A guide to studying in Scotland

By Ailsa Mackay, UK Student Recruitment Officer at Heriot-Watt University

Your family may have visited Scotland on holiday, watched a world-class sporting event or attended one of the many cultural events and festivals held throughout the year. Scotland also has a huge amount to offer students, including a fantastic university education! So, what do you need to know if your young person is thinking about studying at a Scottish University?

With 600 years of excellence in education, Scotland boasts four out of the six oldest UK universities, as well as many modern institutions. In fact, the quality and structure of the education system in Scotland is renowned and has been replicated by many countries around the world, including the USA.

Four-year degrees

Typically, a degree in Scotland is four years long, designed for students coming to university with Scottish Highers. The first two years usually offer breadth of study, with the final two years providing the specialisation in their subject. Although A Level students can study many degrees over three years, just as they would elsewhere, the four-year degree structure is a very popular choice, and it offers some advantages:

- The first year of study can provide A level students with flexibility on entry requirements as subject requirements may not be as restrictive.
- Breadth of subject choice in the first two years of study provides students with the chance to explore academic areas before committing to their degree specialism.
- The breadth of knowledge gained before specialising in later years of study provides a chance to improve and develop study skills. This breadth of study is also valued by employers.

“ Scottish universities are diverse and inclusive, offering a warm welcome to over 50,000 students from more than 180 countries each year. ”



Photo credit: Heriot-Watt University

A four-year degree provides time to mature and develop as a young adult. Students can get to grips with university life and living independently while making the most of the student experience.

Funding worries

You may also have questions about tuition fees, particularly if your young person is considering a four-year degree option. Don't worry, the application process for tuition and maintenance loans for study at a Scottish university are the same as if the student was studying elsewhere in the UK and you can apply for each year of your degree. Applications for finance are made to your home nation Student Finance agency. Many Scottish universities also offer bursaries and scholarships to students from outside of Scotland, so it's a great idea to do some research on what's available. This information can be found on university websites.

It's not all haggis and ceilidhs!

Lastly, will your young person fit in? Of course. Scottish universities are diverse and inclusive, offering a warm welcome to over 50,000 students from more than 180 countries each year. Scotland also boasts some of the safest cities in the UK to be a student. And it's not all haggis and ceilidhs! There really is something for everyone, with easy access to vibrant cities, beaches and the great outdoors. Students aged under 22 years-old can take advantage of free bus travel to make the most of their leisure time and our cities are well connected by rail and train to the rest of the UK.

A guide to studying in Wales

By Rhiannon Smith, Marketing Officer at Study in Wales

Welsh universities have strong reputations for research and teaching, and an impressive track record on graduate employability. Students who attend university in Wales should expect a culture of academic excellence at international institutions and a fun, affordable lifestyle in stunning natural surroundings.

The nation of 3.1 million may be small, but it punches well above its weight. The history of higher education in Wales began in 1822 and the country has a long track record of innovation. The hydrogen fuel cell, ball bearing and the equals sign are just a few examples of Welsh inventions.

Today, 200 years after the country's first higher education institution opened its doors, there are over 130,000 students enrolled at Wales' eight modern universities. Around 25,000 students are international, coming from 134 countries.

The tradition of groundbreaking research and first-class teaching persists, with Welsh universities offering qualifications that are respected by academics and employers across the world. Three Welsh universities feature in the top 500 of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024.

Community links

Welsh universities benefit from tight links with their local communities and the fields of business and technology. One of the best things about studying in Wales is that

employability is at the heart of all academic programmes. Universities partner with leading companies, which means students receive the very best career-focused education. As well as the careers services on offer, Welsh universities have ongoing projects available for students each year. A range of volunteering and work-placement opportunities give students the chance to upskill, get outside their comfort zones and really discover their passions.

High student satisfaction

Students coming to Wales have one of the highest chances of being offered valuable and relevant jobs after graduating. To support graduating students, universities in Wales offer work experience, careers guidance and opportunities with industry partners. Impressive employability rates are just one reason students are turning to Wales, or Cymru (the nation's Welsh name). The universities in Wales consistently perform above the UK average for student satisfaction. In the most recent Whatuni Student Choice Awards, Welsh universities took four places in the UK's top 25 institutions.

The unique lifestyle in Wales also entices students to study there. Compared to many other parts of the UK, the cost of living in Wales is low, with the price of accommodation, shopping and entertainment typically more affordable.

Mountains, valleys, forests and beaches...

Another key attraction is the country's landscape. With mountains, valleys, forests and lakes a common sight, around a quarter of Wales lies within one of its many national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Added to this is the warm Welsh welcome students receive from famously friendly locals. There is always a warm welcome for students, and a lot of our universities offer a smaller, more personal community to experience. But we have big cities too, of course, and your young person will never be far from a beach or a mountain to climb. Wales offers students not only the possibility of an amazing university experience, but a prosperous future, too.



A guide to university entry qualifications

By Ellie Campbell, Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Access Officer at Keele University

As you help your young person make decisions about their future, it can be difficult ensuring that the qualifications they choose are accepted for entry to university. Here is some guidance on the typical qualifications.

A levels

A levels are the most popular qualification to study in the UK and there are currently a staggering 85 different subject areas to choose from! A levels follow the format of learning content in a classroom setting for two years, with the AS year being Year 12 and Year 13 involving final exams/assessment.

Results are expressed in grades with A* as the highest and E as the lowest. Students will drop some AS levels after Year 12, but these are still important as they'll contribute to the total points your young person can apply to uni with. AS levels are now equal to 40% of an A level, so an A level 'A' grade is worth 48 UCAS points and an AS level 'A' grade is worth 20 points.

BTECs

BTECs (British Technology and Education Council) are work-related qualifications which include classroom-based learning and are completed over the course of two years. Currently, there are over 2,000 different BTEC course options that span 16 sectors. There are three levels of a BTEC qualification: a BTEC Extended Diploma, equivalent to three A levels; a BTEC Diploma, equivalent to two A levels;

and a BTEC Subsidiary Diploma, equivalent to one A level. BTECs are graded on a scale from Distinction* to Pass.

T Levels

T Levels are new technical qualifications that are equivalent to three A Levels. T Levels were introduced in September 2020 and currently offer 16 different courses, with a target of 24 available to study by September 2024. As part of a T Level qualification, students study in the classroom approximately 80% of the time and spend the remaining 20% on an industry placement to help them gain insight into future careers. Students are assessed using a variety of different methods. T Levels are graded in four tiers: Distinction*, Distinction, Merit and Pass. As of May 2024, 162 institutions accept T Levels for entry into university.

International Baccalaureate

Students study six different subjects, three of which must be studied at 'higher level' and the other three at 'standard level'. The IB, as it is also known, is graded on a scale of one to seven, with seven being the highest. Scores are then added together and used for entry to university. Students must achieve at least a 4 in their higher and standard level subjects in order to pass the diploma.

The IB also has 'Core' requirements which require students to study the Theory of Knowledge, complete 150 hours of Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) and write a 4,000 word Extended Essay. This core allows students to reflect on the nature of knowledge, explore an area of their choice in detail and integrate their passions outside the classroom into their diploma. They can achieve up to three additional points for these core areas.



A higher education jargon buster

By Emily Durrant, Senior Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Essex

Understanding higher education jargon can be a task all in itself! I've created this guide to help you make sense of the common words and phrases that your young person might come across as they explore their higher education options.

UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is an independent charity which provides the UK's shared online undergraduate application service.

Undergraduate

A student studying for a foundation or bachelor's degree.

Bachelor's degree

The most common type of undergraduate degree. These are typically three-year programmes, although this can vary depending on the course and university. There are different types available, most commonly BA (Bachelor of Arts), BSc (Bachelor of Science), BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) and LLB (Bachelor of Laws).

Foundation year

The first level of study available at university is a foundation year, designed to improve academic skills and subject-specific knowledge. These can be standalone one-year courses or integrated as part of a Bachelor's degree.

Postgraduate

A student who has gained an undergraduate degree and is studying towards a higher degree, such as a Master's or PhD.

Firm choice

If applying to university via UCAS, students can apply to up to five universities. From the offers they receive, they will then select their firm choice. This is the applicant's first choice of university.

Insurance choice

Alongside their firm choice university, applicants can select an insurance university. This is their second choice and will usually have lower entry requirements than their firm choice.

Clearing

Typically opening at the beginning of July each year, Clearing is where universities open up any remaining spaces on their courses. Students can apply directly to the university via Clearing once they have their final qualifications and may use this option if they were not accepted by their firm or insurance choices, or have simply changed their mind about their chosen university or course.

Open Days

These events provide the opportunity for students to visit universities and often include tours, subject taster talks and the option to meet staff and students. Attending an Open Day will help your young person learn more about higher education and make informed choices.

Personal statement

This forms part of your young person's university application, which is submitted via UCAS. The personal statement is their opportunity to personalise their application and demonstrate their enthusiasm and passion for their subject.

Scholarships and bursaries

Non-repayable financial support for students who meet certain criteria or eligibility.

Student finance

Full-time UK undergraduate students can apply to Student Finance England (SFE) for tuition fee and maintenance loans.



SFE

Teachers or careers advisers tend to use this abbreviation when referring to Student Finance England, a partnership between the Department for Education (DfE) and Student Loans Company (SLC) which provides financial support. Your young person can apply for tuition fees, maintenance loans and some grants and bursaries through their website.

Tuition fee loan

Students applying for student finance receive a tuition fee loan from the government (SFE) each year to cover the cost of their studies. These are paid directly to the university and are not means-tested for the majority of full-time, three-year undergraduate courses. The current tuition fee loan equates to £9,250 per year.

Maintenance loan

These funds are available to cover living expenses, such as accommodation. The loan is paid each term, directly into the student's bank account. Unlike the tuition fee loan, the maintenance loan is means-tested, so the amount your young person will receive will depend on your household income.

Joint honours

Joint honours degrees combine two or more subjects and can cross disciplines and faculties. Joint honours courses are a great option for those who enjoy different subjects.

Sandwich programmes

These provide students with the chance to incorporate a study abroad or placement year into their university course. Typically extending the course length by one year, this option can provide a unique opportunity to study overseas or gain work experience to enhance employability.

Degree apprenticeships

An alternative route into higher education. With the support of an existing employer, students can study towards a degree while working and earning. Tuition fees are usually covered by the employer.

Note from UniTasterDays

Search a large database of university Jargon on our Jargon Buster: <https://www.unitasterdays.com/jargonbuster>



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An introduction to the allied health professions

By Marc Alner, Student Engagement and Recruitment Manager at Birmingham City University

Every year, thousands of students apply to courses such as medicine and pharmacy. These degrees are fantastic for those interested in becoming doctors or pharmacologists, among others, but competition can be very high. Quite often, students have not considered the wide variety of alternative routes they can pursue or are simply unaware that they even exist.

What are the allied health professions?

If your young person is considering the options available to them, it's important not to forget some of the lesser known – but no less important – careers in healthcare. The allied health professions (AHP) comprise of fourteen different areas of practice, making up the third largest workforce in the NHS. From operating department practitioners and speech and language therapists to therapeutic radiographers and dieticians, the skill sets required are often very similar to those required for medicine and pharmacy degrees.

These types of degrees are regulated by either the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or General Osteopathic Council (GOC). This offers students the opportunity to spend time on an industrial placement within their three years of study. They'll become familiar with various medical environments and

experience life as a professionally autonomous healthcare practitioner. Due to the collaborative nature of the healthcare sector, many of the AHPs find themselves working closely with doctors and surgeons.

Financial support for health programmes

Financial support for students studying for these degrees is also a factor worth considering. The introduction of the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) in 2020 provided students on eligible courses with a training grant of at least £5,000 in each year of study (subject to terms of the LSF). You can find out more about these on page 51.

It's important to stress the importance these professions play within the healthcare sector. The work that has been done to bring attention to these pivotal roles has resulted in a welcome increase to the study of these degrees at university. Health Education England's campaigns have included raising the profile of the AHPs in the military, including roles such as radiographers and operating department practitioners.

“ The allied health professions comprise of fourteen different areas of practice, making up the third largest workforce in the NHS. „



Where to study? A guide to the different types of universities

By Dr Morag Duffin, Head of Access and Participation at The University of Law

The higher education system in the UK is very diverse and your young person can study at a wide range of institutions. From traditional universities and further education colleges with higher education provisions, to smaller and specialist institutions. As a result of this diverse range of institutions and their different modes of teaching and learning, students can choose the setting that best suits their individual preferences.

When it comes to choosing what and where to study, the 'what' should always come first. What course does your young person want to study? Once they know that, they might have the difficult but exciting prospect of deciding where to study it. A primary consideration is what the course is like at each institution i.e., the content of the course. Does it cover the topics they're most interested in?

It's also important to note that different higher education providers might teach the courses in different ways. Some institutions might focus on the more theoretical aspects of the course, while others embed more modes of application and research. Understanding the different types of universities will enable them to make the best decision.

What is your young person looking for?

Some questions to consider when thinking about the type of university:

Do they have any preferences on location?

This may be influenced by family or work commitments. It's important to note that if your young person would prefer to study online, there are some institutions that provide a 100% online model. This could allow them to remain at home but still study their chosen course.

Are they looking for a traditional academic or a vocational/professional university?

Everyone has a preferred style of learning and different types of universities will accommodate these. Going to a university that better suits a student's style of learning will help them to achieve their goals. For example, if they prefer project work as a mode of learning, they should look for a university course which doesn't place significant weight on end-of-year exams.

Do they like the idea of learning as part of a large or small cohort of students?

Attending a larger university will provide the conventional 'university' experience, while going to a smaller, more specialist institution, will mean smaller class sizes where your young person may receive more personal teaching.

Do they want a residential or hands-on experience?

If your young person is looking to study Makeup Artistry, they could study at a specialist institution such as Arts University Bournemouth, a traditional university such as Solent University or at a further education college such as Bury College. However, this variety isn't just for applied courses. Law, for instance, can be studied at a traditional university but also at a specialist university, such as The University of Law.

The best way your young person can approach these choices is to keep their mind open to all types of institutions and courses. They can find out more by reading prospectuses, social media posts, attending Open Days and talking to current students.



Reasons to study the arts

By Dale Hurst, Digital Content Officer at Arts University Bournemouth

If your young person has said they're interested in studying an artistic or creative degree, we recognise that you may have some questions or concerns. Whether that's about their career options after graduation, or the competitive nature of the creative industries. I have put together some reasons why your young person should study the arts.

1. They won't be narrowing their career options

I'll begin by putting some minds at ease. While the creative industries are competitive, your young person will be just as likely to get a job within them as they would if they studied a more general degree. If anything, with the wide-spanning crossovers between the creative sector and those including [media, IT, marketing, advertising and PR](#) (to name a few), your young person could actually be adding to their options by studying an arts degree.

2. Transferable skills

Even if a job in their desired creative industry doesn't come along right after graduation, studying an arts degree will give your young person plenty of transferable skills, turning them into desirable, employable candidates. Artistic and creative degrees encourage collaboration and teamwork, a self-starter mindset, and develop skills in critical and innovative thinking and problem-solving. On the other hand, they will also take away invaluable entrepreneurial and self-promotion skills, which will serve them well if they want to pursue a freelance career or start their own business.

3. Build confidence

Many creative degrees encourage students to tap into their passions and their favourite subjects. They may even diversify or discover new causes that are important to them. Projects can often be practice-based, such as short films and animations, paintings, and sculptures, with not as much focus on essays and other academic outputs. The freedom

to explore something that they enjoy can help your young person express themselves more confidently.

In addition, some creative courses lean toward collaboration – either with other degrees in-house or the local communities. Opportunities like this can help build confidence in social and team-working situations.

“ Perhaps most important of all, pursuing a degree in something your young person enjoys or that they're passionate about can have huge benefits to their mental health. ”

Study at a specialist university

If your young person is strongly considering a creative degree, it's important to know that the UK is home to several specialist arts institutions, equipped to provide the best training in their chosen field. They will be taught by people with industry experience and a network of contacts, and will work with industry-standard equipment, all of which will be invaluable when preparing for a career further down the line.

What's more, the creative industries are all interconnected, with any single production potentially made up of multiple individual specialists working together. At a creative specialist university, your young person will not only develop the understanding that this collaboration is key to making them even more ready for industry, but they'll also develop these networks across the industries for future success.

Finally, while a larger institution may offer courses that cover a creative discipline quite broadly – for example, photography – a specialist university may give students the opportunity to specialise within a photography degree. This could be within advertising, documentary or fashion. It doesn't matter if they don't know what their specialism is right away – they may even discover it while they're studying!

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Image: Heather Emery - BA (Hons) Commercial Photography

INTO

CAREERS

What are the differences between sixth form and university?

By Ashleigh Little, Head of Post-16 Outreach and Recruitment at the University of Sunderland

University is an adjustment from what your young person has been used to at school or college. The key to this transition is preparation. Here are five key differences they might experience and some advice about how you can support them with the upcoming changes.

1. Location

Many university students will move to a new part of the country and become part of a larger institution than they're used to. Open Days are a great way to meet staff and current students, visit the university campus, check out student accommodation and explore the local area. Most universities also offer applicant or offer holder days where they can find out about courses in more detail and meet other applicants. If they can't attend on-campus events, university websites provide photos, videos and virtual tours of facilities and accommodation options.

2. More independence

Your young person will experience a new sense of independence at university, helping them build crucial life skills. They'll be responsible for applying for student finance to cover their course fees and living costs, managing their money, attending lectures and completing academic work. They may also get a part-time job, which they'll need to balance with their studies.

Your support and advice around finance and budgeting will be invaluable; you could prompt them to apply for student finance in good time, research university bursaries and scholarships and help them to budget effectively.

3. Different teaching methods

Learning at university is different to school or college – there's a greater focus on independent learning. Your young person will be expected to attend lectures and seminars, as well as conduct independent study. Time management, attendance and commitment are important skills to help students adapt to this new way of learning.

They can find out more about teaching methods by chatting with academic staff and current students at an Open Day. They could also do some research on university websites and on platforms such as The Student Room.

4. Managing deadlines

Students need to be organised to stay on top of deadlines. You could help your young person to prepare for this by giving them a calendar, planner or online diary to set their own reminders. It could be a haircut, dentist appointment or a friend's birthday – anything that gives them responsibility. This organisation and time management will help them to find a balance between their social life and their studies.

5. Course content

University courses are often structured differently from school or college courses. Your young person can find information about how a course operates, and the modules on offer, on university websites.

Many universities also offer foundation courses, which can bridge the gap between school or college and university study.

“ University is an adjustment from what your young person has been used to at school or college. The key to this transition is preparation. „

What is the University Alliance and how can they help parents and guardians?

By Heather Francis, Senior Student Recruitment Officer at the University of South Wales

What is the University Alliance?

The University Alliance represents 16 of the UK's leading technical and professional universities. Universities who are members of this group specialise in providing degree courses that align with industry needs. Through hands-on teaching and sector-relevant course content, they're producing graduates who are ready to work and who are highly employable.

Key facts about the University Alliance:

- Alliance universities are leaders in healthcare, engineering, social sciences, creative industries, business and computing.
- Alliance universities came top for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023.
- 95% of graduates from Alliance Universities were in work or another activity, such as further study, just 15 months after graduating. And 93% of those described what they were doing as 'meaningful'.
- Alliance universities are more likely to be rated gold for teaching excellence than universities in any other group, according to the government's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).
- 67% of research at Alliance universities is rated as internationally excellent or world-leading.

What are the benefits of studying at an Alliance university?

Alliance universities train students for jobs in industry, so the approach to teaching is very hands-on and practical. This often involves smaller class sizes and training using industry-standard equipment. The course will also have exposure to employers, through work placement

opportunities, teaching delivered by industry professionals or projects set by industry.

The assessment style also reflects this practical approach, with an emphasis on assessing practical projects rather than exams. Alliance universities also deliver excellent research, which means that students gain skills and knowledge that are at the cutting edge of their fields.

Applying to an Alliance university

Alliance universities accept a range of qualifications such as A levels, BTECs, T-Levels and more. The entry requirements for courses are often mid-tariff, meaning that they don't require high academic grades. Some students perceive this as an indicator that the course is not of high value, but this is not the case. Alliance universities are running courses that are not solely academic, so the entry requirements reflect this. Work experience is often the key to entry for these courses.

How can the University Alliance help parents and carers?

The process of finding the right course and university can be very stressful for students. As a parent or carer, it's important to be aware that there are different types of universities to suit different types of learners. There is a stereotype that going to university involves sitting in lecture theatres and taking exams. This isn't the case. There are world-renowned UK universities offering so much more than that, and many of them are part of the University Alliance.

When choosing a university to study at, it's important to consider what success means for the young person you're supporting. Commonly, students are told to aim for highly academic courses and so, subsequently, anything else feels like a failure. Far too often we speak to students who have been directed to alternative pathways and steered away from university altogether because they don't thrive in a traditional learning environment. These are often the students who will thrive in an Alliance university.

If exposure to industry and strong employment outcomes is important to your young person, I thoroughly recommend that you look at what University Alliance institutions have to offer. Book onto an Open Day to see first-hand how these institutions go beyond the lecture theatre.

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A member of the



Where to start when researching university options

By Sarah Wiltshire, Student Recruitment and Events Officer at the University of South Wales

With more than 50,000 undergraduate courses to choose from in the UK, finding where to start may seem daunting. However, there are lots of different exploration methods to find the right course and institution. It's important to remember that the right option is out there for everyone, but research is key.

Finding their niche

University is a chance for people to find their calling and future career. Do they want to become a midwife, where it's necessary to have a degree to advance? Or does a degree in film entice them to pursue their passion and create excellent network links?

Regardless of the career, it's important to ensure that going to university is the right choice for the young person you support. Trying to think of one career that they want to pursue may not come to them immediately, which is entirely normal. A good starting place would be to think about the subjects they're taking, or activities they participate in outside of school or college, and what they enjoy about them. Condensing their lists in this way will help them to avoid feeling overwhelmed. However, if there isn't something that jumps out, this may be a good opportunity to explore options.

So, they've found a subject, now what?

Finding a subject of interest is a great first step. However, no two courses are the same. Therefore, it's imperative that your young person does some research. Is there a particular course that they're interested in? Are there specific entry requirements for the course? Make the most of free resources, such as the UCAS website and university web pages.

Typing in keywords in the search tool will give them the most relevant information,

but your young person's school or college library or careers service will also have university prospectuses to flick through. This will give them a general feel for what the university is like. There may even be a UCAS exhibition coming up near you. These events get universities and other higher education providers in one place, from all over the UK, so that students can speak to them and gather plenty of information all at once.

Note from UniTasterDays

Search 100s of subject video guides for impartial subject introductions on the on-demand video platform: www.unitasterdays.com/ondemand

Location, location, location

Your young person may have now whittled down a long list to a few select institutions. However, there are still important elements to consider, such as location. Do they want to move 300 miles from home to a brand new city? Or do they want to stay at home and study locally? Location is such an important element, especially as it's where they'll call home for three years or more!

When looking at location, it's important to consider aspects such as cost of living, accommodation and transportation links. One of the best ways to do this is to attend Open Days. They're brilliant for weighing up both the course and the suitability of the university. After all, students never know how they feel about a certain place until they step foot on campus! Keep an eye out for travel bursaries, too – some universities offer them as a means to help you attend their visit days. You can find out more about these on page 53.

No pressure!

It's vital to remember that university is a big step towards your young person's future, regardless of the subject or location. Some may find the support a huge weight lifted off their shoulders, whereas others relish independence. Supporting them, no matter how significant that support is, will assist them in what can be a big life choice.

Key dates for applying to university

By Ethan-lee Mackay, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of South Wales

University is an exciting chapter in a young person's life, but applying for university comes with several deadlines which applicants need to consider before applying.

Applications

May

In May, students will be able to start their UCAS application on the UCAS Hub, ready for the next academic year of entry, but they won't be able to submit it yet. Many applicants will start this process at their school or college where they'll be given specific information to link their application to their school or college. Applicants will usually be able to choose up to five courses of study.

July

Applications for Conservatoires open in July, and students will be able to register, pay and submit their application. Conservatoires provide performance-based higher education, including music, drama, screen and production courses.

September

Applications open in September for the following year of entry. This is the earliest that university applications can be submitted for undergraduate courses.

Deadlines

October

The first deadline in October is the application deadline for conservatoire music applications. Applications for dance, drama and musical theatre courses may have different deadlines, so it's important to check the Conservatoires' websites to confirm.

There is also a deadline in October for applicants who wish to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, or for medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses at other universities.

January

The equal consideration deadline for undergraduate courses and most conservatoire undergraduate dance, drama or musical theatre courses is towards the end of January. The date will change each year, so it's important to check the UCAS website to find out when the deadline is for the year in which your young person wants to study. The equal consideration deadline means universities must consider all applications received by this time and courses cannot close before this date.

It's worth noting that all schools and colleges will have their own deadlines when they expect applicants to complete their UCAS application, usually between October half term and the December break. This gives advisers and teachers enough time to analyse applications and provide their references before the official deadline date.

Applicants can still apply to university after the January equal consideration deadline, right through until the September before they start university, providing the course they are interested in still has vacancies. However, applications can only be made in the traditional UCAS cycle until 30 June. Applications made through UCAS after this date will be processed through Clearing.

Receiving offers and the other options

February

From February, applicants can continue to apply to university through UCAS Extra. This is an option for applicants who have received offers from all five choices but declined them, perhaps because they've changed their mind about what or where to study. UCAS Extra is also for applicants who didn't receive any offers at all. UCAS Extra closes on July 4th - before Clearing commences.

March

Student finance applications open in March, ready for the upcoming academic year. Applicants must have completed their UCAS application prior to applying for student finance, however they do not need to have chosen their firm choice (first choice university) yet. Application deadlines for additional funding, such as scholarships and bursaries, are unique to the university and it is therefore recommended that they research their individual websites for further information.

May

Applicants who applied by the January equal consideration deadline should have heard back from all their choices by May. Providing they've received all their decisions, they must decide which university is their firm choice by the deadline indicated to them. If they wish, they can also select an insurance choice. Ideally, this should be for a course with lower entry requirements or offer conditions. All other course offers will be automatically declined.

July

In July, towards the end of the UCAS cycle, Clearing begins. By this time, courses are filling up but applicants can still apply through Clearing, providing that courses still have vacancies and they meet the entry criteria. To apply during Clearing, students apply directly to the universities. Most universities make instant offers during this time, unless an interview or audition is required. Clearing officially closes in October, but some universities may have different deadlines depending on when courses fill up.

“ University is an exciting chapter in a young person’s life, but applying for university comes with several deadlines which applicants need to consider before applying. ”



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Fact or fiction? Myth busting at university

By Matt Spink, Graduate Student Recruitment Assistant/Marketing at the University of Salford

Your young person is heading off to university: an incredible achievement that can leave you feeling extremely excited but also very nervous. However, a lot of the nerves tend to come from myths and misconceptions, which more often than not turn out to be exactly that, MYTH.

This article aims to debunk some common misconceptions about university, hopefully easing those nerves and helping you continue to get excited for the new chapter in your young person's life.

'Students get thrown in at the deep end.'

University may be considered a step-up from a student's time at college, but it's not one that's expected to happen overnight. Universities are aware that, for many students, it's a huge change in lifestyle, both personally and academically. Whether a student is moving far from home or staying local to the area, whether they're commuting to university or moving into halls, the change is still one that takes time to adapt to. This is mirrored on the academic side of things: students are given the time to adapt to this change, slowly being introduced to new ways of being taught and assessed instead of it being thrown at them all in one go.

'Students don't get any support at university.'

'Independent study' is a key difference between college and university, but this term can perpetuate the myth that students have to solve problems on their own and aren't supported. This is not the case.

Whether support comes from peers, academic staff or dedicated teams within an institution, there are plenty of options available to students who are struggling. Support typically covers everything from financial support and careers advice, to mental health and wellbeing. This is available right the way through a student's journey, from the day they move in until the day they graduate. Students are not alone at university.

'It's difficult to make friends at university.'

As your young person takes the step towards university, you may feel like you're sending a small fish into a very large pond. How will they make friends at such a large institution? Will they become lost in the background? These worries are often felt by parents, supporters and new students alike.

These fears though can actually become the first thing they have in common with other students and end up being the building blocks of friendships that last a lifetime. Your young person will have plenty of opportunities to make friendships, whether that be through their course, a society they join or even a spontaneous day out with a housemate. These are all situations and environments that can spark an unbreakable friendship at university.

Hopefully this article has eased some of your nerves and allowed you to get a little more excited for the journey your young person is about to embark on. Support services at universities are available for anyone that needs them, and this includes parents, carers and supporters. Do get in touch with student support teams and take advantage of the guidance and expertise on offer.



A guide to degree apprenticeships

By Carol Rogers, Degree Apprenticeships Manager at Harper Adams University

Following the completion of their A levels (or equivalent), there are various options available for your young person to gain a start in their chosen career. For some professions, the only available route was a university degree. But degree apprenticeships are shaking that up.

There are over 100 Level 6 undergraduate apprenticeships available at higher or degree level, including occupations such as a Chartered Surveyor, Youth Worker, Building Control Surveyor, Food Industry Technical Professional and many more.

What is a degree apprenticeship and what are the benefits of completing one?

A degree apprenticeship offers an alternative route to gaining a higher-level qualification and opens possibilities for many more students where university is not the right choice.

Benefits include funding; the apprenticeship is funded by the apprenticeship levy, so students do not need to apply for a student loan.

Apprenticeship standards are set by employers within industry and outline key knowledge, skills and behaviours for a particular role. These standards are mapped to apprenticeship programmes, with the intention that apprentices work towards gaining relevant work experience through a structured programme.

Degree apprenticeships offer students the opportunity to gain work experience while completing their degree. Many of the Harper Adams current Chartered Surveyor apprentices say they benefit from building networks and work experience early in their careers – where going to university would not give them the same opportunity.

The structure

Apprenticeships follow a similar structure regardless of level:

- An application process which includes assessments to make sure the chosen course is appropriate and at the right level
- A structured programme of learning while working and earning a wage, supported by the employer and the training provider
- An independent assessment at the end of the programme to confirm competence of knowledge, skills and behaviours within the apprenticeship standard. It can be difficult for a student to balance work, study and life but the apprenticeship regulations require that an apprentice has protected time within their contracted hours for study and training – currently six hours per week. This includes attending university tutorials, work shadowing and other learning activities relevant to the apprenticeship standards.

The structure of training will differ for each apprenticeship. At Harper Adams University, we have block weeks of teaching throughout the year, where apprentices join us on campus for their lectures and tutorials. Other universities or training providers will have day release programmes and some may be remote.

Entry requirements

Entry requirements are typically the same as universities, although relevant work experience is also considered. The application process itself differs from university and isn't operated through UCAS. The employer contacts the university to confirm they've employed an apprentice and we then go through the application process.

An apprenticeship is a job first. The employer chooses a university to work with for the degree element of the programme, so the first step is to find an employer that is willing to support the apprenticeship programme.

The 'Find an apprenticeship' website is useful for finding vacancies across England. Students can see what's available in their area for a particular career. We also encourage students to approach companies as well, to see if they would support an apprenticeship. This is something that many current apprentices have done.



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Apprentice voice: the differences between degree apprenticeships and the traditional university route

An interview with Roisin Byrne, Apprentice and Assistant Design Manager at Kier Group

Higher and degree apprenticeships are on the rise. The latest government figures show an increase of 9.1% in 2023/24, and they accounted for 35.3% of all apprenticeship starts. If you've ever wondered how a degree apprenticeship compares to a traditional undergraduate degree, and whether it's right for your young person, then read on.

Here Roisin explains the key differences between university and degree apprenticeships and how enrolling on Kier's construction site management degree apprenticeship with Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) changed the direction of her career.

Can you tell us what you did before you started the degree apprenticeship and what made you join?

I was working as a project coordinator for a telecommunications company, specifically working with the civil dig teams to organise the infrastructure build for fibre connections. At the time, Kier was offering several apprenticeships and when I read about what was being offered, I knew it was a fantastic opportunity not to be missed. Apprenticeships are made for individuals, just like me, who didn't go to university but wanted to carry on learning while earning.

In your opinion, what are some of the key differences between the degree apprenticeship and the traditional degree route?

Firstly, the apprenticeship route allows the student to study, in most cases, free of charge while earning a wage and learning on and off the job.

Secondly, because you work and study, an apprenticeship negates the pressure of having to do both separately, without the support of your workplace or needing to limit your work hours to study.

Photo credit: Kier Group



Thirdly, it's given me lots of personal freedom and opened many doors for me professionally already.

How has your degree apprenticeship shaped your career?

I find that the more I learn, the faster I work. Being able to help other design managers when they have several information requests – often all at once – is really rewarding. And the information I pick up in lectures helps my decision-making at work – employers benefit from degree apprenticeships as much as employees.

All my design manager colleagues are very knowledgeable and supportive, but when

I have the knowledge to make decisions independently, it makes a difference to a project and boosts my confidence.

Plus, Kier has put so much faith and resources into me, which in turn makes me feel secure, happy and motivated in my role.

Did you experience any negatives?

It's difficult for me to highlight any negatives with the apprenticeship schemes because it has genuinely changed my life, and to have an employer like Kier that offers apprenticeships is a huge help because they're so supportive. When I first applied, I had a feeling it would be a really good opportunity, but now I'm here, I realise that it's been the best decision I've ever made.

“ When I first applied, I had a feeling it would be a really good opportunity, but now I'm here, I realise that it's been the best decision I've ever made. ”



Flying the nest: a guide to university accommodation

By Emma Churchill, School and College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter

For many young people, choosing to go to university will result in them living away from home for the first time. This is an exciting but also daunting time for your young person, especially as they start to navigate the various accommodation options. Setting aside time to do research early on will help your young person feel more confident, making their transition much easier.

To get started, we recommend searching university websites to find their dedicated accommodation webpages. Here, you'll find information about the accommodation on offer, as well as the support provided. You'll also find that accommodation comes in many forms, some of which will suit your young person more than others. Some options include:

University owned or managed accommodation

This is a popular choice for first-year undergraduate students. It is often located close to the university itself and tends to be set up specifically for students at that institution. There's normally a wide range of options available to suit all needs and budgets. Typically, applications are made directly to the institution.

Private halls

Private halls are like university managed accommodation but they're managed by private providers instead and designed specifically for students. Students could be living in flats with students from different institutions if they're in a location where there are multiple higher education providers. Applications are usually made directly to the provider.

Private student housing

This is a popular option for students after their first year. Private housing provides the

opportunity to live with friends and experience the next step to independence.

Living at home

Going to university does not necessarily mean that your young person must leave home, particularly if you live within a commutable distance from their chosen university.

Research time

After researching what's available, ask your young person to reflect on the following questions to help them find their perfect home from home:

- What's important to them? Consider cooking, distance from university/town, size of room, the facilities (e.g., ensuite room, kitchen etc.) and how many people they are happy to share these with.
- How much can they afford to spend?
- Is the accommodation accredited by a regulator?
- How many weeks do they need a contract? Some universities offer year-long or academic year contracts. You may also see term-time-only contracts where students are required to move out over Christmas and Easter holidays.
- What do students have to say about it? If a university has a platform, such as UniBuddy, make use of this to ask questions directly to current students.

Finally, I would recommend students visit the accommodation in person or attend virtual events. This offers the chance to ask any questions, however small, to help you both feel confident about accommodation decisions. And remember, it won't be long before they're back home again, asking for their favourite home cooked meal!

“For many young people, choosing to go to university will result in them living away from home for the first time. This is an exciting but also a daunting time - for the student as well as you, their parent or guardian. ”

A guide to university events

By **Melissa Grindon, Employment Officer at Liverpool Hope University**

As a parent or guardian, it's important and reassuring to know that your young person is going to an institution where they feel comfortable, safe and confident.

However, despite an endless amount of information available online, it's always key to experience a pre-application event and take advantage of what's on offer. Here are just a few events you may wish to consider.

Higher education fairs

If you're unsure of where to begin with supporting your young person, a higher education fair is a great place to start. Fairs will give your young person the opportunity to speak to university ambassadors and course leaders and will help them to gain an initial perspective on student life. There are also seminars dedicated to areas such as personal statements, interviews, auditions and international opportunities.

Exhibitors provide plenty of information and materials, so you'll have plenty of resources to reflect on after you've left the event.

Open Days

At the start of the application process, take note of each institution's Open Days. An enormous amount of content is covered during an Open Day. There's not only subject-based talks about course content, but

sessions focusing on aspects such as student finance, student development, wellbeing and accommodation, too.

Academic meetings and campus tours

If you can't make an Open Day, universities also offer one-on-one academic meetings and campus/accommodation tours for families. These can lessen the pressure of attending a larger event, allowing your young person to really take in the surroundings, as well as give them the advantage of speaking to a member of the recruitment team about any concerns or questions they may have.

Applicant days

Applicant days are similar to Open Days, but are more catered towards students who are holding an offer with a university and getting closer to making their final decision. Universities also host subject tasters to give your young person a chance to experience a day in the life of someone on their degree course and even meet students currently studying the programme.

Extra guidance

If you still find yourself unsure, or simply need more from potential institutions, many universities have parent and guardian portals or information pages on their websites. Some universities present online webinars and question and answer sessions to give you the opportunity to raise your queries.

There's plenty of support available from recruitment teams for you and the person you support, and university staff are more than happy to provide their insight and knowledge, as you embark on your higher education journey together.



What is a university summer school?

By Charlie Smith, Student Recruitment Manager at the University of Bath

University summer schools offer an invaluable opportunity for students considering higher education to gain insights that support their university decision-making. They can also really help your young person to prepare for the transition from school or college to university study.

Most summer schools are aimed at students who have just finished Year 12 and are timed to coincide with the period when your young person will be exploring their university options and preparing to complete an application. While some summer schools charge an attendance fee, many are free to attend, especially where they are aimed at students from backgrounds that are traditionally under-represented in higher education.

A summer school offers a perfect opportunity for students to get a real taste of university life by staying in university accommodation, eating meals in university outlets, spending time with current university students and sampling university facilities.

Introducing subject-specific summer schools

Summer schools which are focused on a specific academic discipline will provide your young person with direct experience of what it's like to study their chosen subject at university. This can be a great experience, whether your young person is planning to study an entirely new subject (perhaps medicine or engineering), or looking to understand how a subject they're interested in will differ at degree level.

Your young person will meet lots of like-minded students who share a passion for their chosen subject, as well as have the chance to chat with and learn from university academics and current undergraduate students. This could give a real boost to their pre-university

studies, as well as provide valuable insights to strengthen their personal statement and prepare them for their chosen course. Some universities even offer reduced or alternate offers to eligible students who complete a summer school that's related to the subject they wish to study. You can check individual university websites for details.

Student experience summer schools

If your young person already knows where they want to study, they could check whether the university offers more general summer schools focused on student experience. They could stay in university accommodation, use the university facilities, perhaps sample student societies and have an opportunity to explore the university and local area. They'll also benefit from getting to know current students to hear their perspective on the university. Hopefully, they'll also make some friends who they'll meet again during Welcome Week.

It's still really important for them to attend the university's Open Day to understand the specifics of the course, but a summer school focused on student experience could provide your young person with first-hand experience of what it would be like to live and study at their chosen university.

Summer schools for specific groups

Universities also offer summer schools aimed at specific groups. For example, at the University of Bath, we run an autism summer school for Year 11 students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, an international summer school for overseas students, and a sports summer school for Year 12 students who are involved in competitive sport and from a background that is under-represented in higher education.

Note from UniTasterDays

You and the student(s) you're supporting can search a comprehensive directory of summer schools and residential events at www.unitasterdays.com/university-residentials

What are university taster days and masterclasses?

By Carl Griffiths, Head of Student Recruitment at Harper Adams University

As a parent, it can seem like there's an endless stream of potential events and activities for your young person to sign up to at university. I expect it's hard to know what's best when balancing travel time, costs and time out of school. However, enabling a prospective student to engage with a taster day or masterclass at a university can be hugely beneficial.

What are they?

For many students, a university taster day or university masterclass (or the other myriad of names for these events) may be the first opportunity for your young person to test the water of their chosen subject.

Many subjects may sound familiar, others not so much, so it can be daunting to try and understand what to expect from a degree without getting a true sense of what it entails. On their own, a prospectus or an Open Day won't provide the depth to help your young person choose between university A or B, or course X or Y, but a taster day or masterclass may help bring to life the teaching style, environment and facilities.

What are the benefits?

Taking your young person to experience these activities can reassure or reaffirm (or even dissuade) their subject choices. They're an opportunity for them to engage with the learning that the university offers,

do a mini deep dive of their subject of interest and hopefully ensure they're making the right decisions. It may be an opportunity for your young person to understand how their subject links to other degrees in allied course areas and open their options to things they may not have explored, but might also interest them. This is also a chance to meet academics and students and potential future peers.

The experience can be beneficial during the application process, too. Your young person can talk about their experience as part of their personal statement, describing what they got out of it. It will demonstrate their dedication to exploring their subject in their own time, off their own back and in greater rigour and depth. This can also give them something to talk about with genuine vim and vigour at interviews.

If travel distances, costs or time is an issue, then online events could be the way forward. These may not have quite the impact of in-person activities, but they can still provide insights that help a student to make well-informed decisions and show their commitment to learning and development.

Masterclasses and taster days are great, unique experiences, but it's important to not just collect them like Pokémon cards. Identify with your young person which events match their interests and add value and knowledge to their future choices.

Note from UnitasterDays

You and the student(s) you're supporting can find out more and search a comprehensive directory of taster events and masterclasses at www.unitasterdays.com/university-taster-events



UNDERGRADUATE OPEN DAYS



Sheffield Hallam's undergraduate open days are a chance to find out about the University, courses and the city.

- Attend subject area talks
- Take a tour of the city, campuses and facilities
- See examples of accommodation
- Speak to course tutors

Staff and advisers will also be on hand to chat about funding options, applying and how we support our students.

Find dates and book a place at

shu.ac.uk/open



What can parents expect at a university Open Day?

By Selena Lockett, Student Recruitment Officer at Swansea University

Supporting your young person as they navigate their university options can sometimes feel overwhelming. Amid so many decisions, Open Days are a great opportunity to gain an insight into the academic and student experience that different institutions offer. This article outlines how Open Days can help ease the transition and clarify what you can expect from attending as a parent or guardian.

Attend Open Day subject sessions

Universities run subject-specific talks to provide prospective students with a taster of their study experience. These sessions are usually attended by parents as well as students and are a good opportunity to gather more information about your young person's subject of interest, ask questions and meet academics. Some subject sessions may also include a tour of the academic facilities to inform attendees of the unique selling points of their university.

Explore the campus and facilities

Open Days are a great way to get to grips with a new campus and get a 'feel' for the university. Universities offer guided campus tours, opportunities to explore the library, hospitality hot spots and the sports facilities. There is also likely to be an opportunity to meet the Students' Union and find out more about societies and the student life.

Finding a home from home

Many universities have various accommodation options available, all with varying fees and benefits. Considering factors such as budget, shared or en-suite bathrooms and the proximity to the student's faculty buildings can help narrow down their choices.

Accommodation viewings are available on the day and can help your young person visualise their prospective living situation during their studies.

Talk support and wellbeing

Disability, mental health, finance and employability support teams will be on hand to answer any questions and provide further information about the services your young person will have access to throughout their time at university. Meeting with central welfare teams can reassure you with the knowledge that they'll have access to consistent and accessible support.

My top three tips for parents attending a university Open Day

Tip 1: Check your itinerary!

University Open Days are typically packed with activities throughout the day and these can sometimes overlap. Planning ahead of time ensures you and your young person get to experience the Open Day in its entirety. You can even split up activities to cover more ground. Make sure you have copies of the event information to hand, it'll help to streamline your day.

Tip 2: Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Parents and students often have different queries and concerns when it comes to university. Preparing some questions and highlighting your main research points is advised and welcomed. Staff, students and academics will be on hand to share their lived experiences with the university and provide insight into day-to-day student life.

Tip 3: Make an experience out of it!

Open Days also give you an opportunity to travel and explore new places. After a long drive, and an active day of research, an overnight stay and opportunity to further explore the local area is a great way to unwind and get better acquainted with the town or city your young person might live in.

“ Open Days are a great opportunity to gain an insight into the academic and student experience that different institutions offer. ”

Preparing for university exhibitions

By Carly Outerbridge, Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Access Officer at Keele University

Preparing your young person for what they can expect at a university exhibition is key to avoiding the grab-and-run or the “erm, I don’t know what to say” conversations that we sometimes experience as higher education advisers. We recognise a hall or exhibition venue full of other students, teachers and unfamiliar faces might be intimidating, but if your young person knows what to expect from the day, they’re bound to feel more comfortable. Following the steps below will help them to prepare.

It’s all about options

Your young person should spend some time thinking about their next steps before the event and be reassured that they don’t need to have an exact idea of what or where to study. It can be handy to create a shortlist of the universities that they’re keen to speak to though.

“Preparing your young person is key to avoiding the grab-and-run conversations that we sometimes experience as higher education advisers. ,”

No question is too big or small

Chances are we’ve been asked the same questions plenty of times before, so your young person doesn’t have to feel anxious about asking us their big, or small, questions. It’s also important that they don’t rely on their friends to be the designated university questioner, as university exhibitions are a fantastic way to help them build independence and confidence.

You may wish to work together to boost their confidence and prepare a few conversation starters about courses, entry requirements, accommodation, facilities, location, extra opportunities, Open Days or whatever else interests them!

What to expect

Find a map of the event beforehand to help them get their bearings and allow your young person to prepare for any scheduled talks. Some universities may provide physical or digital prospectuses, but it’s best to wear comfortable shoes and take a strong bag.

Closer to the time, your young person may also receive an individual QR code which they can ask universities to scan to receive information updates. Some students find it useful to temporarily set this as their phone lock screen or just have it to hand.

My top tip

They’ll probably feel tired on your way home, but this can be a good time for your young person to make a quick note of which universities stood out to them. Reflect on the day together when you get a chance and encourage them to continue their conversation with universities and their teachers if they have more questions. This is a good way to encourage them to book university Open Days.



A guide to the university admissions process and offer-making

By **Susie Kilburn, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Officer at City, University of London**

Supporting your young person through the university admissions process may be a slightly daunting experience, whether you've been through it yourself or not. Here's a short summary of the process to help.

Application timelines

UCAS applications can be submitted from towards the start of September in Year 13. The deadline for students applying to all courses at Oxford and Cambridge, or to all universities for Medicine, Veterinary Science/Medicine and Dentistry, is 15 October (for 2025 entry).

The deadline for all other courses and institutions is the last Wednesday in January. For 2025 entry, this will be 29 January 2025. Your young person will usually be given an earlier internal deadline by their school or college, and it's important they adhere to this over the national deadlines.

What do admission tutors receive from UCAS?

From the student:

- Key personal information (e.g. nationality, education, work experience etc.) and their personal statement.

From their school/college:

- A reference, which may include contextual or individual circumstances.
- Predicted grades for any qualifications the student is currently completing and actual grades for achieved qualifications, such as GCSEs.

Depending on the course and university, your young person may be required to take an additional step in their application such as an interview or test. It should be clear on the university course pages if any of these stages are required. The student's performance at this stage will be considered by the university before they provide a response.

Admissions tutors will consider whether the student:

- Meets the entry requirements for the course.
- Shows enthusiasm for the course.
- Has the skills and experiences needed to succeed on the course.

Admission tutors are not able to see the other universities your young person has applied to at this stage.

Offers your young person may receive:

- **Conditional:** They have been offered a place on their chosen course, providing that they meet the grades specified by the university.
- **Unconditional:** They have been offered a place that carries no conditions.
- **Alternative course:** The university has not been able to offer your young person a place on the course they originally applied for, but have offered them a place on an alternative programme.
- **Unsuccessful:** They have not been offered a place.

Response time frames vary from university to university, but they all have a decision deadline to meet which is usually around the third week of May.

Your young person will typically select two offers:

- **A firm choice:** this should be their top choice.
- **An insurance choice:** this is their back-up choice. Their insurance choice should have lower predicted grades in case they miss the grades for their firm choice.

If your young person does not receive any offers, or decides to decline the offers they receive, they have the option to apply to another university through UCAS Extra (until 4 July) and/or Clearing (from 5 July).

How to support a student to write a standout personal statement

By **Kat Knight, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Manager at City, University of London**

The personal statement is usually the part of a student's university application that requires the most time and attention. It may also be the first time a student has produced a piece of writing like it. I've put together some key information and advice to help you support your young person during this process.

What is the personal statement?

The personal statement is used by university admissions teams to understand the skills and experiences your young person has that will make them an ideal student for the course.

Nailing the structure

The structure of a personal statement will vary slightly for every student, but we recommend the following for a clear and concise statement:

Introduction – a couple of sentences that tells us why your young person has chosen to study this subject.

Love of the subject – anything that goes beyond the sixth form syllabus to show their interest in the subject. Good examples are taster days, online courses, relevant journals or articles, documentaries or podcasts.

Their studies – in this section, your young person should let us know what they study at sixth form and how that's preparing them for their course and university study.

Additional experience – this is typically work experience. Even part-time jobs which don't seem relevant to the subject they're applying for still demonstrate key skills, such as teamwork and communication, which are transferable to all degrees.

Hobbies – a few sentences about what they do in their spare time. If these give them skills including teamwork and leadership, even better!

Conclusion – a sentence or two summarising how going to university will support their next steps or future career plans.

Backing up their statements

Instead of providing a list of things they've done, it's important your young person reflects on their experiences and why they've been useful. They're likely to have gained transferable skills from their experiences, which will have prepared them well for university study.

“ **The personal statement is usually the part of a student's university application that requires the most time and attention. It may also be the first time a student has produced a piece of writing like it.** ”

I would recommend checking each point your young person makes to ensure they're ticking the following boxes:

- A – Activity – a brief description of what they've done (work experience, online courses etc)
- B – Benefit – what skills or experience did they gain from the activity?
- C – Course – how does this activity or benefit relate to the course they have applied for?

An example of the ABC method:

'Outside of my studies, I work in a busy fast-food chain, where I have recently taken on more responsibility as a team supervisor. On shift, I manage a team of four staff whose tasks range from taking and fulfilling orders to cooking food. As the manager, I also handle complaints from customers and manage our order flow. This is not unlike being on shift in a ward, and I feel well prepared to work with other teams to balance demanding priorities in the hospital.'

Top tips from UCAS

Advise your young person to avoid listing out qualifications, subjects and experiences. Instead, encourage them to cherry-pick their examples and give them real depth and context.

- The key is to always use examples which link back to their chosen subject and why they want to study it.
- It's important to avoid clichés and overused quotes – admissions teams want to see who your young person is and get an idea of their personality instead.
- It's great to mention hobbies, interests and extracurriculars, but best to do this when it can be related back to their course.
- If applying for a course such as medicine or nursing, it's vital that students show they understand what studying and eventually a career in this field would look like. It's not enough to say they want to be a doctor because they want to help people. They need to evidence the knowledge and suitability they possess to succeed on the course.



Five tips for preparing portfolios and interviews for creative courses

By Sarah Hewitson, Student Recruitment Manager (Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries) at the University of Portsmouth

Applying for a creative course requires more than just grades. Developing a portfolio of work, attending an interview or writing a personal statement will form a key part of your young person's application. It allows them to showcase their style and creative ability, discuss their influences and demonstrate their passion for their creative subject.

Five tips to help your young person during the application process

1. Research the course

It's really important that they look into the course they're applying for. Universities won't expect them to be able to recite every module, but courses can differ vastly between universities. In their portfolio or interview, they'll need to show an understanding of the course and subject area. To stay ahead of the game, your young person should look into attending an Open Day, read the portfolio guidance carefully and explore current events.

2. Help us learn about them

At the same time as demonstrating that they understand the course, universities will also want to see what inspires your young person! Everyone is unique and we want to see them amongst the pages. They should include a range of things that describe them as a person and as a creative individual – what makes them tick? As creatives, we put a lot of ourselves into our work, so they should ensure that comes across.

3. Show us the creative process

Within the portfolio, your young person can shine by demonstrating their creative journey through initial research, developmental work and then the final piece. They should also demonstrate that they can critically review and analyse their work. Would they do the same again? What would they change? This balance of creativity and reflection will help them sail through their studies too.

4. Keep it succinct

While we love to see a variety of work within a portfolio, we do want to see your young person's ability to edit. It's all about establishing a balance. They shouldn't bring everything they've ever done, but they shouldn't pare it back so far that they're left with little to show either! They should also try to tailor their portfolio to the course they're applying for.

5. Choose a suitable format

They should opt for what best suits the creative area they're working in – just because a portfolio is digital doesn't mean all their work has to be digital too.

They should also consider practicality. Is a bulky folder going to hinder them in transit? Would a digital portfolio be easier to share? Your young person should tailor the format of their portfolio to suit the situation as much as possible.

If they're attending a Zoom interview, make sure the tech is running smoothly. Does the microphone and camera work. Has screen sharing been set-up? In addition to this, does their digital portfolio read in the same way as a physical portfolio would?

Remember, universities will always be there to support your young person through the application process. Encourage them to make the most of their opportunities by attending workshops, taster days and more, so that they're fully engaged and prepared for their application journey.

Note from  UniTasterDays

Remember, you can search events advertised for parents and students through [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com).

Getting clear about Clearing

By Andy Long, Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Access Manager (UK) at Keele University

Clearing has changed in recent years. If you were to look back ten years, it may have been seen by some as a last chance saloon for students who didn't get the grades they needed. But fast forward to recent years, and it has become one of the best options for finding their place at university.

When does Clearing start?

Clearing is seen to start on A level results day, but it actually starts much earlier, typically on 5 July. From this point, any new applications to UCAS are considered by universities through Clearing, as well as any students who decline their firm choice through UCAS. This is both for students who are waiting for their results and those who have already achieved them. It should also be considered that students don't need to have applied during the UCAS cycle to make use of Clearing.

For some students, Clearing is now the sixth choice when it comes to getting into university. They'll typically start to decide during their first year of Level 3 study, apply through UCAS by the January deadline and hopefully receive all their offers. While all of this happens, they may have a change in circumstances, or a change of heart about what they want to study, and this is where Clearing really comes into its own. It's a buyer's market for students, as they

have more options at their disposal and will have their grades to hand, allowing them to pick and choose.

Research is key

Not all universities and all courses go into Clearing, so your young person must make sure they research the institutions that accept applications. UCAS and university websites are the best places to see what's available and will also help them find out where they need to apply. Although supported by UCAS, many conversations and applications will go to the university directly as, at this point, a student can apply to as many universities and hold as many offers as they like!

Universities will consider changing their entry requirements around Clearing as well. This means that if your young person wasn't sure if they'd get an offer from a university because of their grades, they may now be eligible to apply.

How can I help?

Your young person will never know what's going to happen during the results period and hopefully everything will go to plan for them. But they should always prepare for their next steps just in case things don't turn out as they hope.

If they decide to use Clearing, you can support their decision-making by going with them to Clearing Open Days or interviews if applicable. They'll also have lots of support from their school or college, universities and UCAS during this period, so although it might feel intense, there's always someone they can speak to for advice.



Student voice: a mother and son's Clearing journey

By Amanda Moralee, Marketing Campaigns Officer at the University of Sunderland

Clearing comes around every summer and is often seen as a safety net for students. But it's not just for those who don't get their expected grades. It's a good route for those who haven't applied to university yet, for those who've changed their mind on what or where they want to study and for those who don't hold any offers.

University Clearing helplines are always available with friendly teams on hand to give advice, talk students through the Clearing process and support their applications.

Despite this support, we know Clearing can be daunting for students and parents. We caught up with mother and son, Andrea and Matthew, to find out about their Clearing experience with the University of Sunderland.

1. Matthew, tell us about your Clearing journey.

Matthew: I studied Law, History and IT at A level and originally applied to another university to study Law. After my first year, I disliked the university and the course, and I didn't know what to do.

My mum suggested I go through Clearing and apply to Sunderland. After some research, I decided to change my course to Cybersecurity. After speaking to the helpline and completing my application on UCAS, I got a place! I met my academics the first week of teaching and although I was nervous, I immediately knew this was the course and university for me.

2. Andrea, what did you know about Clearing before Matthew got his University of Sunderland place?

Andrea: I knew students could apply to university through Clearing if there were still places on the course. I wasn't sure about the process, so Matthew rang the university and they guided him through how to apply.

3. How did you both find the Clearing process?

Matthew: Easy – the university staff were supportive and guided me step-by-step on what I needed to do. There's lots to take in, but



I just wrote everything down. I completed the Clearing application myself through UCAS, but the advice I got from the helpline and the university's Clearing webpage was really helpful.

Andrea: It was very straightforward but I was more apprehensive than Matthew. I know he's an adult but as a mother, I still like to know everything! The staff made him feel at ease, the instructions were clear and if he needed anything he was given contact numbers to call.

4. What information do you need when you make the call to the Clearing hotline?

Matthew: Having a list of your qualifications and grades is useful so staff can check if you're eligible for your chosen course. Your UCAS number is good to have to hand, and it doesn't hurt to check out the course web page, so you know what to expect.

5. What advice would you give to other students who find themselves in the Clearing process?

Matthew: Choose your university based on the course you want to study and then speak to the staff - they're all so friendly and helpful. It's ok to feel nervous, but they'll guide you all the way. Don't think just because you didn't apply months ago it's too late, just give them a ring.

Andrea: Encourage your son or daughter to call the Clearing helpline and chat to the staff. They're all calm, friendly and informative. They won't be the only person joining through Clearing either, so try to stay calm and enjoy this next step!

“ Clearing comes around every summer and is often seen as a safety net for students. But it's not just for those who don't get their expected grades. ”



Photo credit: University of Sunderland

A guide to completing the UCAS application form

By **Samantha Sykes**, Customer Success Manager, UCAS

If you're supporting a young person through their choices, they may have decided that university is their next step. Once they've picked the course they want to study, and where they'd like to apply to, they'll then need to tackle the UCAS application form. This is where all the information about them is held, such as personal details, education history and their personal statement.

Step 1: Registering on the Hub

Your young person will need to register on the UCAS Hub to set up their account. It only takes a few minutes to enter some basic details to get them started. The Hub is also a great place for them to combine all the research and planning, so encourage them to sign up early on so they can make the most of it.

Top Tip

Make sure their email address is always up to date so they don't miss important updates on their application. They can change their email address at any time, but only their primary email address will receive email communications from UCAS and their chosen universities and colleges.

Step 2: Linking their application to their school

The young person you support will have a 'buzzword' to enter if they're applying through their school or college. This links their application to their school or college so advisers can track progress.

Step 3: Application sections

They can fill the form in at any time and can do it bit by bit to make it more manageable. They just save as they go, and they can go back and edit sections if they need to.

Personal details – this will already contain the information they gave when registering.

Contact details – address, email, telephone number, postal address, and permission should they want someone else to be able to act on their behalf.

Where you live – they'll be asked where they've lived for the last three years and for what purpose, as unis need to know if they're living there temporarily or permanently.

Nationality details – their birthplace and nationality.

Supporting information – these questions ask if they've lived or worked in – or have parents from – the EU, EEA or Switzerland.

Finance and funding – how they will fund their studies?

Photo credit: UCAS



Diversity and inclusion (UK applicants only) – equality monitoring information. Universities and colleges only see this information after a place is secured or at the end of the application cycle. It doesn't influence any decision-making.

More about you – this section gives your young person the opportunity to highlight their individual circumstances in the application. Universities and colleges can make more informed decisions about an applicant's circumstances and ensure supportive measures are in place for them.

Education – details and dates of all places of education they've attended since the age of 11, exam results and qualifications still to be taken.

Employment – basic details of any full or part-time paid employment. They can talk more about this in their personal statement.

Extra activities (UK applicants only) – if they've participated in an activity to prepare them for higher education, they can give details of it here.

Personal statement – their opportunity to tell the university or college about their ambitions, skills and experience and why they want to study a particular course or subject.

Your young person can give you nominated access if they'd like you to be able to speak to UCAS on their behalf. UCAS will then be able to discuss their application with you but for security reasons, we can't share their login details (for example, if they need to change their password).

Photo credit: UCAS



Student Finance in England: 3 key facts for parents and guardians

By Jon Cheek, Founder at [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com)

Back in the winter of 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) announced significant changes to student finance and repayment policies for university students in England who will be starting higher education courses from September 2023. If you're reading this, it's very likely these changes will impact the young person you're supporting!

This was big news. Student finance is the biggest barrier to university pretty much everywhere you look, including in our own National Review of University Guidance. Any change to student finance will have a significant impact on those hoping to start university. I won't cover everything here, so I will instead provide guidance on the top **three** things that I think every student, and every parent or guardian supporting them, needs to know about student finance.

Note that these changes do not affect current students in receipt of student finance, those who are now in repayment, or students from Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland. If you're supporting students elsewhere in the UK, I would recommend you look at the [brilliant information provided by Martin Lewis](#).

Before I start, it's important to be aware that students usually fund their courses through a student loan. It's unlikely that a student will fund their studies directly.

Tuition fees, usually up to £9,250, are paid for a student by the Student Loans Company. They will very likely need a maintenance loan towards their living costs too, and the model is based on the student earning more money when they graduate and subsequently paying it back.

Key fact 1: Students need to earn £25,000 before they start paying their student loan back.

New students starting courses will only start repaying student loans when they earn over £25,000, at 9% of earnings above that amount.

A quick example:

Harry starts university in 2024.

- He finishes his course in 2027.
- In the April after his graduation, he's now earning £30,000.

His monthly repayment will be around £37.50, (it might be a little less if the repayment threshold increases in the future), but I don't want to make things unnecessarily complicated here!

Key fact 2: The student loan repayment period is 40 years

For those starting university in September 2024, they'll potentially be paying back their student loans for a 40-year period. If they haven't cleared the balance within that 40-year period, it will be 'wiped'. Of course, if students are in a position where they (a) repay the balance within the 40 years or (b) decide to clear it within the 40 years, the repayments would stop earlier than that.

Key fact 3: The amount of money students receive will vary

A student loan will come in two parts: the tuition fee part, which every student eligible for student finance receives, and the living cost loan, also known as the maintenance loan. How much a student will receive for their maintenance loan depends on a few factors, the main one being parental income. Put simply, the more you earn as parents and guardians, the less your young person is likely to receive for their maintenance loan.

Everyone eligible will receive some financial support. To find out more, try out the student finance calculator which you can find on the [government website](#). The calculator will show you first-hand how your income is likely to impact how much loan support your young person will receive.

Note from  UniTasterDays

Things have changed before and will change again. It is important to always access the most up-to-date information. For full guidance regarding student finance, please always refer to the [Student Loans Company website](#).

A guide to university bursaries and scholarships

By Max Harvey, Student Money Adviser at Cardiff University

Student finance can be complicated, but universities can help. They employ staff to guide students and their families through the process, to ensure that student loans are accessed correctly and on time. Although student loans and grants through the Student Loans Company are the main source of funding for most students, there are other funding sources, such as bursaries and scholarships, which are important to know about.

What are bursaries and scholarships?

Bursaries and scholarships are two terms you may have seen when researching universities. Although the two can sometimes be confused, bursaries tend to relate to a student's status and a scholarship tends to relate to academic achievement.

Scholarships are usually grants paid to students who do very well academically or in other areas.

For example, if a student receives three As at A level, or is a talented musician or sportsperson.

Bursaries tend to be about financial need. They can be used to help support students who are financially disadvantaged and encourage applications from groups that might be less likely to apply to university. Examples of bursary recipients might be students from lower income households, students who have been in the care system or armed forces veterans.

Further information on bursaries and scholarships

The difficulty with both bursaries and scholarships is that they are individual to a university. If a young person is trying to choose between a few institutions, it's important that they research the scholarships and bursaries available from each of them, to make sure they have the full picture.

Most students will want to prioritise the course and the university they go to when making decisions, but bursaries and scholarships can sometimes make the difference between two similar offers. Alternatively, they can certainly be a very welcome extra to make life a little easier when they start their course.

“ When dealing with anything financial – be it loans, banking or bursaries, be aware of scams. If the person you’re supporting is unsure about an email or a text, don’t click on links within them, or offer any personal details if they do. If in doubt, contact a university through their official channels to check if what they’ve been sent is genuine. ,,

A guide to the Disabled Students' Allowance

By Sarah Hanson, Widening Participation Scholarships Officer at the University of Liverpool

Starting a higher education journey can be really exciting, but your young person may have concerns about how they'll manage and the support they'll get. This worry is particularly pronounced for those with learning difficulties, mental health issues or disabilities who may be used to comprehensive support at school or college through their Education and Health Care Plan (also known as EHCP). It's important to be aware that there is a wealth of support available at university, including the Disabled Students' Allowance, also known as the DSA.

The Disabled Students' Allowance is provided to help with extra costs your young person might incur as a direct result of a disability. All the support provided by the DSA is based solely on an individual's needs, so it's not dependent on household income and none of the funding or equipment needs to be returned.

The DSA can support students with a wide range of issues, including:

- specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or ADHD
- mental health conditions, such as anxiety or anorexia
- physical disability impacting mobility or dexterity
- sensory impairments, such as sight or hearing loss
- social or communication impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders
- long-term health conditions, such as cancer or chronic fatigue syndrome.

The DSA helps students with a range of support measures, including:

- specialist equipment such as assistive technology or ergonomic equipment
- general allowances such as fridges for medication or printing costs
- non-medical helper support, including specialist note-takers or a BSL interpreter
- travel, such as private taxi transport.

Applying for the DSA

Your young person can apply for the DSA online as part of their student finance application. They're required to upload medical evidence, such as a diagnostic report, after which they'll be invited to book a needs assessment.

During this appointment, they'll work with an Independent Needs Assessor to agree the support they'll need from DSA. Afterwards, they'll receive an Entitlement Decision Letter (DSA2) confirming the support they'll receive and instructions on how to move forward.

Many students put off applying for DSA because they're worried about being treated differently, or because they want a fresh start at university, but this support can be vital for your young person to succeed and achieve their potential.

They should start the process as soon as possible, to ensure support will be in place for the start of the term. As well as support from the DSA, universities and colleges will also offer a package of support, such as specialised transition days, peer mentors or disability coordinators to support them directly. As a parent or carer, you can find out more about this support through university websites or by attending Open Days and speaking with their student support teams.

Note from UniTasterDays

For more information on the DSA and support for disabled students, check out The One in Five Podcast. A university support podcast created by disabled students, for disabled students who are considering university: <https://www.unitasterdays.com/listen-to-the-1-in-5-podcast/>

An introduction to the NHS Learning Support Fund

By Rowan Hoper, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Salford

I know that the financial aspects of higher education can be daunting. It's therefore key that your young person is aware of any available funding that will support them with their studies. One example of this is the NHS Learning Support Fund (NHS LSF).

What is the NHS Learning Support Fund?

The NHS LSF is additional funding that your young person may be eligible for if they study a health course. The payments are grants, so they don't need to be paid back. As it's an additional pot of free money, it also has no impact on their eligibility for student finance.

The below financial support is available:

Training grant

A non means-tested grant of £5,000 each academic year with an additional £1,000 also up for grabs in certain subjects.

Travel and dual accommodation expenses

Reimbursement of additional travel and accommodation costs your young person might have while they're on placement (in addition to their regular commute).

A Podiatry student at the University of Salford shared that their expenses allowed them to 'apply for the exact placement opportunities needed, without worry about the extra commuting costs.' However, it's important that your young person budgets and keeps a log of their expenses for reimbursement purposes.

Exceptional support fund

An income-assessed grant of up to £3,000 per academic year if they experience unforeseen financial hardship.

Is your young person eligible for the NHS Learning Support Fund?

At a basic level, to be eligible for the NHS LSF your young person needs to be:

- actively studying an eligible course in England
- eligible for maintenance and tuition fee support from the Student Loans Company (SLC).

The following pre-registration courses (at undergraduate or postgraduate level) are eligible:

- dental therapy or dental hygiene (level 5 and 6 courses)
- dietetics
- midwifery
- nursing (adult, child, mental health, learning disabilities, joint nursing/social work)
- occupational therapy
- operating department practice (level 5 and 6 courses)
- orthoptics*
- orthotics and prosthetics*
- paramedicine
- podiatry* or chiropody
- radiography (diagnostic and therapeutic)*
- speech and language therapy.

*If your young person studies on these courses, they can receive an extra £1,000 per academic year. However, Social Work courses have different funding. Find out more at:

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students

How can they apply?

Applications open in spring and your young person will need to create an account and apply online. As with student finance, they'll also need to reapply every academic year:

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-learning-support-fund-lsf

“ It is key that your young person is aware of any available funding that will support them with their studies. ”



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- / How to make an application
- / How fees work
- / Student accommodation
- / Attending open days
- / Student support

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Exploring universities on a budget

By Helen Robinson, Account Manager at UniTasterDays

With rising living costs and increased fees for public transport and fuel, attending Open Day events with your young person can be pricey. These issues can create barriers to attending events, however Open Days are really the very best way for you and your young person to explore the university and the town or city in which it resides. They're a great way to help with researching options and, in my opinion, nothing can be better than stepping foot on campus and seeing for yourself what it would be like for your young person to spend the next three years of their life there!

UniTasterDays offers a great online platform to search offers and travel bursaries to help with the cost of attending open day events – to find out more, take a look at www.unitasterdays.com/event-incentives/.

Here are some other practical tips to navigate Open Days affordably and ensure your young person can explore all their options.

1. Travel bursaries and funds: many universities offer financial assistance to help with the expenses of attending Open Days or other events. These funds vary, ranging from cash reimbursements for transport to discounted accommodation and food. Websites, such as UniTasterDays.com, provide tools to explore what each university offers.

2. Freebies: some universities provide food vouchers or discounts during Open Days to ease the costs.

3. Car sharing: if your young person's friends plan to visit the same university, carpooling can reduce travel expenses and add fun to the journey.

4. Plan travel wisely: booking in advance and exploring various public transport options can save money. Using a 16-25 railcard can further lower train travel costs, too.

5. Consider local options: moving away to university might be appealing to your young person, but university options closer to home should also be explored and could help to reduce costs in travel and accommodation.

6. Social media insights: using social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram can provide you with great insights into universities and their student communities.

7. Explore virtual Open Days: online events allow you to explore universities from the comfort of your own home! These types of events can help to narrow down choices and reduce the number of universities you need to physically visit. UniTasterDays lists lots of virtual events, just use the search feature on our website to find out if one of your university

“ **UniTasterDays can help you search for incentives and offers to assist with the cost of attending open days.** „



A guide to university fair access and widening participation

By Claire Churchill, Deputy Head of Outreach at the University of Birmingham

Understanding higher education can be challenging – there are acronyms to learn, dates to remember, forms to complete and events to attend. This can be especially difficult for students, and their parents or carers, who come from under-represented groups within higher education.

This includes students who:

- are in the first generation of their family to go to university
- attend schools that perform below the national average
- have low household incomes
- have experienced time in care
- live in areas where fewer young people progress to university
- are young carers
- have a disability.

The Office for Students (OFS) – which regulates the work of universities – states an aim to ensure that ‘...all students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education’. Therefore, many universities put support in place to help students from these backgrounds overcome any barriers they face. As parents or carers, if you feel that your young person might be eligible for additional support, you can signpost them to the following opportunities:

Pre-entry support

Widening participation programmes, such as summer schools and other intensive outreach events, support fair access by giving students an insight into university life and study. Students will need to meet eligibility criteria in order to take part, so look carefully at these before applying. Participants may also receive

additional benefits such as mentoring, support with the transition to higher education or access to reduced or alternate offers.

Contextual offers

Most universities will take a student’s personal circumstances into account when they consider an application and will review how these circumstances may impact their achievement. Contextual offers are often a grade reduction below the typical entry requirements for a course. They may be offered automatically to students meeting specific criteria or may need to be applied for separately – students can find out more on university websites.

Post-entry support

- **Enhanced funding:** Your young person may be eligible to receive enhanced funding to support them at university. Again, it’s worth checking university websites for what might be on offer and the eligibility criteria.
- **Academic support:** Students from under-represented backgrounds may be entitled to additional support at university, such as peer mentoring, 1:1 guidance or enhanced careers programmes. What’s available to students will vary from university to university, so it’s worth researching what would be most beneficial for your young person.

“Overall, universities want to ensure that there is fair access to their programmes, and parents and carers play an important role in helping students access this support. We don’t expect you to know all the answers, so do reach out to universities for specific guidance.”

Who's eligible for access and widening participation programmes?

By Laura Whitelock, Access and Outreach Officer at the University of York

Higher education institutions are eager to ensure our learning communities are inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for all students, no matter their background.

Many institutions will support key groups of students, including those who are the most under-represented at their institutions, or students who are generally under-represented within higher education institutions in the UK.

What does 'under-represented within higher education' actually mean?

When we say 'under-represented in higher education' we're referring to students who are statistically less likely to progress to higher education. Often, institutions will use eligibility criteria to make it clear who their target audience is in order to receive additional support through widening participation programmes. Most of the criteria will focus on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or under-represented communities.

“ Higher education institutions are eager to ensure learning communities are inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for all students, no matter their background. ”

So, who is eligible to receive support?

The most common thread in eligibility criteria is that students need to have attended a state school or college for secondary and post-16 education.

Aside from this, students eligible for support may include:

- first-generation students – students who are the first generation in their immediate family to attend higher education
- care experienced and estranged students – students who have spent time in local authority care or are estranged from their family
- young carers – students who have caring responsibilities
- ethnic minority students e.g. Black, Asian, Arab or mixed-race backgrounds
- mature students – students aged 21 or above at the start of their undergraduate degree
- refugee and asylum seekers
- students from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities
- students with a disability or long-term health condition (including mental health conditions)
- students from military or service families
- students living in areas with a low progression rate ([you can check your postcode online](#))
- students with a household income below £42,875
- students eligible for free school meals, pupil premium or other discretionary payments
- students who attended a school or college that achieved below the national average (based on [Government statistics](#)).

It's worth noting that different institutions will have different eligibility criteria and even some programmes at the same institution may focus on different groups of students. For example, at the University of York, we have [Black Access](#), which is a programme designed by our current Black students to support fellow Black students. But we also have post-16 programmes, such as [Next Step York](#), accepting students from most of the criteria in the bullet points above and on the previous page.

If students meet this criteria, what support do they qualify for?

This can vary between institutions, but may include:

- reduced offer schemes e.g. students can receive an offer lower than the standard entry requirements - for example, AAA could become AAB or even ABB
- access to scholarships or bursaries – money provided by the institution to support students with study or accommodation costs (non-repayable)
- mentoring, often with current students at the institution
- the opportunity to attend tailored events and activities at the institution such as campus tours, residential events or online skills sessions
- ongoing support such as regular contact relating to key milestones e.g. making post-18 decisions, completing personal statements and applying for student finance.

How can you help your young person to access the support?

Look at university websites to check their eligibility criteria. Remember that not all institutions will have the same criteria, so it might be helpful to keep a list to refer back to.

Research widening participation programmes at various institutions – are there any particular universities your young person is interested in? What support are they hoping for? Helping them to apply for these programmes can be beneficial and, in fact, many of them will ask for a parent, carer or guardian consent form.

You might wish to attend events with your young person, either in person or online, to help them with any questions they may have. Remember, you don't need to be an expert, you can ask questions too! A good way to have your questions answered and find out about upcoming events can be to sign up for updates from [UniTasterDays](#).



Supporting care-experienced students at university

By Wendy Price OBE, Head of Widening Access and Participation at the University of Sunderland, and National Strategy Group Co-Chair for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers

Care-experienced students are currently under-represented in higher education and their carers can play an important part in inspiring and supporting these young people to achieve their potential.

Here are my five top tips when supporting a young person to explore their options and help ensure that their transition to higher education is as smooth as possible.

1. Find the right higher education provider

Look for providers who have made a public commitment to supporting care-experienced students. Have they signed the Care Leaver Covenant? Are they members of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)? Engagement with these organisations is a clear message that support is available and these institutions have committed to developing their offer for these students.

2. Consider alternative routes into higher education

Not all students feel confident about their ability to progress directly to higher education. Would they prefer to study an Integrated Foundation Year to prepare them for undergraduate study? Perhaps an apprenticeship or foundation degree would help to build confidence? There are a range of options available to suit all students. Contact each university to find out more.

3. Encourage them to inform universities about their circumstances

When universities know that a student is care-experienced, we can support them through the entire application process and work with their teachers and carers to guide and reassure them.

Also, encourage your young person to find out what support is available to them. The Propel website, developed by national charity Become, provides full access to information about the support offered at each institution and is a useful starting point.

4. Help with planning ahead

A to-do list which clearly shows key actions in the lead-up to starting university will be very helpful for all prospective higher education students. Applying for accommodation, bursaries and student finance may have deadlines, so these need to be included too. Care-experienced students may be eligible to receive additional financial assistance, personalised support and priority places to attend summer schools so it's important to plan ahead.

5. Be the difference!

So many students tell us that they never considered higher education until somebody encouraged them and actually believed that they could do it! Ask your young person how they're feeling about university and reassure them that you're there to offer support.

“ So many students tell us that they never considered higher education until somebody encouraged them and believed that they could do it! Ask your young person how they're feeling about university and reassure them that you're there to offer support. ”

How do universities provide additional support for students in need?

By Suzie Loader, School and College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter

Starting university can be an exciting but challenging time for any young person, but for those who need extra support, or who come from under-represented backgrounds, it can be even more daunting.

Ahead of starting university, some students may want to know the advice, information and support available to them, particularly if they experience any of the following:

- specific learning difficulties
- mental health difficulties
- physical disabilities
- sensory impairments
- long-term medical conditions

Universities want to ensure that all students can access higher education regardless of background, and there are many support services available to ensure that individual

student needs are met. We'll provide an outline of these services here.

Wellbeing services

Typically a free and confidential service available for all students who may be finding things difficult – personally or academically. These services offer counselling or other 1:1 support, highlight online support packages and work with wider support services where relevant.

Health services

Most universities will have a health centre on-site or links to one nearby. Students are encouraged to register once they join the university.

Students' unions

The SU, as it's also known, can provide advice on many issues, such as housing and funding. As students' unions are independent bodies, the support they offer is in addition to what's already provided by a university.

Academic support

Your young person is likely to be assigned a personal academic tutor who can talk to them about their academic and professional development. Universities also have specialist academic advisers who help with areas including academic writing or mathematical skills, such as statistics.



Disability support

Students with additional needs, such as physical disabilities or additional learning needs are supported in various ways. For example, through the Government's Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), they may be entitled to funding that enables them to purchase specialist equipment or help cover the costs of a non-medical helper.

Applications for the DSA are made through the Student Finance England portal. Universities also provide additional support in the form of accommodation modifications or putting together an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). This can help your young person with certain adjustments depending on their needs, such as additional time in exams.

Accommodation

Most universities offer first-year students a place in university accommodation. Although your young person will be living independently, residences are monitored by security and usually have additional support teams in place, such as Residence Life Advisers, who offer drop-in sessions for students who require additional help.

Career support

Universities want their students to succeed and their specialist careers teams help them with their next steps. For example, many will offer CV and interview workshops, as well as advise students on work opportunities – from part-time student jobs to internships and graduate schemes.

Financial support

Universities often have many bursaries and scholarships available. Your young person could be eligible to receive this additional financial support and university websites are the best place to find that information. Many universities will also have a fund to support students facing unexpected financial hardship, which may impact their ability to study.

It's important that prospective students and their parents or carers are aware of the support offered at the universities their young person is interested in. We recommend that you contact them directly and start these conversations as early as possible. They can then make the appropriate adjustments to support your young person's transition to university.

Introducing...

The One in Five Podcast

The One in Five is a university support podcast created by disabled students, for disabled students who are considering university.

All the content you will hear on the podcast is based on the lived experiences of the incredible One in Five student panel – Alice, Dominique, Jessica, Kyle, and Matthew.

Listen to all episodes:
www.unitasterdays.com/listen-to-the-1-in-5-podcast



A collaboration between



Supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities

By **Michael Tomkinson, Head of Accessibility, Disability and Inclusion** and **Dr Clare Dickens MBE, Associate Director of Student Life at the University of Wolverhampton**

Did you know that 17.3% of UK home students have a disability? Many individuals of all ages contemplate whether university is the right path for them. And those with a disability, or special educational needs and disability (SEND) support, may see this as a barrier to studying at higher education. This section is to tell you that it isn't.

If a student provides a declaration to a university that they have a disability, they'll be protected under the Equality Act 2010 to receive reasonable adjustments during their time at university, while ensuring that their application is not discriminated against throughout the admissions process, or during their studies.

The two levels of support at university:

There are two levels of support for students at universities; reasonable adjustments and Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). When students declare their disability, the university will produce a **reasonable adjustment plan** (or equivalent) which will ensure that they, and their academic lecturers, are aware of how they can best be supported. Remember, it's in the universities best interest to support them to succeed and remove barriers during their studies.

The second level of support relates to **Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)**. DSA is a government fund which should be applied for when applying for general tuition fee support via Student Finance England.

DSA is tailored to the individual's needs, but this can include support towards additional costs that your young person may incur

while studying and which are related to their disability, including:

- travel costs
- support towards specialist equipment, software, and related training
- non-medical helper support which can include a specialist mentor, specialist tutor, British Sign Language Interpreter (BSLI) or a specialist notetaker.

The step-by-step process:

Now that you're aware of the support that your young person may be eligible for, they'll need to follow a few steps:

1. Declare their disability on their UCAS application.
2. Apply for DSA at the same time as they apply for their general tuition fee support.
3. Declare their disability to their university directly, whether they're applying directly or engaging with their admissions team (if they're staying in accommodation, please let them know of any needs in advance as accommodation services will have specialist rooms available.)
4. They may be asked to register with a support team, who will engage with your young individual during their time at university.

Key things to consider:

1. Every university will provide your young person with reasonable adjustments, but the type of adjustments may differ. It's therefore important that they engage with the university directly to discuss their specific needs or concerns before applying.
2. Engage with the university Open Days and specific events. These will enable them to meet with support staff and academics.
3. Engage with the university's Students' Union and speak to their Disability Officer or Liberation Rep, as they'll be a go-to individual for your young person during their transition to higher education.
4. DSA has eligibility criteria, so please check if they're eligible. If they're not, please contact their chosen university to discuss the other types of support available to them.

Celebrating diversity in university communities

By Dr Sarah Mohammad-Qureshi, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partner at The University of Law

Universities are ideal environments to bring together a blend of people from different backgrounds, with variety in the personal characteristics that shape us, our motivations, experiences and values.

The university student community is undoubtedly more diverse than your young person will be accustomed to. This is an opportunity not afforded in many social groups or workspaces, and is one they can benefit from. Interacting with different people is important for our personal growth and a wider understanding of the world.

Are they feeling a little daunted?

Misunderstandings about groups of people who are different to us can lead to unnecessary hostility and anxiety. Explore why your young person might feel nervous, uncomfortable or unsafe around certain people and help them recognise how these negative associations have formed.

At university, they can expect to meet, study and socialise with people of many different characteristics. These include different disabilities, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations and gender identities. This offers fantastic potential for their learning, not only

in the diversity of thought from their peers, but also in their understanding of society, privilege and inequality.

The more interactions that occur, the more they may change their preconceptions and stereotypes. Your young person can also use this learning to challenge negative associations and see others as individuals and potential friends.

Expanding your network

Another benefit to this unique environment is that it allows your young person to expand their social and professional network to include a broader range of people. This exposure to diverse thinking, cultural awareness and equality will directly benefit them by enhancing social and structural inclusion, whatever their future career aspirations. Through this personal growth, students can have a positive impact on the world.

Your young person can also use this opportunity to become more mindful of barriers and inequalities faced by their peers, by considering who is under-represented and how their journey to higher education differs. This may be the first time they have needed to consider additional factors such as venue accessibility, safety concerns of particular groups or religious customs.

This is also a chance for them to showcase aspects of their personality and celebrate themselves in a more authentic way than they may have done previously. By realising the lived experiences of others, we can help to create a culture of inclusion and support each other to succeed.



How students can make friends and manage homesickness

By Leanne Punchard, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Suffolk

As a parent of a young person going off to university, you'll probably be feeling a mixture of emotions: pride, anxiety and perhaps even a little bit of relief! There'll no doubt be an element of worry: will they make friends or feel homesick, or will they be making the most of their experience at university?

This is a very exciting milestone, not only in their education, but in their life experiences. This will mark their next step into adulthood as they learn to become fully independent.

To help with the transition to university life, here are some tips and ideas to make their start as smooth as possible.

For you:

- Buy them tickets to Freshers' events. They can then pick and choose which events to go to without the worry of cost.
- Put together a hamper of snacks that they can share with their new flatmates (this always goes down well!)
- If you have any special recipes that will remind them of home, write them down into a booklet for them to cook themselves.
- Speak to Parent Ambassadors. Many universities have other parents on hand, who are available to provide advice.

“**As a parent of a young person going off to university, you'll probably be feeling a mixture of emotions: pride, anxiety and perhaps even a little bit of relief!**”

For you both:

- Visit the university and surrounding area prior to the move; it will benefit you both to become familiar with the local area.
- Plan a shopping trip dedicated to designing their new room.
- Create a family WhatsApp group that will keep you connected. Add a funny group name and use a profile photo that makes you both smile.
- Choose some photos for them to take. Creating a photo wall in their new room is a great way to be reminded about their loved ones at home, and will initiate a talking point with their new flatmates.
- Get excited with them! Talk about your own first experiences of independence and enjoy reliving those memories together.

For them:

- Encourage them to choose Halls of Residence. They might feel tempted by an en-suite room, with private living space, but they could end up feeling left out.
- Point them in the direction of a part-time job, or an opportunity to volunteer during the summer. It will help improve their confidence and social interaction.
- Suggest they join their university's social media groups. Many new students will be looking to make connections prior to the big move.
- Even though they might want to shut themselves away in their room to unpack and take in their new environment, advise them that an open door means they're willing to talk and make friends. They could also suggest a group trip to the local supermarket as they all find their feet.

Good luck with this next milestone. It might be hard to let them go, but they will learn a lot from navigating this by themselves. Besides, they'll be back before you know it!

New opportunities - how can your young person make the most of their university experience?

By Kate Nelson, Marketing Coordinator at Teesside University

We know university is about gaining that all-important degree, but it's so much more than that. At uni, your young person will gain experiences and skills that they wouldn't get anywhere else. Here's a guide to some of the new things they can expect.

Academic workshops

It's a big leap from further to higher education; your young person has to learn how to think critically, use references, structure assignments and manage their time. It can be difficult knowing where to start, but academic workshops offer useful information, tips and practical exercises to help your young person develop the skills they need to get the most out of their studies. Workshops are typically delivered by academic support teams and they're a great way for your young person to feel supported during their time at university.

Clubs and societies

Your young person will have spare time during their studies, so joining a club or society is a great way to meet like-minded people, expand their friendship group, try something new and/or keep active. Clubs and societies usually have a stall during Freshers' Week, so that's a perfect time for them to see what's available and to sign up for anything that interests them. If there isn't anything they like, they can look to set up their own society with a group of friends.

Placements and internships

When your young person graduates, they'll be one amongst thousands. How do they make their job application stand out from the crowd? Completing a work placement or

internship is a fantastic way of getting some on-the-job learning that they can include in a job application and discuss at an interview. It also gives them a real insight into what it's like to work in the industry and, more importantly, it'll help them build networks and links that are helpful when it comes to job hunting.

Student ambassador schemes

If you've been to an Open Day with your young person, it's likely the person giving directions or delivering campus tours was a student ambassador. At Teesside University, our ambassadors apply and interview for the role – which is excellent prep for future job applications – and are paid for their time too, so it's a good way to top-up their funds. The role is really varied and includes working at Open Days, attending careers fairs throughout the country or delivering presentations in schools and colleges. Students gain many transferable skills that future employers value, such as teamwork, presentation and time management skills.

Ambassador schemes operate differently at every university, so encourage your young person to check out what's available at the unis they're interested in.

Volunteering

Volunteering is a great opportunity for your young person to get away from the academic demands of university and do something they feel passionate about. Taking time away from their work while doing something meaningful can reduce stress and encourage them to be socially minded. Some universities even offer volunteering opportunities overseas – perfect for discovering new places, learning about other cultures and meeting new people.

“ We know university is about gaining that all-important degree, but it's so much more than that. Your young person will gain experiences and skills that they wouldn't get anywhere else! ”

Studying and working at university

By Andrew Cooper, Hybrid Delivery Coordinator at the University of Liverpool

Having a student job while studying is not a new thing and can be an important way for your young person to supplement their income and support themselves throughout their studies. As a parent you might be concerned that your young person will become distracted by work, but there are many benefits – and not just of the financial kind – from working alongside their studies.

Can they transfer from a current position?

If your young person already has a part-time job at a national company, it's worth them asking about a transfer to their new study location. Many companies have stores in university towns and transferring means that your young person can continue working in a role that is familiar to them when they start somewhere new.

Check out university employment opportunities

I encourage students to sign up to university job banks. Universities have a variety of roles available, from working in catering and supporting university events to running campus tours. Often, the university will have restrictions on how many hours a student can work to ensure that they're not working too much and still have time for their studies.

For example, in student recruitment, I employ students to support school events and some weeks can be very busy! If I allocate a shift, but then a student tells me that they have a

looming deadline that they're struggling with, I would find a replacement so that they can prioritise their studies.

Jobs in the local area

Alternatively, many students will find jobs in the local area. There are lots of temporary jobs available, but I would advise them to think about the time of their shifts as evening work may affect their studies. If your young person is applying for a job in their local area, encourage them to ask their prospective employer if they can be flexible and consider their study priorities.

Employment opportunities have career benefits

From a career perspective, employers are looking for graduates with multiple skills. Those students who graduate with a high grade alongside part-time employment must know how to prioritise tasks and have good time management, as well as a wealth of other soft skills.

It can also open up future careers that your young person may have never considered. For example, during my studies, I benefited from working as an usher at my university theatre. The year I graduated, the university opened a new public theatre and created a graduate role to manage it. My student job gave me the skills to successfully secure the role. After the year-long contract finished, I moved to a different department and that eventually led to the career I have now.

Speak to the university's careers team

The final thing you can encourage your young person to do is engage with their university's careers department. They can help them prepare for interviews, sharpen their CV and also support them with finding work experience and internships in an area related to their degree.



Making the most of university: an academic perspective

By Marie Clifford, Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience at the University of South Wales

Students turn up to lectures or seminars, do some extra reading, submit their assessments, pass them with flying colours and get their degrees. There might also be some socialising thrown in too. That is one way of viewing university, but by preparing your young person for what to expect and what they need to put in to get the most out of it, it can be more than a transactional arrangement with some cheap drinks on the side.

Relationships are key

Encourage your young person to get to know their lecturers, peer group and other key players. The vast majority of lecturers welcome contact from students, want to hear their thoughts and be asked for clarification. This provides great support for students both academically and socially. Peer group support is invaluable; someone to vent with over a coffee or ask questions over WhatsApp provides the human contact we all need. With more hybrid or remote learning in action, attendance for on-campus lectures and seminars really help to build these relationships.

Students should engage fully

There's no point turning up if your young person isn't fully present. They should take notes to ensure active learning is taking

place and limit distractions (there are apps to disable social media during teaching time). They should also expand learning outside of the formally arranged sessions by reading around their subject, finding links across subjects and, where applicable, in their day-to-day life.

Take charge of their own learning

One of the key aspects of higher education study is becoming an independent thinker and an autonomous learner. There are huge advantages to this, in that your young person will have more choices and options than they may have experienced from compulsory education. But with great power comes great responsibility! Attendance may not be monitored as closely and additional reading and research will need to be done outside of the classroom.

Organisation and time management are skills that need to be honed and your young person will need to take charge of any feedback received. How can they improve? Are there common areas they're falling down on? How could this help them with future assessments in that subject, but also in different subjects?

Planning ahead

It's never too early to think about careers. What experience does your young person already have? How can they get more? All universities have careers services where they will be able to find volunteering and paid positions that can help to broaden their CV when the time comes to think about their next steps.

University is not all about study either, so factoring in socialising, hobbies and 'me time' is essential for recharging and gaining valuable transferable skills. By embracing all that university can bring, your young person will have a successful, enjoyable and unforgettable experience.

“ It’s never too early to think about careers. What experience does your young person already have? How can they get more? „

The reality of student life - it may surprise you!

By Natalie Johnston, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Salford

The perception of student life for parents and supporters may be based on experience, stereotypes in the media or influenced by the experience of others. In any case, I hope it's reassuring to know that the term 'student life' is more than just a series of assignments, social events and life lessons. It's your young person's opportunity to explore their subject and discover their passion for a future career.

Students experiment with new hobbies and eclectic tastes and most form meaningful friendships that last a lifetime. The hazy memories of their student life will form the basis of anecdotes they share with the future generation (who will inevitably roll their eyes at the second-hand embarrassment).

What will they do for the next three years?

Full-time study doesn't necessarily mean full-time! Study time is not just calculated based on how many hours of teaching takes place per week (also known as 'contact time'). This can vary greatly and is in no way a reflection of quality. It may be surprising to learn that contact hours are rarely full-time, unlike school or college. Contact hours are influenced by a range of factors and your young person can learn more about this by attending an Open Day.

What happens outside of class?

Self-directed or independent study is a process where a student is given the time to reflect on what they've learned and to read around the subject using a recommended reading list.

For others, participating in practical study is a big part of their learning. For instance, a placement in a school can help a psychology student understand how theories around child development have influenced teaching resources. For those studying for degrees which lead to qualifying status, such as midwifery, students sometimes spend as much as 50% of their total study time on compulsory placements, in a range of clinical settings.

Assessments aren't all exams and coursework either. Group work is commonplace, as is public speaking, when presenting their findings to peers and professionals. Industry professionals may issue fashion students a live brief and those students are expected to pitch their concept with the hope of their idea being selected.

Part-time work

Students often find the time to work alongside their studies and the extra income goes a long way to sustaining a safe and happy student life. Many universities support students to find quality part-time work that flexes around study demands. They will often employ students as ambassadors, too.

The transition

Whether home or away, starting university takes some getting used to. Students are thrown into a class of people they've never met, from all different walks of life. It can be a shock to realise that mainstream education, with registration and tutor time, is replaced with accountability for timekeeping and deadlines.



Supporting your young person with their transition to university

By Emily Jordan, UK Student Recruitment Events Officer at the University of Winchester

Starting university can be an incredibly exciting yet overwhelming time. Students are thrown into a new place, surrounded by new people and faced with new responsibilities. The best way to help your young person transition to university is to be as prepared as possible in order to support them on this next part of their journey.

Before starting:

For new students, basic tasks, such as cooking, can sometimes feel overwhelming. Help prepare your young person with some simple, cost-effective recipes that they can easily whip up in their first few days. Not only is this a nice activity for you to do together before they leave, but a roommate who can cook is a very valuable friend to hungry students!

Encourage the young person you support to be as active as possible with the university's pre-arrival events, applicant days, online chats or meet and greets. Some universities help students contact their new flatmates. If this is available, encourage your young person to check who is bringing which utensils with them, so they don't end up with several kettles and toasters in the kitchen!

Many students worry about homesickness when they first arrive. Perhaps bring along a photo of the whole family to display in their new room or a special memento from home. Most universities will provide students with some sort of pre-arrival checklist. Check this and check it again to ensure your young person has all the personal items they need for the first few weeks (e.g. medication).

First few weeks:

After saying goodbye to your young person, agree upon a contact system that works for your family. Will you video call each week, phone every day or simply text as and when to catch up? Establishing this gives you both reassurance that you'll stay in touch, while allowing your young person freedom to experience their new life.

Similarly, it may be nice to set a date in the diary for when you'll next come to visit. Knowing your visit is approaching, will help them to get out and about to explore their new surroundings and find somewhere fun to show you!

Finally, being on hand to assist financially, where possible, can help to ease worries for students. The first few weeks can be challenging if they've never had to balance their finances in terms of food shops, phone bills, rent, study resources and socialising costs. It's not uncommon for students to overspend in some areas, so being on hand to assist with food parcels is much appreciated.

More importantly, remember this is an exciting point in your young person's life, it will open a new world of experiences and opportunities to them, so enjoy the journey together!



Student insight: what do students get up to at university?

By Stephanie Willmott, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of West London

As well as choosing the course your young person wishes to study, there are a range of other aspects of student life that are worth considering when they're deciding which university to go to.

These opportunities can be related to academic study or social activities. It's worth noting that depending on the course, the contact hours that students have, in terms of attending lectures, seminars and tutorials, can vary. Therefore, it's important to strike a balance between taking time to study and taking time to relax and have fun.

Internships and work placements

For certain courses there'll be the opportunity to undertake an internship or work placement as part of the course. This is a great way for students to network with industry experts, learn more about their desired field and gain practical experience and insights from career professionals. Students can choose to opt for a work placement module or internship as part of their academic studies. The duration of time and opportunities available to students can differ and will depend on their specific university.

Joining a club or society

In addition to your young person's studies, universities provide many extra-curricular opportunities for them to get involved with during their free time, including clubs and societies. From Aviation and VFX to football and yoga, there are many outlets to suit a range of interests and hobbies. This has many

great benefits: it can allow students to learn a new skill or take up a sport, as well as giving them a chance to make new friends and take part in competitions.

This can have a positive impact on your young person's mental health and student life at university. Every university has a diverse range of clubs and societies to choose from. University Freshers' Fairs during Welcome Week are a brilliant way to find out more and sign up. To help them make the most of their time at university, encourage your young person to say 'yes' to different opportunities!

Volunteering/part-time work

Working part-time is a valuable way for your young person to develop the transferable skills that will best prepare them for working life. There are a variety of flexible student-friendly jobs that they can fit around their lectures and study commitments. These can be jobs off campus in a variety of settings, or they could be hospitality or retail positions. They may be able to work on campus for their Students' Union, or support a specific university department by becoming a student ambassador.

Volunteering outside of academic studies has great advantages for students too, for example:

- it makes a difference and gives students time to support a good cause.
- it gives them the opportunity to support the local community in their local area.
- they can enhance their CV.

Every university has a Students' Union (SU) and students can choose to run in elections to represent the student voice on campus. There are many other roles your young person can take advantage of to add to their university experience, such as becoming a course representative or mentor. This is a good way to take up a position of responsibility and to learn and practise new skills such as public speaking.





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Parent voice: meet Jackie

Jackie lives in Cheltenham with her husband and two sons, William and Elliot, who are both at university. By sharing the journey they took to get there, and her thoughts and experience as a parent, Jackie hopes to reassure other parents and supporters that it'll all be fine!

Introducing William

William attended a grammar school in Gloucestershire and studied A levels in Geography, French and Economics. He completed a BA in Geography at the University of Exeter in 2022 and is currently studying a Master's Degree in Town Planning at the University of Birmingham, closer to home.

Introducing Elliot

Elliot studied A levels in History, Business and Economics at a comprehensive school in Cheltenham before going on to study History and Politics at the University of Nottingham. After taking a year out to travel around South America and start some part-time work, Elliot is currently studying for a Master's programme in International Security and Terrorism, in the hope of progressing his career in this area once he's graduated.

1. What did William and Elliot want to be when they were young and has that changed over time?

Neither expressed a particular interest in what they wanted to be, they both selected subjects at school and university that they enjoyed and were good at. In the second and third year of their undergraduate degrees, both had a better idea of a potential profession...

“**As long as they can throw themselves into new activities and experiences and chat to people, they'll have a great time and you'll love to spoil them when they come home for the weekend!**”

2. Did they always want to go to university?

Both William and Elliot knew they wanted the experience of studying at university and didn't really show an interest in entering the world of work after leaving school.

3. Did you attend any school events, talks, UCAS fairs or Open Days?

Yes, lots! Open Days were essential in finding out what they did, or didn't want, from a university. It was also helpful for them to think about what they'd compromise on too. Whether that was the location of the university, the halls of residence or degree type. We attended lots of Open Days together as a family, which was a great way to see what the university was like and also have a look around the town or city. It helped both my sons, and us as parents, to get a feel for the university and experience what the city had to offer. It also helped to cement their desire to study at a Russell Group university.

4. How did you decide which Open Days to attend?

My sons took different approaches to picking Open Days and researching universities. Elliot did his homework and did lots of research online before choosing which universities to attend. He read lots of online forums, blogs and reviews to help him get a feel for the university, understand its reputation and get a gauge of what student life might be like.

William, however, had a more relaxed approach to selecting which Open Days to attend. They both decided they would like to be around a two-hour train journey from home, so that helped to narrow down their selection. Every university was so different from the next, so Open Days really were a vital research tool that helped with their final decisions.

5. What was the biggest factor that influenced their decision to study at the University of Nottingham and the University of Exeter?

As mentioned, both wanted to be approximately two hours on a main train line from home. This turned out to be a great decision as it meant they could pop home for the weekend without it taking too much time and costing the earth!

Both William and Elliot were led by the subjects they wanted to study, but the campus and student life also had an impact on their decisions.

6. How did you feel about your sons going to university and moving away from home?

Both my husband and I were very excited about our children going to university, we knew that it would be a great experience for them and would help them to progress with their chosen careers. We were nervous about the pressures of big nights out without their network of school friends being with them, but they soon made close friends and had a great time socialising together.

7. How did you help your sons prepare for university?

As a family we often cook together, so this put them in great stead for cooking for themselves. They've always done jobs around the house – cleaning their rooms, helping with chores etc, so that turned out to be useful when it came to looking after themselves! Both had part-time jobs when they were in sixth form too, which I think really helped them to budget and understand the value of money from a fairly young age.

8. Do you have any advice for other parents who are about to go on the same journey?

Remember that it won't always be easy for your young person, but knowing they can always call, FaceTime or even come home if they need to will really help. We decided to treat both to a gym membership in their first year, which encouraged them to keep fit and, in turn, they both made great friends through sports clubs.

We found that it's important not to ask too many questions when they do come home, as they often like to just take it easy, away from the pressures of their studies.

Consider catered accommodation during their first year. Elliot had a catered hall-of-residence which we think really helped him to socialise and make friends, especially with students

who weren't on his course. It's worth the extra spend, plus it's good to know they had the option of a warm meal everyday!

Finally, be prepared to drop everything to go and see them if they need you.

9. As a parent, is there anything you wish you had known about?

Not really, we felt well-researched. If anything, I would say that catered accommodation is worth the extra money. It helps with socialising as they can always find someone on their corridor to go along to dinner with.

10. Overall, how have William and Elliot found university and the experience of living away from home?

They've loved every minute and have really thrown themselves into student life. They've taken on lots of different experiences, joined various clubs and embraced different opportunities, which they've thoroughly enjoyed. Luckily, it wasn't just the social side of university that they liked; they both really enjoyed their studies too.

11. Thinking about the practicalities of university life, do you have any advice about must-take items?

A doorstep is a must! Being able to wedge your door open so people can see you and pop in for a chat is great. It's an essential item, especially for the first few weeks. Also, lots of coat hangers, vitamins and things to help them personalise their room. We also put together a snack box for a familiar treat. We still put together these boxes for them to take back to university when they come home – nice shower gel, chocolate treats, a good book, magazine, shaving gel etc. I actually asked my son this question too and he said his advice would be "speak to anybody and everyone in your first few weeks" as it really helped him to make friends.

“**They've loved every minute and have really thrown themselves into student life. They've taken on lots of different experiences, joined various clubs, such as surfing, rugby and debating society, and had lots of different opportunities which they've thoroughly enjoyed.**”

Preparing for the university transition

By Philippa Dobree-Carey, Director at From High School to Uni

University may feel a long way off, especially if your young person is just starting Sixth Form or heading into exam season. But the big departure is just around the corner, and you need to be ready.

There are many pieces to this puzzle. University can seem intimidating for some students, especially for those who are first-in-the-family to go to university, but it can be stressful for parents too. While higher education offers great opportunities for your young person's personal growth, academic achievement, and career development, it also requires financial planning, emotional support and cheerleading from the sidelines as they become an independent adult.

This guide provides a roadmap for a smooth transition and valuable tips to help you support your young person and help them to navigate this new chapter in their life.

First of all, it's best to get organised. Here are five priorities to tackle during the summer holidays:

1. Research the university: Before packing begins, it's important to get to know the university better and find out more about what it has to offer. Encourage your young person to explore the university's website and student handbook, and research the local area to familiarise themselves with the place. This will give them a better understanding of what to expect and can help to reduce anxiety.

2. Managing a budget: This is one of the most important life skills you can teach your young person. Work together to come up with a realistic budget that will cover their basic

expenses, but also show them how to pay bills and manage their money effectively.

3. Time management: If they haven't learnt it at school, university will demand effective time management to juggle classes, assignments, activities, a part-time job and a social life. Teach your young person how to use their calendar, planner, or an app to keep track of deadlines, appointments and projects to stay organised and avoid last-minute stress!

Unlike school, university relies on a student's own motivation and dedication to complete their assignments. No one will nag them or give them a detention if they don't hand in an assignment. Accountability is something they'll need to get to grips with if they haven't already.

4. Life skills: Teach your young person some practical life skills such as cooking, shopping, meal planning and washing before they leave home. Show them how to read clothes labels and give them a practice run by giving them a shopping list and a limited budget over the summer holidays to help them learn more about budgeting and meal planning.

5. Make connections: University can feel isolating at first and loneliness is one of the reasons why students want to drop out. I would strongly recommend that your young person connects with other students on their course through social media groups over the summer. Having a ready-made friend on arrival can ease the transition and help to combat any feelings of loneliness.

Finally, remember that this is an emotional time for both of you and it will take some adjustment.

There may be slight wobbles along the way, but encourage your young person to make use of the vast university resources to support them with any challenges they may face, from mental health to financial help. The house may feel emptier and quieter, but at least you'll notice a difference in the price of your food shop... until the holidays!

“ University may feel a long way off, especially if your young person is just starting Sixth Form or heading into exam season. But the big departure is just around the corner, and you need to be ready ”

Credits - a special thanks to all our guest contributors

Ailsa Mackay
Heriot-Watt University

Amanda Moralee
University of Sunderland

Andrew Cooper
University of Liverpool

Andy Long
Keele University

Ashleigh Little
University of Sunderland

Carl Griffiths
Harper Adams University

Carly Outerbridge
Keele University

Carol Rogers
Harper Adams University

Charlie Smith
University of Bath

Chris Hakes
University of East Anglia

Claire Churchill
University of Birmingham

Dale Hurst
Arts University Bournemouth

Dr Clare Dickens
University of Wolverhampton

Dr Morag Duffin
The University of Law

Dr Sarah Mohammad-Qureshi
The University of Law

Ella Sancassani
University of Essex

Ellie Campbell
Keele University

Emily Durrant
University of Essex

Emily Jordan
University of Winchester

Emma Berwick
University of Birmingham

Emma Churchill
University of Exeter

Ethan-lee Mackay
University of South Wales

Heather Francis
University of South Wales

Helen Robinson
UniTasterDays

Jen Barton
Durham University

Joe Glover
University of Leicester

Jon Cheek
UniTasterDays

Kate Nelson
Teesside University

Laura Whitelock
University of York

Leanne Punchard
University of Suffolk

Marc Alner
Birmingham City University

Marie Clifford
University of South Wales

Mark Faulkner
University of South Wales

Matt Spink
University of Salford

Max Harvey
Cardiff University

Melissa Grindon
Liverpool Hope University

Michael Tomkinson
University of Wolverhampton

Natalie Johnston
University of Salford

Philippa Dobrée-Carey
From High School to Uni

Rhiannon Smith
Study in Wales

Roisin Byrn
Kier Group

Rowan Hoper
University of Salford

Samantha Sykes
UCAS

Sarah Hanson
University of Liverpool

Sarah Hewitson
University of Portsmouth

Sarah Wiltshire
University of South Wales

Selena Lockett
Swansea University

Stephanie Willmott
University of West London

Susie Kilburn
City, University of London

Kat Knight
City, University of London

Suzie Loader
University of Exeter

Tasha Bodger
Harper Adams University

Wendy Price
University of Sunderland



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