Featuring expert contributions from over 40 higher education practitioners.

UniTasterDays.com

Parents' Guide to University 2022

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

Produced in collaboration with HELOA

Contents

Preparing for university and pre-application pointers

4 | A parent guide to the benefits of university

5 | A parent guide to the different types of higher education courses

7 | A parent guide to how students can make the most of university

10 | Preparing for the university transition – a parent guide to how things are different from school

11 | A parent guide to how students can make their post-16 and post-18 subject choices with university in mind

12 | A parent guide to school and college option choices – do students need to study certain subjects for their university course?

14 | Supporting students when they are making university choices – three steps to success

15 | A parent guide to university league tables

16 | They want to study X but I really want them to study Y. How can a parent support university choices?

17 | A guide to the support available for international students considering studying in the United Kingdom

19 | A parent guide to international university study opportunities

20 | A parent guide to university accommodation

22 | A parent guide to degree apprenticeships

University events and updates

23 | A parent guide to university events

25 | A parent guide to booking and planning university open days

26 | A parent guide to attending a university open day – what to expect when you arrive

27 | What's new in higher education? The key updates for parents

29 | A parent guide to communications - who will universities communicate with, and when?

30 | A parent guide to university widening participation and access programmes

31 | A parent guide to event targeting – why are certain events only available for certain students?

University finance and wellbeing

33 | A guide to supporting care experienced students into higher education

34 | How do universities promote student wellbeing?

35 | Getting to grips with Student Finance – a parent guide

37 | A parent guide to university bursaries and scholarships

38 | A parent guide to how universities support students in need of additional support

39 | A parent guide to how universities help students who need study skills development and support

University applications

40 | A guide to applying for university courses as a mature student

41 | A parent guide to supporting students working on their personal statements

43 | A parent guide to university application deadlines

44 | A parent guide to contextual admissions

46 | A parent guide to the qualifications universities will accept for entry

47 | A parent guide to university applications

49 | A parent guide to how students can make their university application stand out

50 | A parent guide to UCAS applications and university offers

51 | A parent guide to Clearing and making university decisions on A Level results day

Careers, employability and terms

53 | Tips for students whilst they're at university – it is never too early for a plan!

54 | A parent guide to university careers support and future student employability

55 | Subject in spotlight - The value of a Performing Arts degree

57 | A parent guide to university student life

58 | Student voice – why did I go to university?

59 | A parent guide to what students do outside of their course

61 | A higher education jargon buster

Welcome to the Parents' Guide to University 2022

This guide has been produced by UniTasterDays.com to help you, as a parent or guardian, to 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 financial information, student life, how students can access additional support whilst at university and much more.

But ultimately it is about preparing you as a parent or guardian to provide helpful support when you're having university discussions in the future. It may even encourage you to consider university yourself!

Experts on your side

This 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 not only universities offer higher education programmes. We just use 'university' as it avoids another acronym and using 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
Director, UniTasterDays.com

"Members of HELOA are delighted to have been asked to collaborate on the Parents Guide to University, a combined effort of staff, student and parent voices to support you in supporting your young person. Whether it's in person in schools and colleges, on campus at open events or online, our members work together to support thousands of prospective students and their families to navigate the range of choices available in higher education each year. If this is your first journey through the process, or you're not sure what has changed recently, this guide is a great place to start."

Fiona Curry, HELOA Partnerships Manager

HELOA

Your FREE resource to support future university decisions

- Search university events
- Watch university guidance webinars
- Read university advice and news

UniTasterDays.com

www.unitasterdays.com info@unitasterdays.com @UniTasterDays /UniTasterDays

A parent guide to the benefits of university

By Nia Stokes, Undergraduate Student Recruitment Officer at Swansea University

If your child is the first in the family to consider higher education, or if you're unclear about what their options are, this article will provide more clarity on the benefits of university.

Sending your child away to university is a key life event and can seem daunting if they haven't left home before, so it's important to understand the potential benefits of this decision.

How does university education differ from school?

University allows students to pursue a passion, focusing on one or two core subjects. This can be an extremely motivating concept after studying multiple subjects at school or college and provides a new academic challenge with a different system of teaching and marking.

Large lectures will introduce students to university-level topics, while smaller tutorial groups will allow for in-depth discussion. Students can also request one to one time with lecturers during open office slots, providing direct academic support.

University can help improve job prospects

Higher education degrees can improve career prospects, and universities present graduate prospect data in their prospectuses and marketing materials. Looking at these figures will help your son or daughter compare which degree will provide them with the most job security in the future.

Some courses also offer a year abroad or a year in industry, which students can complete in their third year, making these four-year degree courses. A year abroad can include studying, working or volunteering in a partner organisation, providing a range of experiences to present to employers following graduation. A year in industry may involve a paid placement, offering invaluable work experience and networking connections to use at the end of a degree.

University develops independence and life skills

Although daunting, studying in a new place and living away from home could give your child their own independence. They will need to manage their own finances, organise domestic activities like cooking and cleaning, and make friends in an unfamiliar environment. University is a great way to practice these life skills, especially with the help of support teams, including student finance and the students' union. Friends for life are usually made at university, as socialising in halls, lectures and clubs and societies often connects like-minded people.

As well as domestic skills, university develops students' key skills. Time management is essential to organise independent study, students will use their initiative to join extra-curricular activities and communication abilities will be developed in everything from group tasks to written assignments.

Even if a student will progress into a career that doesn't directly link to their degree subject, employers universally recognise the transferrable skills that a degree offers.

A parent guide to the different types of higher education courses

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

Whilst it is important for students to research different universities, choosing the right course for them should be their 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. We have 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. These courses are designed to improve academic skills and subject-specific knowledge as well as preparing students for undergraduate study and life at university. Upon successful completion of their foundation year, students will often automatically progress to year 1 of their chosen undergraduate degree.

Bachelor's degree

A Bachelor's degree is the most common type of undergraduate degree. These are typically three-year programmes, although can vary dependant 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 – this may be a great option for those with interests spanning multiple subject areas.

Sandwich programmes

Sandwich programmes provide students with the ability to incorporate a study abroad or placement year within 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 and develop their work experience to boost employability.

Degree Apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity as an alternative route into higher education with the support of an existing employer to further a young person's career; enabling students to study towards a degree while working and earning.

Higher National Certificate and Diploma

Available in a range of disciplines, Higher National Certificates (HNC) or Diplomas (HND) are often focused around industry and incorporate practical methods of learning. These courses typically take one to two years to complete and can enable students to progress into the second or third year of a full Bachelor's programme.

Integrated Masters

These courses combine undergraduate and postgraduate study to enable students to graduate with a Masters qualification on completion of their course.

Final tip - don't judge a course by the title

The content and delivery of courses with the same title can vary significantly across different universities and it is important that students do their research to dig beyond the course title. Students may wish to study something familiar or try something they haven't heard of before – I would recommend students take the time to explore all of their options.

> **"Whilst it is important for students to research different universities, choosing the right course for them should be their crucial first step."**

University of Essex
IMPATIENT
TO SEE YOUR CHILD
SUCCEED?
SCAN HERE
to sign up to
our newsletter
essex.ac.uk

A parent guide to how students can make the most of university

By Sophie Threlfall, Recruitment & Outreach Officer at the University of Salford

Move away from home and explore

By the time they are 18 years old, many young people may have outgrown their home town and perhaps would like to study somewhere new. There are hundreds of universities to choose from in the UK alone, so students will have a lot of opportunities available to them – both close to home and those further away.

> **"University is about so much more than simply studying for a degree - it is also about students developing and growing holistically through new challenges and experiences they will encounter."**

If personal circumstances allow, students may wish to consider moving away from home, into supported student halls of residence as a first-year student. What better way to meet new people and make new friends, than moving to an entirely new place that they will have three years (in most cases) to explore and get to know! It is also a great way to meet different people from diverse backgrounds from both around the UK and further afield.

You may also wish to consider encouraging your young person to explore places and travel as much as they can; they may discover some hidden gems in different parts of the country they had never heard of along the way!

Try something new – student societies

University is about continuing to discover who you are, so students shouldn't be afraid to try something new. There are many societies and sports clubs to join and become part of at university, so if your young person has always fancied giving something a go, university provides the perfect opportunity to try it. Being part of a society or club is also a great way to meet like-minded people and get involved in social activities.

It is important that students strike the right balance between studying and recreational activities, their mental, physical and social well-being are all important, so scheduling down-time alongside studying is an absolute must.

Students don't need to go directly to university

Of course, some students don't choose to go directly to university. Anyone can have a change of direction in the future and return to study as a mature student, so it's never too late to turn their hand to something new at university. To find out more about returning to study as a mature student, including opportunities for parents and guardians see page 40.

Relish opportunities

Universities know that it can be daunting for students to find their feet in the first year, so there are always plenty of welcome activities and on-campus events for them to attend to ease the transition.

Students should try to take advantage of suitable opportunities that come their way - as we know, you're only young once! Please encourage your young person to attend university events such as welcome week, freshers fairs and comedy and live music nights.

Whether it be field trips or a year in industry or abroad that might come their way, students should make the most of these opportunities while they can. Please remind your young person that new experiences outside of their comfort zone, including volunteering or finding part time work will support their resilience and employability skills.

Once they're studying, if your young person feels they would be able to speak confidently about their course and university experience

to prospective students, you could suggest they enquire about becoming a course representative or being part of the student ambassador scheme to support with university open events and more.

Be mindful

Please reassure your young person that they should not put too much pressure on themselves. University can be a fantastic experience, but students shouldn't try and do everything at once, they should pace themselves and set specific time aside for relaxation as well as study.

At university there are different support networks to support students personally and professionally. If they find themselves struggling, they should not suffer in silence, so encourage your young person to ask for any help required. We want to ensure students make the most of their time at university, so please encourage them to always access any support they may need.

Be frugal

The money saving possibilities as a student are endless, but the more disposable income they have, the better! They may wish to consider study locations where their money will go further, and I would suggest bigger food shops at cheaper supermarkets to last longer, rather than shopping in smaller convenience stores.

Students should invest in a student union card and use this to get discounts on local leisure activities, shopping and restaurants. If they're going to be using the train, it is well worth investing in a young person's rail card to save 1/3 off rail travel. Remember students are exempt from paying council tax. If they are in self-catered university accommodation, cooking skills would also be very handy before they move in!

What does the future hold as a graduate?

Although none of us can predict the future, we can be as savvy as possible when making informed choices of where and what to study. Lots of graduates secure employment near to where they studied, and where they have undertaken a year in industry may have already led to many positive connections. They may also wish to look at labour market information to predict growing graduate job market opportunities.

"They should not put too much pressure on themselves. University can be a fantastic experience, but students shouldn't try and do everything at once, they should pace themselves and set specific time aside for relaxation as well as study."

// Peel Park

// The Ignition Project

// MediaCity

University of Salford MANCHESTER

BECOME UNSTOPPABLE AT SALFORD.

With unbeatable links to industry and state-of-the-art facilities, award-winning academics, and our fantastic location just 2km from Manchester city centre, the University of Salford is a great place to live, study and work.

But don't just take our word for it. As a parent, carer, guardian or supporter, we understand you'll want to help your child to make an informed decision about studying at university and we have lots of information and resources to help you to do this.

Find out more about university life and what Salford has to offer, including:

- The application process
- Accommodation and commuter information
- Our green campus and facilities
- Our student support services

Visit salford.ac.uk/parents

Our Open Days

Our 2023 Prospectus

Preparing for the university transition – a parent guide to how things are different from school

By Gemma Stead, Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer at the University of Huddersfield

Studying in a university environment can seem like a big change for students, especially after completing much of their studies at home during the pandemic.

There are many differences between school and university, the biggest being that students can expect a lot more independence both academically and socially. For many, this is a big reason for choosing to attend university, but it may also take a bit of getting used to.

Below are some of the key differences you may wish to highlight when discussing university transition with the young person you support.

Time keeping and deadlines

University lecturers and tutors don't chase students for drafts of their work or give regular reminders of when their work is due for submission. Similarly, although attendance is usually monitored centrally, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that they turn up for their study commitments.

It is important that students manage their time effectively, especially when balancing what is on offer socially with succeeding in their studies.

Academic writing and research

Students are expected to do the majority of their work independently. Topics, key themes and concepts are outlined by academic staff through lectures and seminars, but students are then expected to go away and research these in detail, using their own initiative. This requires a lot of self-motivation, choosing a subject they are passionate about will help with this.

The style of writing expected of students is also different at university with an expectation to think critically when researching topics, offering balanced arguments in essays, backed up by quotes and references from their background reading. This is why referencing is so important. There is usually lots of help on hand to support students with this when they start their university course.

Student life

Student life at university will seem very different to school life. The opportunities available to learn new skills and meet new people are really exciting and an excellent way to build skills that employers value, such as confidence, resilience and willingness to try new things.

The Student's Union organises most social activities which include the many clubs and societies on offer. Joining a society is a great way for students to meet like-minded people and try out new activities.

Support available

Although moving to university study can seem like a big step, there is lots of support available to transition to a new way of working. Students aren't expected to adjust to the change overnight and allowances are made, particularly for first year students when it comes to skills such as referencing. Universities may also offer a 'buddy' system where new students can call on support from others who have previously faced similar challenges.

"There are many differences between school and university, the biggest being that students can expect a lot more independence both academically and socially. For many, this is a big reason for choosing to attend university, but it may also take a bit of getting used to."

A parent guide to how students can make their post-16 and post-18 subject choices with university in mind

By Andrew Cooper, School & College Account Manager at Liverpool John Moores University.

Sending your child off to university is an odd time for parents and guardians, you may be feeling nervous and not sure where to begin when supporting their decisions. I often have longer conversations with parents at events than students, with the main questions from parents being: *Where do we start in order to help?* and *What should they do to get onto the course?* Hopefully, this piece and the wider guide will help.

What do they want to do?

There is a lot of coverage in the press about what a 'good degree' is, and this can lead to misconceptions that students won't get a good job if they study certain subjects. It is easy to understand why you may wish to encourage your young person in a certain direction, but generally it should be about what is best for your child. Listen to what they want to study and support them to find out as much information as possible about it.

There are many career possibilities from a single subject, some that don't even seem connected. There are also plenty of transferable skills, which means a student can walk into a huge range of careers outside their subject area if they wish to. It is often easier to pick post-16 options if they have a desired or perceived direction of travel after their courses.

Support their research

Look through university courses. Any admissions criteria will be stated on the course entry requirements and obviously may have an impact on decisions.

Ask what tools your child's school use when researching courses, if they are already using resources such as Unifrog or chatting to students on The Student Room, they can find out what other students with similar interests have gone on to do. Other useful websites can explore labour insights (to help pick a degree area) or SACU has an A Level match tool, where students can put in what A Levels they wish to study and see degree matches that people studying the same subjects have progressed on to.

What if they have no idea on post 16 and/or post-18 choices?

Don't worry. Many students in Year 13 say they still don't know what they want to do. Advise them to consider subjects which they enjoy, that they are good at and where they would also meet university entry requirements. If they are predicted good grades and they enjoy the subject, that is a great place to start.

There are many things to consider, but the best way to plan post-16 options is to keep an open dialogue with your child, their school and future providers. Experiencing university in person will always be useful and UniTasterDays.com is a great way to find open days, as well as further support sessions for parents.

A parent guide to school and college option choices – do students need to study certain subjects for their university course?

By David Handy, Head of Admissions at King Edward VI College Stourbridge (Previously Senior Student Recruitment Manager at Newman University)

As students progress through Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, they will be exploring lots of different opportunities in the wider world. Through their exposure to colleges, higher education institutions, apprenticeship providers, employers and other opportunities, they will have a myriad of choices to navigate.

Teachers and careers advisors will signpost students to potential futures and help guide them through the process, making sure they have an ambitious but also a realistic vision for the future. But you also have a huge influence as a parent or guardian. I will provide key information you'll find useful when providing this support here.

GCSE pre-requisites

English Language and Mathematics at GCSE are imperative for students who are looking to progress to higher education. It is important that you reinforce the significance in achieving a Grade 4 or above for them to progress onto both Level 3 and higher education provision.

For some courses GCSE Science will also be very important, particularly for young people thinking of studying science courses (including Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology and Veterinary Science).

Level 3 course selection

When young people are investigating their Level 3 courses, I would recommend that they always have one eye on their next steps and to make sure that the courses they are selecting are going to enable them to progress to it.

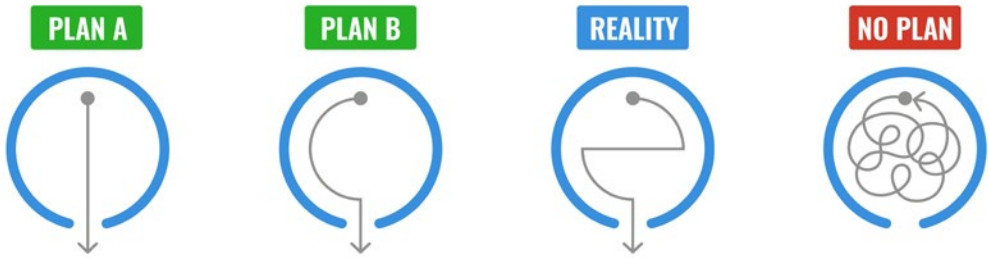
Some young people may have ideas that are potentially going to prove challenging for them in terms of their academic abilities and may need guidance towards appropriate opportunities. For example, whilst a student may not be able to progress towards a Medicine degree, there may be other opportunities within the NHS or healthcare sector that they could explore.

Entry requirements

It is important that throughout the process students are guided to review entry requirements for both their Level 3 and higher education options.

Alongside this, it is also important for them to closely look at university prospectuses and websites to ensure they are considering making the right option choices for the higher education course they may wish to pursue in the future.

> **"I would recommend that they always have one eye on their next steps and to make sure that the courses they are selecting are going to enable them to progress to it."**



University of Reading

JOIN OUR PARENTS AND SUPPORTERS' NETWORK

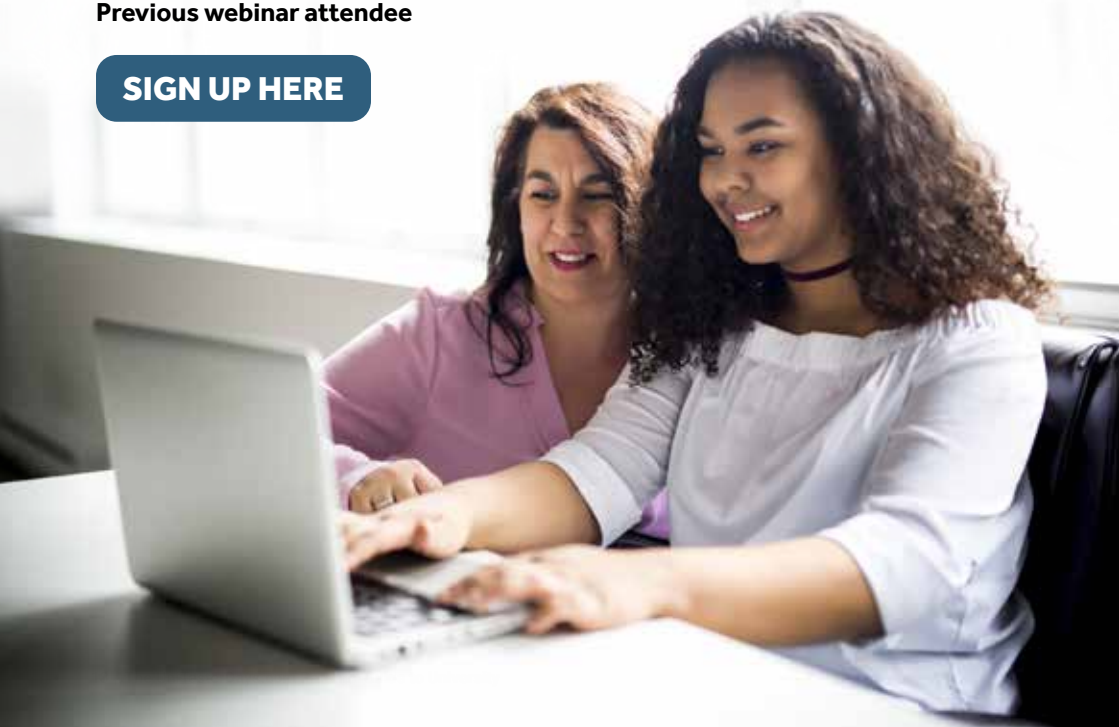
Are you looking to support your young person in their journey to university?

Our Parents and Supporters' Network will give you access to regular live webinars, monthly newsletters with topical updates and our free, online course. We'll guide you through all the key aspects of your young persons' application from choosing the right course for them to student finance and beyond.

> "This was very useful and the first step by an anxious mum to gain some knowledge about the process. Our eldest son is the first in our entire family to want to go to university. Thank you!"

Previous webinar attendee

SIGN UP HERE



Supporting students when they are making university choices – three steps to success

By Poppy Hudghton, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Manager at Queen Mary, University of London

Studying at university will offer your young person an invaluable qualification at the end of their degree programme, and from their first day at university, they'll be supported with the guidance, tools and opportunities to build their skills and confidence.

Whilst choosing to study at university can be a big decision, choosing what and where to study can feel like an even bigger one. I've pulled together a three-step guide to help you support your young person when they are undertaking preparation and subsequently making decisions.

Step one: Researching courses

There are lots of course options to explore and it's never too early to start the discussion. Useful websites and tools include the UCAS Course Search, The Complete University Guide, and Prospects. Universities also have their own course finders which are the best place to find out more about modules, entry requirements, and course structure.

Step two: Prioritising universities

Once your young person has an idea of what course they want to study, the next step is to narrow down university choices. A good starting point is to make a list of priorities, covering what is important to your young person. Their priorities might include:

- Do they want to live at home or move away?
- Do they want to study in a city or a rural area?
- Do they prefer exams/coursework, what does each university offer?
- Does the university offer financial support, bursaries or scholarships?
- Are the entry requirements realistic?
- What study support is available at each university?

Step three: Explore avenues to ask questions

Once your young person has a long list of university options, we would encourage a more personalised approach to whittling down their choices. Speaking to current students, support staff and academics is invaluable, and there are plenty of resources and events out there to help along the way. The first port of call might be booking a number of open days, to explore the campus whilst engaging with current students and staff.

Note from UniTasterDays

You can search events offered by universities UK-wide using UniTasterDays.com

You and your young person may also want to consider exploring services such as Unibuddy which allows prospective students to interact with current students, as well as booking taster lectures and watching webinars like those on the UniTasterDays on demand platform.

Once your young person has narrowed down their options and has a realistic feel for the entry requirements, they'll need to settle down to apply on UCAS. Their school or college are likely to offer support with this, to supplement the wealth of information available online.

Best of luck with the process, it's a fun journey to go on!

A parent guide to university league tables

By Meg Griessel, Student Recruitment Officer (Schools & Colleges) at St Mary's University, Twickenham

When navigating university league tables, it's important for the young person you support to recognise more than just an institution's 'overall position'. They should consider multiple university league tables with their top priorities for higher education study in mind. And remember – if they discover that the institution they want to apply to doesn't rank highly on one league table, this doesn't mean this university isn't for them!

Which university league tables are available?

There are three 'major' league tables: The Sunday Times Good University Guide, The Guardian University Guide and The Complete University Guide. There are also student experience rankings such as WhatUni?, whose figures are primarily based on student surveys and opinion. Then there are international league tables, the most notable being: Times Higher Education World University Rankings or the QS World University Rankings.

What will university league tables tell a student?

League tables tell students (and parents supporting them) more than simply which university is the best at teaching. When you look at league tables it's important to understand the methodology that the publication uses. Each source will state which criteria they've prioritised or considered - this will include, but is not limited to: teaching excellence, research, and student experience. This will explain why an institution might rank differently between university league tables.

It will also help learners understand how the strengths of different institutions are displayed. If two students are interested in the same subject, one may be more concerned about the quality of teaching and student experience, while the other may be more attracted by the quality of research. The significance of each table really comes down to the individual student and their specific needs.

The different metrics a league table is presenting should also be considered. When viewing tables online, you and the person you support can adjust rankings to view where a university ranks on the specific criteria a student has prioritised as key to their university experience. For instance, if a student thrives better in environments with frequent staff support you can arrange the Guardian University Guide to see the student-staff-ratio at each institution, determining how much access learners will have to their tutors.

Don't forget university subject league tables too!

Major university guides will also provide rankings at subject level. Often learners will not consider a university because it's in the bottom half of a league table. But they may discover that the same institution offers the best course in the country for their desired subject! This is especially true for areas like medicine, veterinary science and dentistry, where a smaller number of institutions offer these programmes.

> **"A league table can't tell you everything. They should be one tool that is used as part of a student's research. It is important to encourage the person you are supporting to also visit universities, reach out to potential lecturers, and to speak to current students studying at the universities they wish to apply to."**

They want to study X but I really want them to study Y. How can a parent support university choices?

By Khashim Hussain, Senior Recruitment Officer (Schools & Colleges) at Brunel University London

It is great that your child has shown an interest in a specific course. Students tend to do better when they have a genuine interest in the subject and when they are enthusiastic about the course they have chosen.

Your child will spend a great deal of time on their degree studies - usually three or four years and a great deal of money along the way too! It is a huge investment for them as well as you in a supporting role. Below are a few things to remember when discussing course choices with the young person you support.

They'll encounter opportunities outside of the subject too

Many courses offer a placement opportunity which provides students with industry work experience. Some courses have the option of studying abroad as part of the course as well. These different modes of study provide invaluable levels of transferable skills which will broaden career opportunities after graduating.

They may not work in the subject area they've studied

Some courses, such as Law, can lead straight into a career, whereas others do not have a direct career path on graduation. For example, studying History at university may not have a direct career path in the same way Law does, but a History graduate can still go on to train as a lawyer.

They'll develop transferrable skills

Staying with our History and Law example, History graduates are highly valued within the legal profession due to their strong analytical and critical reasoning skills. As a parent or guardian, it is worthwhile to look beyond the course title and look at the contents of the course to gain a better understanding of the skills and experiences that will be gained.

Visiting a university open day, either in-person or virtually is a good idea to explore a subject further. It provides you and your child the opportunity to speak to both academics and current students, and explore the subject area in greater depth.

Note from UniTasterDays

You can search events offered by universities UK-wide using UniTasterDays.com

> **"As a parent or guardian, it is worthwhile to look beyond the course title and look at the contents of the course to gain a better understanding of the skills and experiences that will be gained."**

A guide to the support available for international students considering studying in the United Kingdom

By Dan Flanagan, Undergraduate Student Recruitment Manager (International) at Keele University

Choosing the right course and university is a daunting experience for any student, but international students have added levels of complexity. Visas, student caps, working with agents, as well as moving to another country often make the process a daunting and seemingly confusing experience. As a parent or guardian, there are many things you can do to support your child throughout this process.

There are a few simple steps which may support a choice that will impact a lifetime. I will outline these here.

Getting the right support

International education is by nature a complicated endeavour, with many layers and moving parts. However, a wealth of support exists in the form of school counsellors, fellow students and perhaps an area you may not have come across before, educational agents. Agents act on behalf of universities to ensure students receive continued support through the process. They are located across the world and guide thousands of students each year on their journey to university.

If support is not offered in your young person's school, you may wish to contact an agent for additional support. Most are free so there is likely to be no cost to you! Also, remember universities have teams of international staff who are happy to support – don't be afraid to reach out!

Understanding what they want

The biggest challenge for students when it comes to their future is making a decision, because there are so many fantastic opportunities available. Firstly, making a decision on their course, but importantly for international students, deciding where to study it. Key factors for international students include which country, as well as the location within that country. For example, whilst a student may like the idea of a university based in London, if the perfect course for them is in Newcastle, should they consider there?

There are a variety of things to consider related to location, but also to educational structure. For example, an undergraduate degree in England is typically three years compared to four years in the USA. By helping students understand what they want, the choice becomes that little bit easier. As parents, your guidance is invaluable during this process.

What's the end goal?

An important question to discuss with your child is 'why?'. If students understand why they are going to university, the choice of where and what to study becomes that much easier.

For example, if they want to work for a certain company, they may wish to research which universities that company partners with. If it's to emigrate in the long term, investigate which country offers the most attractive post-study work visa. Even if a student doesn't know their end goal and they simply want to study for a fantastic experience, then research student satisfaction rankings and try to speak to current students and alumni. By understanding what the end goal is, the road to get there becomes clearer.

As parents, you are crucial in a student's decision-making process. By using the resources available and asking the right questions, you'll help them make a decision that will set them up for life.

Newman University
BIRMINGHAM

A single campus university to the south west of Birmingham.

Newman is a small, friendly community where our students gain a real sense of belonging.

Top 10

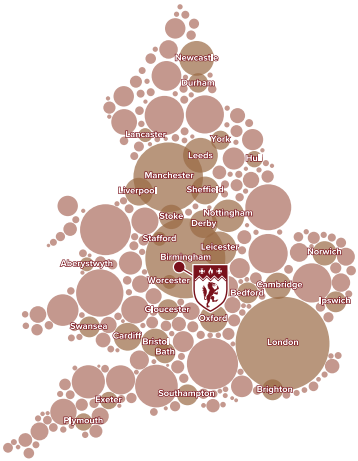
for social mobility of its graduates*

* (Institute for Fiscal Studies and Sutton Trust, November 2021)

Find out for yourselves at one of our Open Days in 2022...

Wed 8th June
Sat 9th July
Sat 8th October
Sat 26th November

newman.ac.uk



A parent guide to international university study opportunities

By David Hawkins, Director and Founder, The University Guys

In an increasingly global world, with students connected to friends, celebrities, news and opportunities all over the world at the click of a button - and Zoom allowing us to all keep in touch, today's students have never been more globally connected, tied into a digital economy that knows no borders.

Yet, when it comes to university, so many focus only on options in the UK. As a result, students are missing out on a huge array of opportunities to find their 'best fit' university around the world, or study at the best university in the world for their subject, not just the best in the UK.

Here, I will guide you through some of the key differences, to help you support your young person who may be considering study opportunities overseas.

Assessments

Students are attracted to the fact that university in other countries doesn't work in the same way as it does in the UK: on a global spectrum, the typical single-subject, final assessment model that most UK universities offer is quite unusual.

In the USA students will study a broader range of subjects and their 'major' will only be about a third of what they study while at university. In the Netherlands (which has over 300 degrees taught entirely in English), the Universities of Applied Science system offer a hands-on style education connected to employers.

Universities across Europe are now offering many international degrees, with options such as the world-class Bachelor of Business Administration at IE Madrid or Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at the Central European University in Vienna, offering life changing opportunities to students who don't want to follow the crowd.

Applications

Application procedures vary widely from UCAS and from country-to-country. When applying to other countries students need to learn new processes, timelines and terminology. Students should start the process at least six months earlier than for UCAS (and, for the US, at least a year earlier due to the probable need to take either the SAT or the ACT).

So, where's popular?

The USA dominates, with universities from the world-class names such as Harvard to lesser-known institutions that compare with the best of the UK. Even in these challenging times, students are working hard preparing university applications to hopefully study at world-leading institutions in California, Florida or New England.

Canada has risen in popularity, with the perception of a more European political and social system, and a favourable immigration regime for post-study work drawing applications to universities such as McGill and Toronto.

Europe is increasingly popular, from studying in English-speaking locations such as Ireland, to courses taught in English across the continent. A particular trend is for students to look at well-regarded private universities in Europe, who offer modern education in a global context, drawing in international students from all over the world to study in cities such as Milan (for Bocconi University) or Dublin (for Trinity College).

Today's students are very globally minded

With changes due to Brexit, students will know that being internationally-connected gives them a wealth of job opportunities after graduation.

Students we worked with last year gained offers from 140 universities in 14 countries, from Stanford in the USA to Leiden in the Netherlands, McGill in Canada to ESADE in Spain. These ambitious and global students will have job opportunities on graduation that their peers at provincial UK universities can only dream of. The time is now ripe for more students to seriously consider international universities: the world is out there!

A parent 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 a daunting time – for the student as well as you as their parent or guardian, particularly as you start to navigate the various accommodation options available. Setting aside time to do research early on will help your young person feel more confident, which will make the transition much easier.

To get started, we recommend searching university websites to find their dedicated accommodation webpages. Here, you will find information about the accommodation on offer, as well as the support provided. You will 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. Often located close to the university itself and tends to be set up specifically for students at that institution. There is normally a wide range of options available to suit all needs and budgets. Typically, applications are made directly to the institution.

Private halls

This is like university managed accommodation but managed by private providers. They are designed specifically for students. Students could be living in flats with students from different institutions if this is a location where there are multiple higher education providers. Typically, applications are made directly to the provider.

Private student housing

This is a popular option for students after their first year. This option 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 away 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 their belongings out over Christmas and Easter vacations.

• What do students have to say about it? If a university has a platform like UniBuddy, make use of this to ask questions directly to current students.

Finally, try to 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 are 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 as their parent or guardian."**

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

DISCOVER UNIVERSITY

Discover University for Parents and Supporters

Our online Discover University platform provides information, advice and guidance for prospective students, parents/guardians, teachers and advisers about studying at university.

We understand how important it is for parents and supporters to be well-equipped to support their young person's journey to higher education. Our dedicated Discover University webpages and social media feeds will provide the key information needed at each stage of the journey.

We also run regular webinars, specifically aimed at parents and supporters, covering a range of topics such as:

- Accommodation
- Preparation for University
- Student Finance
- Support for Results Day
- Support Services for Students

Sign up for our free webinars aimed at parents/supporters: **exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/applying/accessexeter/parents**

RUSSELL GROUP

Follow us for regular updates, links to events and resources: @DiscoverUniExe

2022CAMS010

A parent guide to degree apprenticeships

By Poppy Hudghton, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Manager at Queen Mary University of London

Choosing a course and university can be a daunting task, and even more so with so many study options available for your young person to consider. In this piece we look at degree apprenticeships, making them as easy as possible to navigate and understand.

What is a degree apprenticeship?

The UK Government launched degree apprenticeships as a way of combining the best of higher and vocational education to address skills shortages across the UK economy. Degree apprentices split their time between study and work, gaining paid employment while achieving a full degree in the process.

What are the benefits of degree apprenticeships?

There are some clear-cut benefits to undertaking a degree apprenticeship. Students do not pay tuition fees as these are covered by the sponsoring employer and they also earn a salary whilst studying. As well as gaining a full degree, students benefit from real on-the-job training, meaning that they are well prepared for continued success in the world of work.

Are there any disadvantages?

As a part-time student, degree apprentices don't always qualify for on-campus accommodation, and as they are working, they might not have as much time as traditional degree students to engage in social and leisure activities.

Students will also need to find a balance between working and studying. Whilst this can be challenging, there are support services to ensure students have the assistance needed throughout their studies.

How can I find out more?

There are over thirty degree apprenticeship courses on offer in England, with thousands of employers to choose from. There are useful resources available on the National Apprenticeship Services website, where students can also explore current vacancies and openings. UCAS and the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education also host some handy guides and list vacancies. We recommend encouraging your young person to start their research early.

As well as the useful websites given above, some universities offer webinars and application support sessions to help you and those you are supporting to navigate degree apprenticeships. You should also look out for university open days and encourage your young person to speak to staff, employers and academics to best prepare for the application process if they choose to apply for one.

Note from UniTasterDays

You can search events offered by universities UK-wide using UniTasterDays.com

> **"The UK Government launched degree apprenticeships as a way of combining the best of higher and vocational education to address skills shortages across the UK economy."**

A parent guide to university events

By Melissa Grindon, Creative Projects Officer at Liverpool Hope University

As a parent or guardian, it is important and reassuring to know that your child is going to an institution where they feel comfortable, safe and confident. However, despite an endless amount of information available online, it is 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 are unsure of where to begin when supporting your child making their decision, a higher education fair is a great start. Fairs are great for students to speak to student ambassadors, enabling 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 within higher education. Exhibitors also provide plenty of information and materials, so you will have plenty of resources to reflect upon when it comes to supporting your child making their university choices and writing their application.

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 open days - there's not only academic based talks about course content, but sessions focusing on aspects such as student finance, student development, wellbeing and accommodation.

Academic meetings and campus tours

If you find you cannot make open day dates, universities can also offer one-on-one academic meetings and campus/accommodation tours for families. These can lessen the pressure of attending a larger event, giving you a chance to really take in the surroundings and have the advantage of speaking to a member of the recruitment team about any concerns or questions you may have.

Applicant days

Applicant days are similar to open days, but more catered towards students who have made their UCAS application and are getting closer to making their final decision. Universities also host subject tasters, giving the student a chance to experience a day in the life of someone on their degree course and even meet those currently studying the programme.

Guidance for parents and guardians

If you still find yourself unsure, or simply need more from potential institution choices, a lot of universities have parent and guardian portals or information pages on their websites. Some institutions present online webinars and question and answer sessions, giving you the opportunity to alleviate concerns.

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

> **"A lot of universities have parent and guardian portals or information pages on their websites."**

LIVERPOOL
HOPE
UNIVERSITY

EXPAND YOUR THINKING

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOPE

Find out more about Liverpool Hope.

Attend one of our upcoming events: **www.hope.ac.uk/visitus**

A parent guide to booking and planning university open days

By Georgia Hargreaves, Events and Project Coordinator at Edge Hill University

Attending a university open day can be one of the best ways to support a student when choosing the course and the universities they would like to apply to.

Below are some of my top tips for making the most out of a university open day, towards helping the young person you support to make great university choices.

Booking an open day

The first step to making the most of university open days is choosing which ones to attend! Making a list of the universities your young person wants to see and which date each of their open days are taking place is good place to start.

By planning ahead, you can organise transport and accommodation in advance and make sure that you have enough time to see all the universities on your list. I would also recommend taking advantage of the virtual open day resources which are now available online. This is a good way to research universities before you make the journey to see them in person - and can also be a great alternative if transport or dates present a barrier.

Planning your open day

Open days are exciting events, but they can also be busy with lots to fit in. The usual type of activities at an open day are higher education and subject presentations, tours of the university accommodation and facilities, and student experience fairs.

With this in mind, it is important to plan your schedule before you arrive. Most universities will send a programme before the event, which you can go through and highlight the activities you want to take part in and what times they are taking place. This will make it easier for you to follow your own schedule on the day and will avoid you missing out on anything. If you've got additional time before or after the open day, I would also recommend exploring the town or city that the university is located in or is close to.

Getting all your questions answered

As a parent, carer or supporter, you are guaranteed to have lots of questions about the next steps for the young person you support, and open days are the perfect opportunity to ask them.

I would recommend attending key information sessions, which are helpful for anybody supporting a student's transition into higher education. You can also ask academics and the support departments questions. I would encourage you to speak to current students about their experience at the university, as this is a great indicator of the benefit of studying there.

> **"Attending a university open day can be one of the best ways to support a student choosing the course and the universities they would like to apply to."**

A parent guide to attending a university open day – what to expect when you arrive

By Charlie Kettlewell, Outreach and Schools Liaison Officer at University College Birmingham

It can feel daunting supporting your young person during their university search. From the travel exploring different institutions, right through to perhaps sharing the stress about this upcoming new life change.

During this process, you may attend university open days. Below are some things you can expect to experience when attending an open day with them, and important considerations to be aware of.

Preparation

Help your young person feel prepared for the day, make sure you all have a notebook, and they have copies of sign-up emails/information they need to bring.

Travel

It is important for you and your young person to experience the journey length from home and the potential costs associated with it.

Ask lots of questions!

You're likely to meet a student ambassador early in the day. These current students provide a wonderful opportunity for you to ask questions about their experiences as a student. You can combine these with questions for lecturers and support staff. Encourage the person you're supporting to ask questions too!

University Talk

Most universities will have talks about their institution, about their facilities and campuses and general information and ethos. These are particularly handy if this is your first visit to the institution.

Subject Talk

Universities will offer subject workshops or talks aimed at students. These are usually attended by parents as well, and give general information about the course with a question and answer session at the end. This is a good opportunity to gather more information and explore subject options.

Lecturer 1-2-1

There might be an opportunity to meet lecturers 1-to-1, to ask further questions that you may not have had answered in the subject talk.

Support Services Drop-Ins (such as Disability, Housing, Careers, Mental Health Services etc)

Depending on your young person's needs, there may be support services that you need further information on. There are usually an array of guides and booklets with extra advice.

Accommodation Tour

It's a good idea to visit the accommodation blocks available. If you're short for time, pick a mid-range accommodation, or one that you believe would be within a price range. Consider elements such as shared bathrooms, kitchen sizes and where it is in relation to the campus your young person would be studying in.

Visit the facilities!

Have a campus tour, visit the students' union, visit campus shops and food outlets, buy food from the canteen and even use the toilets! You and the person you're supporting will get to experience the day-to-day facilities that will be available during their studies and will be able to get more of a 'feel' for the institution.

> **"You're likely to meet a student ambassador early in the day. These current students provide a wonderful opportunity for you to ask questions about their experiences as a student."**

What's new in higher education? The key updates for parents

By Fiona Curry, Schools and Colleges Liaison Manager at the University of Central Lancashire

Universities have changed how they communicate with, recruit and teach students at pace over the past two years. Firstly, in a reactionary way to the pandemic and then based on their learnings.

There has also been a call for more diversity in leadership, teaching staff and the student body, and while there are no quick wins, equality, diversity and inclusion are firmly on the agenda in a bolder way than before.

Hybrid research, admissions and learning

For those researching their university options in 2022, there's a vast range of opportunities including 'Always on' virtual open days and events, speaking to students and staff using online resources like Unibuddy, and listening to pre-recorded videos and content.

Whilst on-campus open events and the return to university exhibitions are welcomed, universities are looking at sustaining some level of digital offer, allowing flexibility and greater choice of how future students engage with them. This doesn't just stop at research, many universities had to hold interviews online during the pandemic, and we don't expect all universities to return immediately to face to face. The benefits of online interviews for courses have led to some universities indicating that they will keep interviews online for 2022 and potentially beyond.

How courses are delivered will also not necessarily return to 100% face to face immediately, or perhaps ever, with improved education technology and student experience for some online lectures.

Changes to university offer-making

Many courses have placement limitations on courses where there has been a steep growth in applications, such as Allied Health courses, and there are strict limits on the number of places that can be offered. Some universities are therefore slowing their offers on these courses and waiting until after interviews have taken place to respond to students. They have a deadline depending on when the application was submitted, and they may wait until that time.

Diversity and inclusive curriculum

Student voice is front and centre of universities engaging with future students and holding university leaders to account. The death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement shone a light on equality, diversity and inclusion, with students demanding action to address these issues. University leaders are looking inwardly at their representation in leadership, teachers and students and their outcomes from university. This is leading to some uncomfortable and necessary conversations and subsequent action. One of these strands is curriculum and ensuring that it represents multiple perspectives. For students studying in Scotland, the Government have also started to look at decolonising curriculum in their schools.

If a sense of belonging and celebrating diversity of their university experience is high on your child's priorities, they can speak to current students and staff to find out what's happening now and what they could influence and impact.

Note from UniTasterDays

For updates on the big changes to student finance (the most significant we've seen since 2012) please see page 35.

The University Of Sheffield.

We offer taster sessions for students considering post-16 options.

Be Sheffield Made.

- Available for Y12/13 students.
- Online sessions in a wide range of subjects.
- Running throughout Spring/Summer 2022.

For more information visit:
sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/visit/taster-days

A parent guide to communications - who will universities communicate with, and when?

By Lucy Holehan, Plus Programme Officer at the University of Leeds

The university application process can feel quite daunting for many young people, so it is understandable that parents and guardians will want to be involved and stay in the loop with any updates.

Communication with UCAS and universities

When someone applies to university via the UCAS (university admissions) portal, they will provide their email address and a mobile phone number. This information is then made available to the institutions they have applied to, so that they can send relevant information to the applicant.

Generally, universities will communicate with an applicant by email as their primary method, so it is really important that your young person is checking their inbox regularly, so that they don't miss out on any information.

Some key points a university may communicate with an applicant regarding are:

• To offer the student an interview after they have submitted their application (only some courses require an interview).

• To provide further details of any conditions surrounding their offer.

• To ask applicants to apply for accommodation (the deadline is usually around June of the year they expect to start).

• To tell students about scholarships and bursaries that they may wish to apply for.

Applicants will also need to be proactive when looking for information; universities will not always send multiple reminders regarding deadlines to apply for things.

Can I contact the universities as a parent/ guardian of an applicant?

There are various reasons why a parent may wish to contact a university on their young person's behalf, often to ask a question. This is quite common, but we would encourage the applicant to communicate themselves as much as possible, which will help them to develop more independence. If you are sending a query on behalf of your child, please bear in mind the following:

• If a parent or guardian wishes to speak to the university admissions team about their child's application, the applicant must officially nominate them via their UCAS application.

• Always provide the applicant's UCAS ID number if asking a specific question, otherwise the staff member replying may struggle to locate the required information.

• Once a student is enrolled on a course, the university will not communicate with any parents, guardians or other family members who enquire about them unless specifically requested and agreed in advance (in very limited circumstances). This is for data protection and privacy reasons.

If you need to speak to the Student Loans Company about your child's funding application, your child will need to set up a special password which allows you to discuss their account on their behalf.

Finally, make sure your child updates their contact email address if they lose access to it (usually because it is a school or college account and they have left) and checks their junk folder regularly. If they don't, they may miss out on crucial information from the universities they have applied for.

> **"Generally, universities will communicate with an applicant by email as their primary method, so it is really important that your young person is checking their inbox regularly."**

A parent guide to university widening participation and access programmes

By Molly Packwood, Contextual Outreach Coordinator at the University of Leeds

Broadly speaking, the phrase 'widening participation, or 'WP', pretty much does what it says on the tin. It enables students from a broader range of backgrounds and personal experiences to access and succeed in higher education, by offering additional support to students from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

How are students selected for widening participation programmes?

WP and access programmes identify students through a combination of several different criteria, which often vary from programme to programme. One of the most common criteria is to do with a student's home postcode – programmes use data produced by the government (POLAR, TUNDRA, IMD) to identify and target specific areas of the country where students are more likely to be at a disadvantage.

Another common factor is having a low household income, which is most easily assessed by looking at which students have received free school meals whilst they were growing up. Looking at the overall performance of a student's secondary school in comparison to other schools in the country can also help identify students who would benefit from additional support, as can a variety of other characteristics, which include but are not limited to:

- Students who have spent time in public or kinship care while growing up.
- Students from minority ethnic groups (including Gypsy & Roma students).
- Students with refugee status.
- Students whose parents did not go to university.

How are widening participation students supported?

The support offered by WP and access programmes can begin at any age, although Year 12 students are the most commonly targeted, and will always involve some form of information, advice, and guidance (IAG) about higher education, which is delivered either in school, at a university campus, or online. These IAG sessions can include things like:

- Academic workshops and tasters.
- Research and study skills sessions.
- Practical support with the UCAS application process.
- General information sessions about what life at university is like.

Students may also have the opportunity to take part in one-to-one tutoring, summer schools and residentials, cultural experience days, and visits to local industries or other universities.

In addition to the support offered by the programmes themselves, universities may also offer additional consideration at the application stage to students who have taken part. This varies from place to place, but it can come in the form of automatic progression to interview, reduced entry requirements, or even a guaranteed offer for certain courses.

I would always recommend checking the relevant institution's website first, and getting in touch if there is anything you are unsure about. Ultimately, those of us who work in WP want to help as many students as possible overcome any barriers to higher education, so it is always worth an email or a phone call to see what can be done to help.

A parent guide to event targeting – why are certain events only available for certain students

By Alexandra Roberts and Katie Whitmore from the Student Recruitment Team at the University of South Wales

The journey to securing a place at university is unique for every individual. But for some students it is important that they have access to tailored support that can help them on their way.

Universities host a range of events throughout the year, from open days, to information, advice and guidance (IAG) talks, to applicant days and subject-specific events. The aim of every university is to ensure that the most up-to-date and applicable information gets to the right people. Therefore, we want to give you, our parents and guardians, a guide on how to choose which events to attend, and an understanding of why certain events are only available for certain students.

Open Days and further information for all students

Everyone who is considering applying to university is encouraged to attend an open day. These are events which are designed to introduce the university to potential applicants. They offer a great catch-all opportunity to visit facilities, such as the accommodation and teaching spaces, and to find out more about support services and student life.

Equally, you should look out for any events that delve deeper into common higher education questions such as, 'Applying through UCAS', 'Making the Most of Sixth Form/College' and 'Student Finance'. These talks are usually open to everyone, and we are keen for students, parents/carers and teachers/careers advisers to engage with them.

Targeted events

Universities acknowledge that for some students, additional support may ensure that the student feels more confident when navigating the application process. Fundamentally, some students will need different information than their peers because of their circumstances. That is why universities offer bespoke events that address the needs of different groups of students. These events may include those for students with a specific learning need, students who are the first in their family to attend university, students who have experience of the care system or there may be events designed specifically for applicants with additional needs such as Dyslexia or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

It is important to be aware of the details of any event you book. For example, a postgraduate open day is not appropriate for students who are looking to apply for undergraduate courses. Likewise, an applicant day is not suitable for non-applicants. On that point, we encourage all applicants to attend applicant days whenever they are invited to them!

Events for school and college groups

Sometimes universities will offer events to school or college groups, however, it is with regret that due to safeguarding and risk assessments these events can often not be made open for individual bookings. That said, if you haven't found the event you are looking for on a university webpage, but you feel that your child/children require tailored information or additional guidance, then why not contact the universities' schools and colleges teams who will be delighted to support you.

"The journey to securing a place at university is unique for every individual. But for some students it is important that they have access to tailored support that can help them on their way."

University of South Wales
Prifysgol De Cymru

Cardiff | Newport | Pontypridd

SUPPORT YOUR CHILD AT AN OPEN DAY

At the University of South Wales, we know that parents and carers are increasingly involved in their child's university application. It can be difficult helping your child choose the right university - even if they know what they want to study.

At our Open Days, parents, carers and students can meet staff and students, learn about life at USW and student money, and take part in interactive subject activities.

www.southwales.ac.uk/opendays
@UniSouthWales

PARENTS' GUIDE

The University of South Wales is a registered charity. Registration No. 1140312

A guide to supporting care experienced students into higher education

By Wendy Price, Head of Widening Access and Participation at the University of Sunderland, and North East Regional Representative for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers

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

Here are my five top tips to explore their options and help ensure a transition to higher education is as smooth as possible for these young people.

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 through their journey. Also, encourage the young person to find out what support is available to them. At the University of Sunderland, we provide bespoke support for all care experienced students. This includes a named contact, guaranteed accommodation, a bursary of £2,000 each year, regular check-in meetings, help finding part-time work and so much more. The Propel website, developed by national charity Become, provides access to full 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 support, guaranteed accommodation, personalised support and priority places to attend summer schools so it is important to plan ahead.

5. Be the difference!

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

How do universities promote student wellbeing?

By Jonathan Stebbing, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Kent

As parents and carers, it is understandable if you have reservations about your child's new journey at university. It's been a turbulent few years for them and you'll want their time at university to be a positive experience. And while moving onto higher education is a time for opportunity and excitement, it can also bring personal challenges. To prepare your child for their next steps, it's important to talk to them about what type of support is available and how they can access this during their studies.

There may be many reasons why your child needs a little extra help during their student life, and university support services are here to help with it all. We have qualified and experienced professionals who can help with emotional and mental health issues, or if your child wants someone to talk to about their academic challenges. These staff offer safe spaces and are all ready to listen.

What support is available for your child?

In the same way that universities have facilities to promote students' physical health, we know that their personal and emotional wellbeing is very important too. Here are some services to look out for as you visit universities with your child:

Mental health advisers

These are specialist practitioners offering mental health advice and support. They can provide short-term focused interventions to promote wellbeing and support students to develop coping strategies.

Counselling

This offers your child a safe space to address issues concerning their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and can help them to put things back in balance again. During counselling they can talk about study pressures, relationships, grief and loss, and sexuality amongst many other concerns.

Wellbeing events

These could include anything from coffee mornings and walking groups to mindfulness sessions and peer support meetings.

How do students access this wellbeing support?

It is important that your child knows what kind of support is available from their university should they need it, so researching student support services as part of their initial shortlisting is a fantastic idea. It might influence their decision on where to study if they need a certain type of support.

Students dealing with specific issues may find it difficult to contact their university for the first time, thinking that their problem is too big or too small, or they might feel embarrassed or scared. Rest assured that student support teams are not there to judge. Anything shared will be treated with respect and held in confidence by experienced professionals.

To find out more about a university's support services, head to their website or look through their prospectus. But, if you want to know more about how they can help with a particular issue or condition, it's best to get in touch with them directly to discuss your child's specific needs.

> **"Universities have a duty of care to their students. Their wellbeing is at the core of what we do. Remember that your child will be independent at university, but they won't ever be on their own."**

Getting to grips with Student Finance – a parent guide

By Savannah Robinson, UK Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Leicester

Finances are a worry for many parents and carers when they have a dependent thinking of going to university, however Student Finance England (SFE), or equivalent, are there to support through the experience.

What's on offer?

SFE provide financial help for students without any upfront costs. They provide:

- Tuition fee loans (to cover the cost of the course)

- Maintenance loans (to help with the cost of living)

- Additional grants (to offer extra support to those in need)

Student loans don't work in the same way as a regular loan, and they do not impact ability to obtain credit in later life. There are various eligibility criteria and means tests for each loan/grant – parents, guardians and students should check out the SFE website for more details.

Repayments

Repayments are calculated fairly, and students won't repay a penny until the April after they've left or have graduated and are earning above the repayment threshold. Plus, after 30 years all outstanding loans are wiped. The repayment period is increasing to 40 years for students starting university in 2023 onwards though. Repayments are usually paid directly from your young person's salary.

The calculation to work out how much your dependant will repay (annually) is:

9% of the difference between their salary and the salary threshold.

For students starting university during 2022, the salary threshold is £27,295 per annum. This changes to £25,000 for students starting in 2023. For more information on how, when and how much your dependant will repay, please visit the student loans website.

How to Apply

Applications to SFE are via the government website (https://www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance). Your dependant will need to complete the form, but there will be a section for you to complete in order for SFE to calculate the amount of maintenance they will receive. The calculations are based on household income in the previous tax year, however if your income has dropped by 15% since then, you can submit a current income assessment form.

Students will be asked which university they are looking to attend. They should use their preferred university (this can be changed if their plans do!). They also need to ensure they tick the box enabling SFE to share information with universities - they could be eligible for bursaries and scholarships from the university and ticking this box will enable the university to assess them for it (free money!).

Other Funding

As previously mentioned, there may be extra funding available from universities – these aren't repayable and is extra money to help whilst your dependant is at university. Better still, these are 'stackable', meaning there is no limit to how much they can receive!

If you are ever in doubt about anything, please do get in touch with universities or SFE as we are always happy to help!

Note from UniTasterDays

This guidance applies to student finance in England.

You can find out more about student finance in Scotland through the Student Awards Agency Scotland: www.saas.gov.uk

You can find out more about student finance in Wales at Student Finance Wales: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

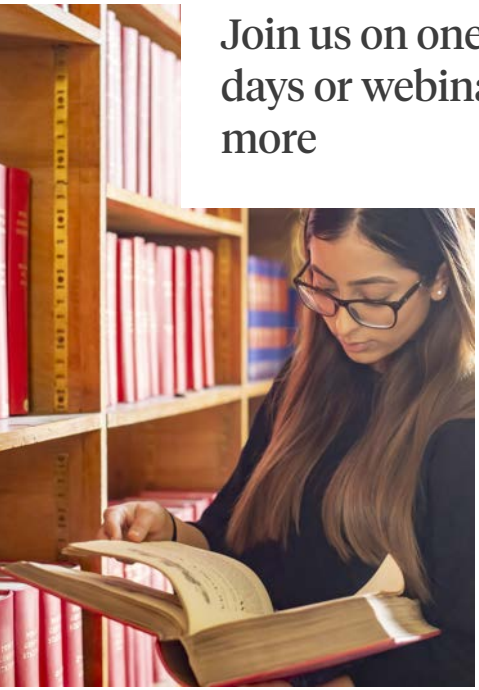
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

le.ac.uk/undergraduate/parents

FIND OUT MORE

Open days & bespoke parents/carers support

Join us on one of our open days or webinars to find out more



Join us to find out more about the application process and our university.
Student Finance for Parents Webinar- 25 April & 16 May
Open Days- 2 July & 17 September

For more information contact:
e: schools@le.ac.uk

SCAN ME

A parent guide to university bursaries and scholarships

By Max Harvey, Student Support Officer at Cardiff University.

Student finance can be complicated but universities can help, and they employ staff to guide students and their families through it, to ensure that student loans are accessed correctly and on time.

Although student loans and grants through the Student Loan Company are the main source of funding for most students, there are other funding sources like 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. This could be a grant paid if a student receives three As at A Level for example, or where a student 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 to encourage applications from groups that might be less likely to attend university to apply. 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 student is trying to choose between a few institutions, it is 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 and, if not, they can certainly be a very welcome extra to help make life a little easier when a student starts their course.

One last comment is a word of warning for students – when they are dealing with anything financial, be it loans, or banking or bursaries - it is important to be aware of scams. If the person you are 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 the official channels and check what they've been sent is genuine.

Note from UniTasterDays

Bursaries and Scholarships are not a loan. This form of financial support is not repayable.

A parent guide to how universities support students in need of additional support

By Melanie Kidd, Higher Education Parent Carer Champion at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (neaco) and Sophie Waring, Parent and Carer Ambassador at UEA and neaco.

With help from our Parent and Carer Ambassador, Sophie, we offer insight and advice on what you can do to ensure your young person feels fully supported at university.

"Starting university, although exciting, can also be something of a daunting prospect. It is important to ensure young people feel secure and confident about their transition into university life, especially if they have any additional needs."

Sophie, Parent and Carer Ambassador.

Advising universities of a student's additional support needs

If your young person will need any additional support at university, it is best to disclose this information every step of the way, including when they apply for and accept a university offer.

We would advise you to encourage your young person to disclose additional needs on their UCAS application. This is optional and will not affect the outcome of their application, but helps universities understand the support they need to offer.

Once your young person has accepted a university offer, that university will need further information about their disability, mental health condition or long-term health condition. If you have previously completed Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), or any other support plan, on your young person's behalf, you'll know how much administration is involved. Although, this might feel daunting for the young person you support, this opportunity allows them to become proactive when taking control of the support they receive.

Each university will have their own process, so research the relevant contact details (e.g., disability advice and guidance) and ensure your young person contacts them early in the application process because there may be additional forms that your young person will need to complete before the university offers them support for their studies and university life.

Types of support available at university

Universities offer a wide range of additional support services for students, such as mental health advisers, disability support and counselling services.

Sophie advises parents and guardians to, *"encourage your young person to take proactive steps to find out what support is available to them so that they have the information to hand and the confidence to access support should any issues arise."*

Peer-to-peer support at university is invaluable. Societies offer opportunities to connect with people, build friendships and receive support. Many universities have student-led activities and clubs which focus on physical and mental health, tackling stigma, raising awareness, and supporting wellbeing.

It's essential to start open conversations with your young person before they go to university about how to ensure they feel fully supported.

> **"Covid has undoubtedly had a negative impact on starting university. It's good to acknowledge this with your young person so they're prepared to check in with you if they feel overwhelmed. Registering with a doctor, downloading wellbeing apps, and maintaining an open relationship with you is all key to ensuring they thrive at university."**
>
> **Sophie, Parent and Carer Ambassador**

A parent guide to how universities help students in need of study skills development and support

By Alison Griffin, Head of Study Support at the University of West London

Messages about needing to be an independent learner at university can seem to suggest that students must cope alone when meeting academic challenges. This message risks creating isolated rather than independent learners and can create an unnecessary degree of anxiety.

As a former mature Psychology student at the University of West London (UWL), it took me a while to find the courage to admit that I was struggling and to ask for help. Now I just wish I had asked sooner. When I engaged with the available support, I quickly realised that I was not alone in struggling and that there was guidance available.

Students should be fully aware of the support available to them

I had been told about the support available during my induction but with so much new information to absorb, I had forgotten at the point of need. As a parent, you are in an excellent position to remind a struggling or anxious student about the possible ways they can access support. Most information is available on the university website so you can gain an understanding without being on campus.

Having nearly withdrawn from my degree in week five, I am so glad I found support before leaving. I went on to achieve my degree, however, not all my cohort did.

As a graduate, the university allowed me to return and create a study support service at UWL, which now has a team of seven study support advisors offering daily 1:1 appointments and study skills workshops to support students with assignments and to build their skills.

In addition to study support, the service offers Maths and English Language support opportunities and a peer mentoring scheme. Mentoring allows students to train and offer support to students studying in a year below them. Of course this is an example for UWL, but also look at the support offered by other institutions as well.

Support available – an example

To provide an idea of how this works in practice, at UWL there are also over 30 available workshops, and students can attend as many or as few as they choose. They include topics such as:

- Planning an assignment
- Report writing
- Exam preparation
- Academic writing style
- Understanding statistics
- Developing presentation skills
- Paraphrasing and summarising
- Peer mentor training

Students accessing Study Support services have been consistently found to achieve higher grades, indicating that it is wise to ask for help. It can seem easier to hope that problems will resolve themselves but a gentle and timely nudge or reminder about available support from a parent or carer can make such a difference because it is difficult to think clearly when stressed.

I am now Head of Study Support at UWL and have my own two children at university. They have seen what it takes to achieve a degree and know the importance of engaging with support, when required. It is very rewarding to see students become less anxious and watch their confidence grow as they overcome the challenges encountered on their path to obtaining a degree.

“As a parent, you are in an excellent position to remind a struggling or anxious student about the possible ways they can access support.”

A guide to applying for university courses as a mature student

By Dr Jonathan Dunn, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Salford

Firstly – a definition of a mature student

Perhaps reading this guide has sparked thoughts of becoming a student yourself! However, even if you have no plans to join your children in student life any time soon, information on applying to university as a mature student may be more relevant than you think.

You may even be a parent to a mature student without realising it! Did you know that the UK government defines 'mature students' as those aged 21 or over at the time of starting their course? With over a quarter of a million mature students beginning undergraduate degrees in 2019 (37% of all undergraduate entrants), there's a good chance you have a mature student on your hands!

Advantages and disadvantages of studying as a mature student

Being a mature learner often gives students added focus and determination to succeed, not to mention advantages such as additional life and work experience, meaning university really can be an amazing experience for people of all ages! However, studying at university as a mature learner can also come with other responsibilities, so a good support network can make a real difference. This is true even at the earliest stage - when considering making an application.

Challenges and relevant support

Making an application to university usually involves weighing up a whole series of important considerations, so you might begin by offering to help your young person to think through how their personal circumstances could present certain challenges. You might also be able to help them research the different types of support they will need to meet those challenges and make the most of the many exciting opportunities ahead.

In their search for a university, you might help them consider the support on offer in areas such as:

- University entry including alternatives to traditional qualifications
- Finance
- Wellbeing
- Counselling
- Study skills (e.g., English, Maths, IT, research skills)
- Childcare
- Carer support
- Computing

As one of our current mature students commented to me recently,
"I work and study, and I'm a parent and carer too. So, for me accessing university seemed almost impossible…[but] the support I've received at Salford has been amazing."

Whichever university the budding mature student in your life is considering, you're certain to find a range of staff and student-led support services available there.

Support services will all usually have a presence on campus at university open days, and it is usually possible to speak with someone about the specifics of what they offer and how these fit with particular circumstances. There are also likely to be general information sessions for mature students where you can also ask questions. So, why not raise the idea of visiting an open day or two, and visit these together if you can?

A parent guide to supporting students working on their personal statements

By Erin Tungate, Student Recruitment Coordinator at the University of West London and Kat Knight, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Manager at City, University of London

What is the personal statement?

When reviewing students' applications, university admission tutors will use academic information like predicted grades, teacher references and the personal statement to decide whether a student should be offered a place. The personal statement is the opportunity for students to tell universities directly:

• Why they want to study the course

• How they have engaged with the subject in their own time

• The experiences they've had in preparation for university

• What makes them unique.

How can you help as a parent or guardian?

Throughout Year 12 and 13, your child will predominantly work on their university application at their sixth form or college during timetabled sessions. However, with the statement being a very important part of the application, students should also dedicate time to work on it outside of school hours.

If your child is finding it difficult, here are some things that you can do to help:

• Finding it hard to begin? Mind-mapping is a great way for students to think of key points to include, without the pressure of putting them into sentences or paragraphs. At City, University of London, we provide resources to support with this – and many other universities may do so too.

• Are they still unsure? Look together at university websites to find out more about the courses they're interested in. Many universities explicitly list qualities that they like to see in students which may be a great place to start.

• Spotting lots of quotes? Whilst we encourage students to write about their extra reading, universities want to hear from them directly. Asking what your child thinks a quote means can help them substitute it with their own words and ideas.

• A little thesaurus-heavy? Students should prioritise writing clearly and cohesively over extravagant language. Try reading the statement out loud together to hear what does and doesn't flow well.

• Over the character count? The personal statement has a 4,000 character limit. Use the 'ABC method' to think together about keeping content relevant. When giving an example or discussing an experience, students should succinctly summarise the activity (A), be able to discuss the benefits (B) and link these to the course (C) they are applying for. If this can't be done, it might not be relevant!

For example, a student applying for English courses at university could discuss an assessment they wrote on the role of women in Shakespeare's plays (A) as an example of developing their research and essay writing skills (B), which shows good preparation for planning and writing coursework in an English Literature degree (C).

Deadlines

It is important for students to stick to deadlines given to them by their teachers – this will allow them enough time to receive written feedback and submit their application before the UCAS deadline.

Top Tip

Use the ABC method to think together about keeping content relevant.

A - Summarise the Activity
B - Discuss the Benefits
C - Link these to the Course

CITY
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
EST 1894

Academic excellence for business and the professions

Supporting students on every step of their journey.

This is City.

Working with students to offer opportunities and support towards a successful future.

With award-winning support services and innovative employability schemes, City's students are well placed to explore all the learning and career advantages that come from studying in the heart of London.

"As someone who always believes in self-development, the opportunities I have had at City, building my network and gaining essential skills, means I can now support others as I take the next steps in my university experience."

Noel, third year
computer science student

Find out more
www.city.ac.uk

Register your interest
www.city.ac.uk/opendays

www.city.ac.uk

A parent guide to university application deadlines

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

Understanding what happens on different dates is one of the key aspects of the UCAS application process that can cause lots of headaches for students if they miss a key deadline.

These dates do change slightly year on year (so always check the dates for each year) but this guide will provide you with an overview of when different things open and close - to make sure that the application process is as smooth as possible for the person you support.

UCAS opens (May)

Students can begin creating their application 18 months before they apply and add information including personal details and their education profile. It might be useful for them to get a head start on the application and complete the easier sections as early as possible.

Oxford, Cambridge and courses in medicine, veterinary medicine, and dentistry (15th October)

Applications must be submitted by 18:00 for these. Those submitted after this deadline will not be considered by those institutions. Other choices which do not fall into these can be added at a later date, so all five choices do not need to be used at once.

Fair and equal consideration deadline (last Wednesday in January)

Universities must consider any applications submitted by this point fair and equally against each other. This is also the earliest that a university can close courses where they have received enough applications for them.

UCAS Extra opens (25th February)

Sometimes, a student ends up not holding an offer from their five choices. UCAS Extra allows a student to submit an application to another university for consideration, one at a time.

University decisions from the January deadline (May)

If a student has applied to university by the January deadline, they will hear back from their university choices in May. Universities have to stick to this timeline so students know when they will get an outcome to make their subsequent choices.

Firm/insurance choice (9th June)

Students need to decide where they want to go. From the offer they receive, they need to make their firm (first) and insurance (second) choice and then decline the others. This is a key decision that students undertake and should not be rushed.

A Level results day (18th August)

One of the most important dates within the application process. Although it is the results day for A Level students, it is also when the confirmation of places for students studying all different qualifications happen. This day is the most emotional day of it all, so it is key to make sure you are around to support students with whatever happens on this day, both good and bad.

Other key deadlines

There are many other key deadlines along the way that students need to meet. Many of these deadlines are linked into processes like accommodation, finance and scholarships which they do not want to miss out on. Schools and colleges can provide support with making sure the students can meet all the deadlines set by UCAS, universities and other key organisations.

Note from UniTasterDays

Deadlines may be subject to change - so always check the dates - especially if you are using this brochure after the 2022-23 academic year.

A parent guide to contextual admissions

By Rob Thatcher, Widening Participation and Outreach Manager at the University of Surrey

When looking at study options in higher education, you will be aware that entry requirements will vary between providers. However, most courses will require GCSE plus A Level or equivalent qualifications (for example, BTECs, Access to HE etc.) in addition to evidence of relevant skills, ability, and experience.

It is acknowledged amongst university and course providers that the experience of applicants in achieving these qualifications and skills will vary, particularly where individuals have shared mitigating and/or personal circumstances that have disrupted their education. In such situations, the course provider may recognise the received or predicted grades against the context in which they were achieved before recommending the applicant as eligible to be considered for contextualised admissions.

What are contextualised admissions?

Contextualised admissions recognise an individual's circumstances when considering their application for study in higher education. This may enable the applicant to automatically receive entry requirements that are lower than those advertised or better reflect the circumstances in which their grades were achieved. Course providers will set out the terms of their contextualised admissions policy on their website in addition to course literature, and it is always recommended to enquire with admissions advisors and/or tutors with regards to your child's eligibility before they submit their application.

Contextualised offer schemes

Where reduced entry requirements are not automatically applied, applicants may be able to participate on a contextualised offer scheme. The key difference is that the scheme will include conditions, in addition to eligibility criteria, which applicants must meet to qualify for a contextual offer. For example, these schemes may require the completion of an assignment, portfolio or to simply commit to the respective course provider as the applicant's firm choice.

Contextualised offer schemes are often coordinated internally by the course provider and may be separate to the course application process. Therefore, it is recommended to enquire with an admissions advisor or course representative regarding the options available for your child.

Additional benefits for contextualised admissions and contextualised offer schemes

Contextualised admissions and offer schemes may also carry additional benefits, whether that be academic or financial support. When enquiring about entry requirements, always ask whether bursaries or scholarships are also included along with any transitional support during the first year of study.

Transitional support may include academic workshops, peer support or mentoring, in addition to signposting to appropriate services alongside the course.

So, when you are supporting your child in identifying their choices and options, keep contextualised admissions within your thinking. They are a reduced entry requirement, but their benefits can extend beyond your child's admission onto their course.

> **"Contextualised admissions recognise an individual's circumstances when considering their application for study in higher education. This may enable the applicant to automatically receive entry requirements that are lower than those advertised or better reflect the circumstances in which their grades were achieved."**

In2Surrey

HELPING ELIGIBLE STUDENTS ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL

In2Surrey provides eligible applicants with transitional support prior to enrolment at the University of Surrey. Taking place from June until October, applicants can receive invitations to attend and access workshops, webinars and mentoring to further inform their preparations ahead of starting at university.

WHAT COULD IN2SURREY OFFER ME?

- A reduction in entry requirements, equivalent to one A-level grade lower*
- Access to an E-Mentor (a current University of Surrey student)
- Invitations to exclusive events that will support your transition to and through university.

* Please note that we may be unable to offer a reduction in entry requirements for BTEC students or those with unconditional offers. Students must still meet all the essential requirements of the course to which they have applied. Please see the Contextualised Admissions Policy on website for further details.

For further information and to apply, please visit :
surrey.ac.uk/schools-colleges/in2surrey

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

A parent guide to the qualifications universities will accept for entry

By Ruth Boyce, School & College Development Coordinator at the University of Winchester

Universities can set their own qualification criteria. Their entry requirements may be based on achieving a certain grade in a specific qualification, subject, or overall achievement.

I will outline some of the key areas to consider below – and answer some questions you may have or be thinking of as a parent or guardian.

Do GCSE grades matter?

Generally, yes. Universities use post-16 qualifications, but also review GCSE achievement too. For many courses there is a minimum requirement, often a 4/5 in English, Maths and possibly Science, it does depend on the course. Specific courses may ask for minimum grades in certain subjects, while competitive courses will look at results as an indicator of academic ability.

What qualifications are acceptable?

When it comes to qualifications after GCSEs, universities accept a wide range: BTECs, T Levels, A Levels, IB (International Baccalaureate), Welsh Baccalaureate and many more. Often entry requirements are listed as A Level grades or as UCAS Tariff points.

To calculate the potential UCAS Tariff points for each qualification there is a UCAS tariff calculator on the UCAS website. This supports students to understand what they need to achieve in their specific qualifications.

Do students need to study the subject before they apply to university?

This question is often asked by students, but there is no one size fits all answer. It will depend on the course and university. Some degrees will have very specific subject requirements, others will be open to students from a background of subject areas. There are thousands of degrees and not as many qualifications at post-16 level, so universities expect that students may not have a qualification in the subject they want to study at university. Universities will use all studied qualifications to make a judgement about a student's suitability and interest in the course.

How to research entry requirements

A course entry requirement will often be described as a typical offer and will stipulate if specific subjects are required. When a student applies whilst studying for their post-16 qualifications, they may be given an offer with conditions to meet, this will be different if they have already completed their studies or are a mature learner (aged 21 or over).

The Discover Uni website holds information about previous offers students have received, which can be an indicator of the types of qualifications and achievements of students who have successfully gained a place. Universities know that grades and qualifications can be influenced by a range of factors, so they consider a student's individual circumstances and give extra consideration if appropriate.

It is not all about qualifications

Universities look at a range of factors, and qualifications are just one part of this, they are also interested in relevant experience and skills. There may be other criteria including interviews, auditions, admissions tests and portfolios which give an opportunity for universities to assess a student's ability. If in any doubt, contact a university's admissions team who deal with a wide range of qualifications and will be available to help.

> **"Universities accept a wide range of qualifications: BTECs, T Levels, A Levels, the International Baccalaureate, Welsh Baccalaureate and many more."**

A parent guide to university applications

By Kate Nelson, Marketing Co-ordinator at Teesside University

Guiding your young person through their higher education options can be daunting, especially if you've never been through the process yourself. Here's what you need to know.

The things to know before the application is in

Application planning

The application process starts in the September of your young person's final year at sixth form or college, so that they can enrol at university the following September. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) opens for applications in early September every year – so if your young person is super prepared, they can submit their application to their chosen universities at that point. The reality is that many students will still be finalising their choices at this stage, so don't worry if they aren't yet ready to apply.

October deadline

If your young person is applying to Oxford or Cambridge or to medicine, dentistry or veterinary courses, they need to have their application submitted to UCAS by October.

Meeting internal deadlines

Your young person's sixth form or college may have an internal deadline for submitting university applications, normally in November or December. This gives careers advisers time to check applications and complete an accompanying reference. Every school and college has their own deadline so make sure your young person knows when theirs is.

Applying by the UCAS deadline

The UCAS equal consideration deadline is in January – course providers must consider all applications received by this time equally. If your young person is applying for a competitive course or university, they must meet this deadline to make sure they are considered.

What happens once the application is submitted?

Receiving offers

For applications submitted by the January deadline, universities have until May to decide whether to make your young person a course offer. Students may hear back sooner but this is the latest deadline set by UCAS. Your young person has until June to reply to their offers and can use UCAS Track to keep an eye on offers coming through and respond to them – confirming their first (firm) and second (insurance) choice universities.

Accepting their offer

Once your young person's place has been confirmed, the exciting stuff starts! They will start to receive information on accommodation, enrolment, welcome week, setting up IT accounts and their timetable – all in preparation for starting their course.

Confirming their place

Universities receive your young person's exam results before they do, so on the morning of results day in August, they will be able to log into UCAS Track and check if (fingers crossed!) their university place has been confirmed.

Teesside University

Your child, their FUTURE

As a parent or carer you have an important role to play in your child's progression to university. Visit our website to access free advice and resources to support your guidance.

THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES GOOD UNIVERSITY GUIDE 2022

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

tees.ac.uk/parents
parents@tees.ac.uk

A parent guide to how students can make their university application stand out

By Izzy Kelly, Aimhigher Project Officer at Aimhigher West Midlands

Whether your child is going to university, applying for an apprenticeship or looking for a job, there's a variety of things that they can do to help them stand out from the crowd. I will provide a few suggestions here.

Work experience

Work experience looks great on personal statements, job applications and CVs, but your child must be able to reflect upon what they have learnt from it and how it is relevant to their future.

By taking the time with your child to consider what they have gained from the experience, they will be able to use this knowledge to effectively demonstrate their skills and discuss what they enjoyed, what they found challenging and how they overcame challenges.

Some university courses (e.g. Medicine, Social Work and Teaching) require a minimum number of hours work experience, so be sure to check this if your child does apply to higher education.

Part time work

A young person can demonstrate potential to universities and employers by taking on an evening or weekend job. By working for just a few hours per week, your child can gain employability skills such as problem solving, money handling, communication and many more. These are useful to draw upon in applications and interviews. However, it is important to ensure that any part-time work doesn't impede on school or college commitments.

Volunteering

Doing voluntary work shows that a young person is driven and focused by giving up their time to support a charity or other organisation. This is another great opportunity for your child to build skills, including dedication and commitment, which are essential for their future.

Clubs and hobbies

Talking about interests or hobbies adds personality to an application and can set a candidate apart from their peers. This is why it's important for students to have other skills outside of academia. Having hobbies can also provide a healthy outlet which may help young people to manage stress as they take on more responsibilities as a young adult.

Other opportunities

Taking up opportunities that link to the career or course your child wants to pursue can really support an application. This could include attending a taster lecture at a university, trips, extracurricular clubs like STEM (out-of-timetable sessions that enrich and broaden the curriculum, giving young people the chance to explore subjects like science, technology, engineering and maths), performing arts clubs or completing free online courses from places like Future Learn and others.

> **"Whether your child is going to university, applying for an apprenticeship or looking for a job, there's a variety of things that they can do to help them stand out from the crowd."**

A parent guide to UCAS applications and university offers

By Melanie Kidd, Higher Education Parent Carer Champion at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (neaco) and Vanessa Tarling, Parent and Carer Ambassador at UEA and neaco.

Here we'd like to explain the university admissions process, by breaking it down into the application and offer stages.

Application stage

Although your young person will be researching courses at different universities, applications are not made directly through the university. UCAS (which stands for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) offers a centralised system for applications where young people can apply for up to five courses at different universities.

Your young person will need to set up a UCAS account. This is easy to do – and they might have already been supported to do this through their school or college. The UCAS Hub allows a prospective university student to explore courses, submit university applications and see which universities have sent them offers.

After your young person has submitted their applications via UCAS, each of the universities will make them an offer in one of a few ways – we'll guide you through this below.

Offer stage

The first thing to note is that all offers will be sent to your young person, so it's important to check with them regularly to see if anything has changed on their UCAS Hub or if they've received any emails.

They will receive one of the following offers from the universities they have applied to:

An invitation to interview:

As part of the application process, the university would like to interview your young person before they make them an offer.

A conditional offer:

A place offered at the university as long as they get specific grades. This is the most likely offer your young person will receive.

An unconditional offer:

A place offered at the university whatever grades they get.

Unsuccessful:

The university hasn't offered your young person a place. Universities will often supply a reason for an unsuccessful application. If they don't, your young person can contact them to ask for a response.

How can you help as a parent or guardian?

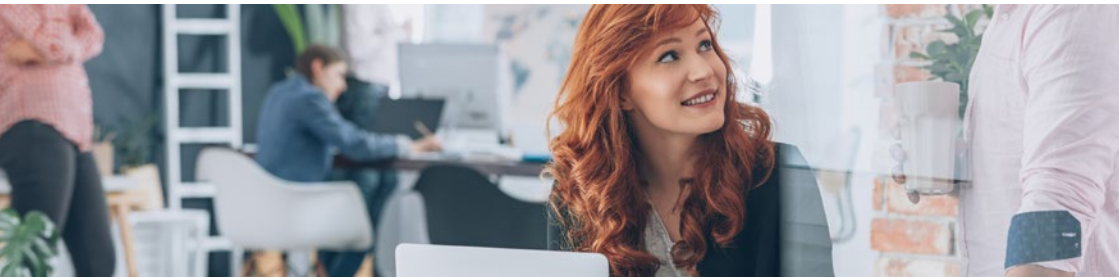
- Be familiar with the five choices your young person has made and why they were chosen – this can help when it comes to supporting your young person to make their final decision.

- Be interested and ask how things are going on a regular basis - but try not to interfere.

- Keep a note of your young person's UCAS login details in case they get lost or forgotten.

- Do the research and be prepared to support your young person as their offers come through.

- Create space for them to clear their head before the next step of making a decision on an offer.



A parent guide to Clearing and making university decisions on A Level results day

By Donna Beardmore, Marketing Campaigns Manager at the University of Sunderland

There's no getting away from it, applying to university is complicated. As a parent or guardian, you will see the trials and tribulations faced, particularly on results day and Clearing.

Results day is a key date for applicants to university and as parents and supporters, your nerves will also be riding high. Here are some practical ideas to help the day go smoothly.

Knowledge is power

If you're unfamiliar with the terminology and timescales of Clearing, there's lots of very useful and clearly explained information on the UCAS website. Many applicants secure a place through Clearing and there is lots of help available along the way.

Help your young person research their options

If your son or daughter achieves the grades they need, they are unlikely to need Clearing and their university will likely confirm their place early on A Level results day. When they log into UCAS Track this will show if they have been accepted onto their firm or insurance university choice. However, if they didn't get the grades needed to meet the conditions of an offer, they still have options and can participate in Clearing.

Even if your young person is confident they will achieve the grades they need, it is worth researching other universities with slightly lower entry criteria, just in case. All universities will have their courses, accommodation and scholarships detailed on their websites. Students will have already looked at other universities before they made their first application, but it is always worth having another look in case any new courses or incentives are available.

What happens if they didn't quite get the grades they were expecting

First of all, it is always worth checking with their first-choice or insurance offer university, even if they haven't achieved their required grades. The university may still be able to make them an unconditional offer. If they can't, this is where your support will be invaluable. Your son or daughter may be upset and anxious, but don't worry, there are always options. This is what Clearing is all about.

Try to keep them calm and focused. They now have some decisions to make so a cool and rational frame of mind is essential. They should start looking at those fallback options they have researched. Many universities will also have courses specifically designed for those with lower or non-standard entry requirements and they may also be able to consider a Foundation year. Have key information close to hand, such as their UCAS number, qualifications and grades as institutions will ask for these.

> **"Please remember your young person needs to communicate with universities themselves - universities will need to speak directly to the applicant."**

With the right preparation and support from parents and carers, every single student has options on results day, no matter what results they achieve.

University of Sunderland

THINK COURSE
THINK CAREER
THINK SUNDERLAND

Are you supporting a student on their journey to University?

Sign up for our parents and supporters' newsletter.

SUNDERLAND.AC.UK/PARENTS

PROUD TO BE SHORTLISTED AS

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR

TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION AWARDS 2021

Tips for students whilst they're at university – it is never too early for a plan!

By Mandy Green, Director of Aspiration at Bedford Academy

Researching and deciding what and where to study are understandably very exciting for both parents and students, but it is also worth taking some time to consider how students can get the most out of their university experience.

As well as gaining a degree, they will have the opportunity to develop employability skills through attending clubs and societies, gaining experience from volunteering, work experience or internships and making the most of their university careers service from the off. Easier said than done, I know! I experienced this for myself first-hand with my two sons and appreciate the challenges for parents and carers.

Encourage consideration of life after graduation

For starters get their attention! When I speak to some of our former students / Alumni and listen to their tips for our current students, a recurring theme is *'make sure you are planning and working towards what you want to do after you graduate from the off.'* This is of equal importance to students with or without a specific job in mind and definitely something parents and carers can steer conversations towards during phone calls, video calls, texts and visits.

It's very easy for young people to get swept away with university life and all the new and exciting opportunities coming their way. You can really help them to balance this with making sure they are on track career wise at the same time. Sure, encourage them to do some social activities but it is good for them to also think about how these are helping them long term.

If students have one or more specific jobs in mind, talk to them! Ask what they have found out so far, have they discussed these with a career professional? They can help in a number of ways - is the job and career information accurate and up to date? Is it unbiased? Is anything missing? Are their plans enough or even too much? Are they focusing on the wrong kind of thing? How can they ensure they are in the best place to compete for graduate opportunities at the end of their course?

Many students do not have a specific job or career in mind and that's okay. It's still good to talk to them about exploring opportunities such as volunteering or getting work experience and it would be even more helpful to encourage them to make the most of the university careers service as early as possible!

Encourage a plan!

A plan, in any shape or form is a great way to feed and nurture their futures. It is worth finding a way to encourage them to capture their plans – be it in writing, in a journal, in a picture, on a spreadsheet, in a recording or even in a time capsule. I used to do a New Year's Eve time capsule with my sons - asking them - where do they think they will be in 1, 5 and 15 years time?

Offering to help review a plan is a great conversation starter and can help students reflect on their journey so far, and how they change and grow as time goes on.

> **"When I speak to some of our former students and listen to their tips, a recurring theme is to make sure you are planning and working towards what you want to do after you graduate from the off."**

A parent guide to university careers support and future student employability

By Rebecca Wills, Head of Careers at Lincoln Minster School (and former Careers and Employability Adviser at the University of Lincoln).

Many young people choose to go to university to improve their future career prospects, but with so many graduates now entering the job market, a degree alone is not always enough. It is therefore very important that students work on developing their employability skills throughout their time at university, and university careers services are experts in offering a range of support to help students achieve this successfully. I will provide a guide to this for parents here.

Careers service support is available throughout university courses

First year students might access help finding part-time work or student ambassador roles, and many careers services will source and advertise such opportunities. They will also have the expertise to support with CV creation and job applications.

In second or subsequent years, students might need advice when searching and applying for work experience, placements and internships, all of which are excellent ways to boost employability skills and add valuable professional experience to their CV.

The final year is when life beyond university becomes a reality, and most students benefit from careers support (although many would benefit from accessing it earlier!). University careers services are specialists in the graduate labour market and support students to search for and apply to graduate opportunities. They can also advise on postgraduate study options and careers in academia.

Career fairs and events

Careers Fairs take place regularly at university to enable students to meet potential employers. Other events such as presentations, workshops, industry trips, employer panels, mock interviews and mock assessment centres all contribute to ensuring that students are well informed about their career options, and well prepared to tackle the various application processes.

Alongside events and activities, the careers services also offer individualised careers information, advice and guidance. Career guidance meetings are available with qualified, specialist careers advisers. Students can explore their future plans and career aspirations with an adviser and develop action plans to help them achieve their goals. Careers advisers can help everyone make their next steps into work or study – even (and especially!) those who have no idea what they want to do.

Ongoing careers support

Universities take graduate employability very seriously (it also feeds into league table results!) and there is always lots of support available. Sometimes it is embedded within degrees and included as part of the course, but often events, activities and opportunities are extra-curricular and optional, so students need to make sure that they are proactive in engaging with their careers service to make the most of what's on offer.

> **"My best advice for you to share with the students you support is for them to find out where the careers team are located, find out what support and events are on offer, and get involved! They should also look out for 'Skills Awards' which lots of universities offer - these are programmes which students can follow to develop and record their experiences and skills."**

Subject in spotlight - The value of a Performing Arts degree

By Ashleigh Hope, Head of Access and Participation at Guildhall School of Music & Drama

If your child is considering a Performing Arts degree you may have some concern, and not without reason! Since the onset of Covid-19, there have been many scary headlines about shows and theatres going dark, performers being out of work, and cuts to arts education.

However, it's not all doom and gloom! There are many benefits to these degrees, particularly if studied at a drama school or conservatoire (this simply means an institution that specialises in intensive music training). I will outline a few of the benefits below.

Value for money

Degrees in small institutions, like Guildhall School of Music & Drama, offer excellent value for money. Programmes are intensive, with lots of teaching time (often full-time!), and year groups are very small, so every student receives the 1:1 support that they need to succeed.

Careers guidance as standard

Careers guidance is embedded into programmes, meaning students are extremely employable when they graduate. From inviting casting directors to shows, to arranging industry placements, to ensuring networking and mentoring with some of the best in the business, future career success is at the heart of the training.

Additionally, most assessment occurs during industry standard shows, concerts, and films, so students are continually working towards success on stage, on screen, or behind the scenes.

Speaking of behind the scenes, did you know there are degrees in backstage specialties? We train the stage managers, lighting and sound producers, and costume and set designers of some of the best theatre, TV and films! These degrees are extremely practical, and students are almost certain to get a job in the industry upon graduation.

Transferable skills

The skills developed in Performing Arts degrees are transferable and sought by employers in all sectors. To succeed, students must develop confidence, creativity, perseverance, and skills in teamwork, communication, organisation, problem-solving and critical analysis. So, if they have a change of heart in five, ten, or twenty-years' time they should be able to transition to another sector with ease.

There is also something special about dedicating 3-4 (or more!) years to something that you love. Performing Arts students are incredibly passionate about their craft. They work hard to get onto the programme, and even harder to succeed, and are hugely inspiring in action. If you're able, watch a student show or concert, or catch an on-demand show online – you won't be disappointed!

> **"They might not be for everyone, but Performing Arts degrees are a fantastic foot in the door to a career in the arts, and are perfect for creative, passionate students. If that's your child, try to set aside doubt, and be ready to cheer them on whilst they navigate this unique experience."**

ESCAPE
STUDIOS

Study an undergraduate degree in Visual Effects, Game Art or Animation

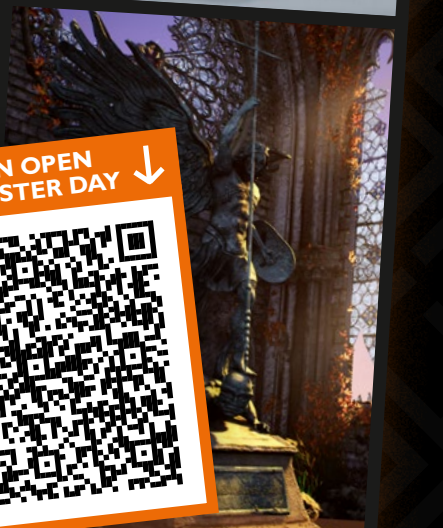
- Industry-experienced tutors
- Ranked **1st in the UK** for Visual Effects and Animation Production Excellence by **The Rookies**
- Ranked **1st in the UK** for Game Design by **The Rookies**
- Courses designed and delivered with professionals from leading studios
- One of few **Unreal Authorized Training Centers** in the UK

UNREAL ENGINE AUTHORIZED TRAINING CENTER

HOUDINI CERTIFIED SCHOOL

Animation | Visual Effects | Game Art

190 High Holborn,
London, WC1V 7BH
escapestudios.com



ATTEND AN OPEN DAY OR TASTER DAY

Image credit top to bottom: Escape Studios undergraduate Animation award-winning student group project | Escape Studios undergraduate Animation award-winning student group project | Image courtesy of Escape Studios MA Game Art student Emanuele Celli

A parent guide to university student life

By Erin Wilson, Student Recruitment Assistant at Lancaster University

At university, students will spend most of their time studying, working hard and admittedly also enjoying some much needed down time outside of their studies. However, dependent on the student's degree, their contact hours can vary. Someone studying History may have 8-10 contact hours per-week, compared to someone studying Medicine who could have between 15 and 20 contact hours.

The mathematicians amongst you will have noticed that these teaching hours do not amount to a full working week, so what are the students doing in the meantime?

Independent Study

Given the varied contact hours of a course, all students are expected to undertake independent study as part of their working week. This will typically include preparation for lectures, seminars, and workshops. Outside of independent study, students may also receive assignments throughout the year and undertake revision leading up to exams.

Placements

Placements can offer exciting opportunities for students to learn more about their area of study, as well as gaining work experience in a specific field which they may wish to pursue after graduation. Most commonly, students get involved in placements by selecting specific modules or even opting to apply for opportunities alongside their studies both during and out of term times.

Part-time Work

Working part-time can also be something worth considering whilst at university. Both inside and outside of institutions there are opportunities for students to engage with the working life of the university and community, for example working as a student ambassador or working in a local coffee shop or restaurant.

Clubs and Societies

University is not just all work and no play; the other big part of university is making friends and meeting people from all over and having fun whilst they are there. Every university will have a myriad of activities for students to get involved in – some rather quirky ones, for example Octopush, or underwater hockey, a limited-contact sport in which two teams compete to manoeuvre a puck across the bottom of a swimming pool into the opposing team's goal.

Socialising

Last and certainly not least, students' time will also be spent socialising with friends and flatmates. The main assumption of socialising within a university culture is drinking and clubbing, but this is not for everyone and there are plenty of alternatives if this is the case. Speaking specifically of Lancaster there are museums, Williamson Park, Lancaster Canal, and the Lake District right on our doorstep. Even societies, clubs and activities dedicated to sobriety and night-out alternatives.

Student voice – why did I go to university?

By Emma Berwick, a current Business with French student at the University of Birmingham

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

What additional information would be helpful?

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

I could also have asked for more information on managing finances and scholarship opportunities. Some companies offer scholarships and bursaries, and students may need to apply before starting their course.

Tips when a student starts their course

I also think it's a good idea once students are at university, to familiarise themselves with the different departments across the university and be aware of what school/department they are part of. Each school has different opportunities and perhaps a separate team of wellbeing officers who make decisions on things like coursework extensions and offering student support services.

> **"Last year, the covid pandemic and online learning made studying challenging for many. This year, with lectures being in person, university feels much more of a community."**

When I started university, I found speaking to older students incredibly helpful. There are lots of Facebook groups, where people ask about modules and there is also general university advice. Now I am a student ambassador I can meet more students across the university, and it is great to hear their words of wisdom. I would strongly recommend attending events, especially freshers' events which help new students settle in.

Organisation is important

As the assignments started appearing as well as module choices, I found that developing a good organisation system was helpful. For my own degree, I found making a list of deadlines on a sheet or paper and adding these to my Google calendar worked well.

The Disabled Student Allowance

One thing I would really recommend that students do before going to university is to check if they are eligible for the DSA (Disabled Student Allowance). This enables equipment and specific software to be given to students who have a disability, to help make their learning easier. Applications can take time, so this should be started as soon as possible.

Depending on the student's situation, if they have been eligible for extra time at sixth form or college, this should be the case at university. If applicable, and judging from my own experience, students are usually allocated a disability advisor who can provide help and support with study adjustments.

If I could make one final suggestion, it would be to regularly check emails. All the opportunities, trips and events are usually sent through email, and it is really important to stay on top of that!

A parent guide to what students do outside of their course

By Jen Barton, Student Recruitment Manager at Durham University

As a parent or guardian of a young person considering going to university, you are likely to have a lot of questions. Even if you went to university yourself, things are likely to have changed.

University students are always busy. They may not have a lot of directed learning time but will need to spend time on self-directed learning. Students will also have, and need, downtime.

Regardless of the university they choose, there will be a whole host of different things they can get involved in during their spare time – I provide a guide to these here:

Clubs and societies

Clubs and societies are large part of university student life and are offered at all universities. There are a diverse collection of groups and organisations, ranging from sport and hobbies to political and liberation groups. Often students will find one or two that they love, after trying a few or more out. University clubs and societies are usually student-led which also provides opportunity for students to take on management responsibilities, such as becoming a treasurer or social secretary.

Sport

The opportunity to engage in sports varies with different universities. Some universities only have a small number of sports teams and students will need to be fairly good to join a team and compete. Other universities will have sport teams that offer opportunities for all levels of ability from beginner to elite.

Socialising

You may be surprised at the vast number of things students do to socialise. Visiting cafés, the theatre (amateur and professional), movie nights, nature walks, quiz nights and perhaps pubs and clubs!

Developing transferable skills

There is wealth of things that students can get involved in that will develop key transferable skills. Most universities have a university newspaper, radio station and social media blogs for example. Students tend to run these as well as the clubs and societies which will develop other valuable employability skills.

Work and volunteering

Many students work alongside their degree. Many university locations have a wealth of part-time jobs, such as in cafés and bars during term-time when they are at their busiest.

Universities also offer support to find placements and internships that students can undertake as part of their studies and during vacation time. These can lead to the offer of full-time employment following graduation if they prove themselves to be a valued employee!

There are also opportunities to get involved in volunteering, which provides valuable experience to include on a student CV as well as a great way to give back to the community.

"University students are always busy. They may not have a lot of directed learning time but will need to spend time on self-directed learning. Students will also have, and need, downtime."

Durham University

Inspiring the extraordinary

Welcome to Durham University

On-campus Undergraduate Open Days:

Friday 17th - Saturday 18th June 2022

9am - 4pm

Register your interest for our On-campus Undergraduate Open Days:

durham.ac.uk/visit-us/open-days/register-your-interest/

durham.ac.uk

A higher education jargon buster – the terms you may run into when providing support

Provided by the University of Salford Student Recruitment Team, Newman University's Senior Student Recruitment Manager Steven Joesbury and UniTasterDays Director Jon Cheek.

We know that starting the UCAS process can be confusing for parents as well as students, not least when you come up against new words that you don't quite understand (don't worry, we've all been there!).

We've put together some explanations of the main terms which are used in relation to university life to help you have a better understanding of the university lingo!

About the courses…

Higher education (also known as HE) - Optional study taken after secondary education. Higher education can be studied at a range of institutions including universities and further education colleges.

Undergraduate - A person studying for their first degree, traditionally following the completion of their A-Levels, BTECs or equivalent.

Foundation degree - A programme that prepares students for success on their undergraduate degree course, often by combining work-based learning with academic study. The course is equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor degree (Level 4 and Level 5) to support students up to the required academic standard.

FdA: Foundation Degree & FdSc: Foundation Degree Sciences

> **"We've put together some explanations of the main terms which are used in relation to university life to help you have a better understanding of the university lingo!"**

Bachelor's degree – usually a 3-year undergraduate course, which may be a:

BA: Bachelor of Arts

BEng: Bachelor of Engineering

BSc: Bachelor of Science

LLB: Bachelor of Law

Levels 4, 5, 6 – The three levels of study within an undergraduate degree. Level 4 being the next level up from an A-Level or equivalent. Level 5 is the second year of an undergraduate degree and Level 6 is the third year of an undergraduate degree.

Joint honours – A degree where two subjects are studied equally (50/50 split) together. A student's time will usually be split across the two subjects equally, but some courses allow the opportunity to spend more time on one than the other which is known as 'majoring' and 'minoring'.

Major/Minor honours - A degree where a student will study two subjects but concentrate on one (the major subject) whilst studying a second subject in less detail (the minor subject).

Sandwich degree - A degree where a student will do a work placement year as part of their course, usually between their second and third year.

Placement year - A degree with a placement (often known as a sandwich degree). This will usually be 4 years long with a year working in their relevant industry.

Study abroad – Universities often have partner organisations across the globe, which allows students to spend a semester or year studying in a different country.

Degree apprenticeships – Compared to higher apprenticeships for school leavers; degree apprenticeships provide learners the opportunity to gain a full bachelor's degree alongside working part-time in their field of interest.

Postgraduate – Typically someone who has already gained an undergraduate degree and is now studying for another qualification or degree.

PGCert: Postgraduate Certificate

PGDip: Postgraduate Diploma

MA (Master of Arts)/MSc (Master of Science) - A postgraduate course (usually 1 year) studied after completing an undergraduate degree.

Integrated masters - 4-year undergraduate course leading to a higher-level qualification. Usually offered in specific subjects:

MChem: Master of Chemistry

MEng: Master of Engineering

MPhys: Master of Physics

PhD - A postgraduate research qualification usually based on at least three years study/ research and a long piece of writing called a thesis.

About the learning…

Academics / Lecturers / Professors - Staff who teach at a university.

Critiques ('Crits') - Often used on art and design courses. Students work as a group, discussing projects and works by other artists, including fellow students and feeding this back.

Lectures – Classes where members of staff or visiting experts present information and ideas to larger groups of students who listen and take notes.

Tutorials and seminars – Classes where smaller groups of students, guided by a tutor or lecturer, talk about topics they are studying in lectures.

Live project brief – The opportunity to work on local industry company projects and offer solutions whilst gaining real world experience.

PBL: Problem Based Learning – A method of study whereby students are given a real problem, and usually work in a group to solve it. This is very popular in medical and health care courses.

Dissertation - A long essay about a specific subject, usually between 9,000 – 12,000 words completed in the final year of a degree course.

Semester - The teaching period at university when a student will have lessons scheduled. There are two semesters in each academic year, typically the one before Christmas and the one after.

Plagiarism - Using or copying another person's work without acknowledgement and with the intention of passing it off as your own. This is cheating and is not allowed at university.

Application terminology…

UCAS - The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is the central portal for information on all full-time undergraduate courses available throughout the UK. Their online service allows applicants to find courses, track their progress and respond to offers.

UCAS tariff points - UCAS has a tariff system or 'UCAS points' which converts qualification grades into points e.g., "BBC" is the equivalent to 112 UCAS points. Grades are added together to give a total which can be used as an entry requirement for a course. UCAS has a useful tariff calculator online.

Entry Requirements - The criteria that applicants must meet to be offered a place on a course, such as achieving certain results at school or college. Different universities and courses will have different entry requirements which will be listed on UCAS, university websites and in university prospectuses.

Personal statement – A vital part of the university application to convey why a student wants to study the chosen course, to demonstrate to admissions tutors why they should offer the student a place on their programme.

Clearing - The summer period, including the time after A-Level results are released, where universities advertise remaining places on their courses.

Student loan (maintenance and tuition fee loans) - Repayable money from the Students Loan Company (SLC) available to help a student with their living costs (maintenance) and tuition fees.

Means tested - Assessment made on household income to determine how much financial support a student is entitled to.

Bursaries and scholarships - Non repayable funding to assist with the cost of studying at university. This sometimes comes in the form of credit to use on campus or with approved retailers.

Conditional offer - An applicant is made a conditional offer by a university if they are predicted to meet the entry requirements of the course. The offer is dependent upon the applicant meeting the requirements, for example achieving certain results in their BTEC, A Levels or other Level 3 qualifications.

Unconditional offer - An offer of a place on a course with no conditions which can be accepted straight away.

UCAS Track - Students can log into UCAS track to check the status of offers as well as amend any details.

UCAS Extra - If a student is without an offer, UCAS Extra offers an additional choice.

Firm choice - An applicant's preferred or first choice university on their UCAS application.

Insurance choice - An applicant's second choice university on their UCAS application to act as a reserve if they don't meet the entry requirements of their firm choice.

About the 'other stuff'…

NUS (National Union of Students) - As well as providing discounts in various retail and leisure outlets, the NUS campaign for student rights.

SU (Students' Union) – Run by students for the benefit of students at universities. They support improvements for students and often can organise the sports clubs and societies, social activities and offer support to students.

Campus - The buildings and grounds at which a university is based; sometimes universities have several different campuses.

Campus university - A university where everything is based on one site, including student accommodation, lecture rooms and libraries. A campus university may still have more than one site, but each site will have its own facilities.

City University - a university which will have different buildings across a town or city, rather than on one site. The buildings are often close to one another and located in a central area.

Open Days - Open days are there for prospective students and their families to go and look around a university. They provide an opportunity to see university facilities and speak to staff and students to get a feel for what studying there might be like.

Halls of residence – Staffed and secure catered/self-catered university accommodation, often on site or nearby to be able to access university easily and ease the transition into university life.

Freshers & freshers week – A first year student is known as a 'Fresher' and Freshers Week helps students to settle into university life with the opportunity to join societies and more.

Need help with any others?

If there are any terms we haven't covered and if there's anything you're still unsure about, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us or speak to staff in person at an event at university.

Credits - a special thanks to all our guest contributors

Alexandra Roberts, University of South Wales
Alison Griffin, University of West London
Andrew Cooper, Liverpool John Moores University
Andy Long, Keele University
Ashleigh Hope, Guildhall School of Music & Drama
Charlie Kettlewell, University College Birmingham
Dan Flanagan, Keele University
David Handy, King Edward VI College Stourbridge
David Hawkins, The University Guys
Donna Beardmore, University of Sunderland
Ella Sancassani, University of Essex
Emma Berwick, student at the University of Birmingham
Emma Churchill, University of Exeter
Erin Tungate, University of West London
Erin Wilson, Lancaster University
Fiona Curry, University of Central Lancashire
Gemma Stead, University of Huddersfield
Georgia Hargreaves, Edge Hill University
Izzy Kelly, Aimhigher West Midlands
Jen Barton, Durham University
Dr Jonathan Dunn, University of Salford
Jonathan Stebbing, University of Kent
Kat Knight, City, University of London
Kate Nelson, Teesside University
Katie Whitmore, University of South Wales
Khashim Hussain, Brunel University London
Lucy Holehan, University of Leeds
Mandy Green, Bedford Academy
Max Harvey, Cardiff University
Meg Griessel, St Mary's University, Twickenham
Melanie Kidd, University of East Anglia and the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach
Melissa Grindon, Liverpool Hope University
Molly Packwood, University of Leeds
Nia Stokes, Swansea University
Poppy Hudghton, Queen Mary, University of London
Rebecca Wills, Lincoln Minster School
Rob Thatcher, University of Surrey
Ruth Boyce, University of Winchester
Savannah Robinson, University of Leicester
Sophie Threlfall, University of Salford
Sophie Waring, University of East Anglia and the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach
Steven Joesbury, Newman University
The University of Salford Student Recruitment Team
Vanessa Tarling, University of East Anglia and the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach
Wendy Price, University of Sunderland

UniTasterDays.com

Disclaimer
UniTasterDays can accept no liability for the accuracy or otherwise of statements in this publication. It is a general guide, produced in March 2022 with content provided from multiple sources.

© UniTasterDays 2022