



HIGHER EDUCATION

A Parents and Carer's Guide for students in YEAR 12 & 13

Information and guidance to support young people with their degree level choices

LINCHHIGHER

linchhigher.co.uk



Who are we?

LiNCHhigher is a collaboration of Universities, Colleges and Organisations from across Lincolnshire who work together to provide high quality outreach activities for students. We aim to improve access to information and opportunities, particularly around progression routes to Higher Education and the range of options available.

4	What is higher education?	14	Universities v colleges	22	University decisions
6	Qualification pathways	15	Choosing a course	25	Results day
8	Higher education institutions	16	Choosing a university	28	Paying for university
10	Year 12 students	20	Open days	29	Student support
11	Year 13 students	20	University application process	29	Choosing accommodation
12	Going to university	20	School/colleges role	22	Preparing to go to university
				22	Alternatives to higher education
				22	Career prospects
				22	Taking a gap year
				22	University terminology

Introduction

As a parent or carer of a young learner currently in secondary school, home education or alternative provisions, over the next few years you will see them faced with decisions about their education that will affect their options and next steps in the future. The advice and guidance you provide throughout their educational journey will have a significant impact on their long-term future.

The higher education landscape is ever changing, seeing more young people heading off to university or college than ever before. However, many parents and carers feel unsure if this is the right pathway for their child, and find the whole topic of higher education quite daunting. Familiarising yourself with the information in this guide will get you up to speed wherever your child is on their journey. This will enable you to provide the right support at the right time, ensuring your child is well placed to make informed decisions about their future.

Throughout this guide you'll find an introduction to the many options available after turning 18, including facts and stats, helpful hints to support your child's(ren's) progression, useful charts and guides and much more. There's also a glossary for any confusing terminology!

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact our team, we are always happy to help.



What is Higher Education?

Higher education refers to qualifications at Level 4 and above, such as Bachelor's degrees, foundation degrees and higher national diplomas and certificates (HNDs/HNCs). There are over 400 higher education providers in the UK including universities, further education colleges, specialist institutions and training

providers. Together, they provide over 50,000 courses and with the growing number of employers providing higher level or degree apprenticeships, there really is something for everyone. Depending on the subject/ career you are interested in, you will follow an **Academic, Vocational or Apprenticeship** pathway.



CHOOSING QUALIFICATIONS: WHAT'S WHAT?

There are a few different types of higher education qualifications, which can be split into three main groups:

ACADEMIC

These qualifications focus on developing deep knowledge of specific subjects. Students studying these qualifications also develop skills in independent learning and research. These courses take place at a university and certain colleges.

VOCATIONAL

These qualifications allow students to develop a knowledge base so that they can learn important theory. However, they also offer more practical learning opportunities and link to specific careers or jobs.

APPRENTICESHIPS

This route can result in obtaining either an academic or vocational higher education qualification. As apprenticeships are jobs, up to 80% of the time will be spent in a work environment rather than in the classroom.

What are Higher Education Institutions?

A higher education institution is an organisation that delivers the various qualifications highlighted on this page. Most people associate higher education with universities, but higher education institutions can also be called colleges, conservatoires, and institutes. Some further education colleges also provide higher education qualifications.

SPECIALIST HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Some subjects may be taught at specialist higher education institutions such as;

- Agricultural colleges
- Training colleges
- Technology institutes
- Business schools
- Art schools (for visual arts and crafts such as painting sculpture textile design and graphic design)
- Conservatories (for performance-based arts such as music or drama)

QUALIFICATION TYPES Undergraduate qualifications are the next academic step up from Level 3. They are delivered at higher education institutions such as universities and colleges. There are various qualifications at different levels.



QUALIFICATION TYPES

Undergraduate qualifications are the next academic step up from Level 3. They are delivered at higher education institutions such as universities and colleges. There are various different qualifications at different levels.

BTEC HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATES (HNC) AND BTEC HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA (HND)

- Work related courses provided by higher and further education institutions.
- A HNC takes one year to complete, and a HND takes two years.
- A HND is roughly equivalent to the first two years of a university/college degree and many students use it as a stepping-stone to a full degree.

CERTIFICATES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION (CERTCE)

- Equivalent to the first 60 credits of an undergraduate degree.
- On completion these can be used towards a full undergraduate degree.

CERTIFICATES OF HIGHER EDUCATION (CERTHE) AND DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION (DIPHE)

- These are levels within a degree course – A CertHE is the same as one year of study and a DipHE is the same as two years.
- They are often awarded if a student leaves a course early but can be taken as a stand alone qualification.

FOUNDATION DEGREE

- These have abbreviations such as FdSc (Science Foundation Degree) FdA (Arts Foundation Degree) and FdEng (Engineering Foundation Degree).
- Equivalent to a HND or two-thirds of a bachelor's degree.
- They focus on specific job or sector skills, in areas as broad as arts and media management, electronic engineering, healthcare and wildlife conservation. Some include work placements for hands on learning.
- Most take two years to complete full time, or longer if taken part time.
- Usually students can choose to study for an additional year to gain a full degree.
- Taught at university or college, or often both.

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION (NVQ)

- Test abilities in the workplace.
- Students complete training and are assessed on work related tasks by completing a portfolio and observations.
Portfolio assessment – build up evidence of what you've done at work.
Observation - an assessor watches and checks that required tasks can be done.
- Levels are based on national standards of the job and each unit is signed off as and when standards are met.
- Doesn't have to be completed in a specific amount of time.

FOUNDATION DIPLOMA/ FOUNDATION YEAR

- These are one-year qualifications that can be a stepping stone to a bachelors degree course for students who want to explore a particular subject area for one year or who don't meet the degree entry requirements.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

- Also known as an undergraduate, first, or honours degree. This is the most common form of higher education qualification.
- There are different qualification titles, but many subjects fall under BSc (Bachelor of Science) BA (Bachelor of Arts). Other common titles are BEng (Bachelor of engineering and LLB (Bachelor of Laws).
- Some subjects, such as psychology or geography are available as BA or BSc courses. The BSc is likely to have more scientific or technical content while the BA will focus more on human or social aspects of the subject.
- Courses can focus on a single subject (single honours) or two subjects (combined, joint honours, or major/ minor).
- An undergraduate degree usually takes three years of full time study to complete – some courses take four years including a year abroad or a years work placement.
- Some students choose an integrated masters degree - usually a three-year bachelor's degree which leads straight into a further year of masters level study.

You'll find more information about choosing a university course and the application process on page 12 in the "Going to University" section.



Qualification pathway explained

Higher level study

LEVEL 8	Doctorate	BTEC Professional Qualifications, City and Guilds, OCR, etc.	NVQ Level 5
LEVEL 7	Masters, post graduate Diploma, post graduate Certificate	BTEC Professional Qualifications, City and Guilds, OCR, etc.	NVQ Level 5
LEVEL 6	3rd Year Honours Degree <u>Top up year to honours Degree from a foundation Degree/ HNC/HND</u>	BTEC Professional Qualifications, City and Guilds, OCR, etc.	3rd Year Degree Apprenticeship <u>Higher Apprenticeship</u> NVQ Level 4
LEVEL 5	2nd Year Honours Degree	BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) offered by colleges <u>Foundation Degree Year 2</u> HNDs	2nd Year Degree Apprenticeship <u>Higher Apprenticeship</u> NVQ Level 4
LEVEL 4	1st Year Honours Degree	BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) offered by FE colleges <u>Foundation Degree Year 1</u> HNCs	1st Year Degree Apprenticeship <u>Higher Apprenticeship</u> NVQ Level 4



LEVEL 3	A and AS Levels <u>International Baccalaureate</u> Open University Access Modules	Applied General Qualifications <u>T Levels</u> Vocational/Level 3 BTEC, City and Guilds, Diploma	Advanced Apprenticeship <u>NVQ Level 3</u>
LEVEL 2	GCSE Grades 4-9 <u>Maths/English/IT Functional Skills courses</u>	Vocational Qualifications - eg. Level 2 - BTEC Certificate/Diploma, OCR/City and Guilds	Intermediate Apprenticeship <u>NVQ Level 3</u>
LEVEL 1	GCSE Grades 1-3 <u>Maths/English/IT Functional Skills courses</u>	Vocational Qualifications - eg. Level 1 - BTEC Certificate/Diploma, OCR/City and Guilds	NVQ Level 1

Year 12 (Level 3) Students

Including Exploring Post 18 Options

As the year progresses, you will need to think about what to do when you finish your course. Would you like to continue your education or training? Or will you be ready to start your career? Make the most of the opportunities available and investigate your options, it's the best advice we can give you.



From February/March, your child will have access to opportunities such as.

UCAS EXHIBITIONS

- Held around the country, these events bring together experts from UCAS (the universities and colleges admissions service), university and college representatives, employers, and gap year providers. Schools or colleges often arrange visits to these exhibitions, but you can also visit independently.

For more details visit www.ucas.com/ucas/events-exhibitions.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE TASTER COURSES AND RESIDENTIAL

- These are short subject-specific courses, lasting between half a day to one week. They are designed to give students a flavour of campus life, and the chance to experience university/college teaching methods, see the academic staff and current university/college students. They are generally free of charge, although students may have to cover travel and food costs. Residential courses involve staying overnight at the university/college.

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CAREERS FAIRS

- These are a good opportunity to talk to careers advisers, universities, and employers to find out more about higher education, training, apprenticeships, and employment options.

CAREER-FOCUSED SESSIONS OR TALKS AT THEIR SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

- This will generally be delivered by representatives from universities, colleges and apprenticeship providers.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Getting the most out of UCAS exhibitions

UCAS exhibitions are large, busy events, often with hundreds of organisations represented, so it's a good idea to do a bit of preparation in advance.

Before they go to a UCAS exhibition we advise you look through the exhibition information together and talk about the following aspects:

- What they want to get out of the day.
- Whether there are any university or college stands you would like to visit.
- The questions they would like to ask university/training provider representatives.
- Whether they are any specific talks or sessions they're interested in.

On the day, we recommend you take a spare bag for all the prospectuses and information you will pick up.

After the fair think about how it went and the sorts of courses and careers you are thinking about.

Check your prospectuses and compare the details of the courses that interest you. Look at where different institutions are and start to think about where you would like to live and study.



University open days begin in the summer term and continue until the autumn, but many universities run events throughout the year. Open days are a great way to get a feel for different institutions' courses, facilities, and campuses. We recommend visiting as many as you can, but particularly your favourite institution and course.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Your child can also seek advice from

- Careers advisers at their school/college
- The National Careers Service, which offers advice by phone, webchat and email. For details visit

nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

HIGHER EDUCATION DECISIONS

If your child decides they would like to go to university or college, during the summer they'll need to decide on the courses and universities they want to apply to.

The following quick guide to higher education explains the range of post 18 qualifications and some of the terminology you and your child might come across in your research.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

POST 18 DECISION'S

FIRST TOP TIP: Arm yourself with as much information as possible so that you're ready to support your child when it comes to discussions about their future.

SECOND TOP TIP: There are many sources of advice and guidance online. The following are a good place to start -

- **National Careers Service**
(nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)
- **UCAS** (ucas.com)
(Prospects.prospects.ac.uk)
- **Which** (university.which.co.uk)
The Complete University Guide
(thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
- **Get In Go Far (Apprenticeships)**
(gettingofar.gov.uk)
- **LiNCHigher**
(linchigher.co.uk)
- **DiscoverUni**
(discoveruni.co.uk)

In addition, there may be careers/higher education events for parents or carers at your child's school or college, and special parent/carer sessions at UCAS exhibitions, so go along if you can.

DISCUSSING THE OPTIONS

- Support your child to make informed decisions, rather than deciding for them. Putting pressure on your child to follow the path you think is best is likely to be counterproductive.
- When you talk with your child about the future, be positive and focus on what they do well, what they're interested in and what they want to achieve. School reports, parents' evenings and grade predictions can be useful reference points for your discussions.
- Encourage them to get some different ideas and perspectives by talking to teachers, careers advisors and other family members.



Year 13 (Level 3) Students

By the start of Year 13 or equivalent your child will hopefully have a good idea of what they want to do next. The time has arrived for them to apply and secure the higher education course, training opportunity or job that is right for them. We understand that they will be busy studying for their Level 3 qualifications which is why its important they have a good network of people to support with the process.

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

If your child wants to study a higher education course at university or college they should begin applying in Year 13.

YOU WILL FIND MORE DETAILS ABOUT CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY/ COLLEGE COURSE (PAGE 22) AND THE UCAS APPLICATION PROCESS (PAGE 29/30) LATER IN THIS GUIDE.



MAKING A PLAN B

Hopefully your child will get their A level/ BTEC /Level 3 results they are hoping for, but it's worth talking to them about a backup plan just in case. Try not to make this sound too negative - you don't want to undermine their confidence, but chat with them about what they might do if they don't get high enough grades for their chosen path. For example, if they can't get onto their ideal degree course, would they want to find a similar course elsewhere with lower entry requirement, retake their exams and reapply, or take a year out for a rethink?

EXAMS

As with GCSEs, the amount of study leave your child will have for A-level/ BTEC revision will depend on their school or college. It's crucial that your child makes a start on their revision early, following a realistic revision timetable and using techniques that suit their learning style.

RESULTS DAY

Results for different qualifications come out at different times:

- BTEC results are released from mid-July. The timing will vary depending on the course and how it is assessed. The way your child will get the results will depend on their school or college; they may have to pick them



up in person or the results might arrive by post or electronically. Some schools and colleges will release them at the same time as A-levels.

- A-level results are available in mid-August.

To minimise stress, it's important to know what to expect on results day and what to do if things don't go to plan. Hopefully you and your child will have discussed a plan B. However, if they haven't engaged with the idea of having a backup plan, it's a good idea to do some research into other options yourself, so you can offer well informed support if they don't get their expected grades.

Ideally your child should be available on results day, as they may need to contact universities, or there could be letters they need to sign relating to their next steps. They should try to avoid being away or at work.

If they are collecting their results in person (this will be the case for A-Levels and possibly for BTECs), make sure they know what time their school or college will be open on results day. Ask whether they would like you to go with them, but respect their decision if they say no.

If your child is applied to University through UCAS, there's more information about what happens next later on in this guide.

Going to University

A child's decision to go to university or college can raise many questions for parents or carers. How do they apply? How much will it cost? What financial help is available? Where will they live?

This section aims to answer these questions and more, enabling you to help your child prepare for their next adventure.

WHY GO?

Going to university or college is a big commitment, in terms of both time and money, but by getting a degree your child will be making a big investment in their future. It will increase their chances of getting a more competitive job and improve their earning potential. In addition, for many young people it is also their first taste of independence, and an exciting opportunity to try new activities and meet new friends.



THE BENEFITS OF GOING TO UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE

It opens a wide range of career options:

- A university degree is essential for some professions, for example if your child wants to become a doctor, psychotherapist or architect.
- Many other jobs will only recruit people with a degree, although they may not require a particular subject.

YOUR CHILD IS LIKELY TO EARN MORE

- Graduates earn on average more over their lifetime than people without a degree. This is sometimes known as the graduate premium.

IT WILL HELP THEM TO BECOME CAREER READY

- Universities and colleges offer career advice, and many provide high quality work experience opportunities.
- Your child may have the opportunity to study overseas, which can be appealing to recruiters.
- University or college life will help your child to become more independent and develop personal and transferable skills such as teamwork, managing their time, meeting deadlines and critical thinking - all critical for the workplace.
- They will also meet people from different places and backgrounds, building a network of contacts that will be valuable during their career.

THEY WILL HAVE A GREAT TIME

- University and college can be a life changing experience; they'll develop as individuals, grow in confidence and have the opportunity to make new friends and try new things.

Do graduates really get more job opportunities?

PROSPECTS' WHAT DO GRADUATES DO? 2018 FOUND THIS:

Employment increased from 74.2% to 76.6% as 4,540 more graduates found jobs compared to last year. The proportion of employed graduates in professional level roles also increased, from 71.4% to 73.9%.

Skills shortages across many industries appear to have helped job prospects with increases in those entering professional jobs across all degree subjects.

In 2018, working age graduates earned on average £10,000 more per year than non-graduates, and had higher employment rates.

In 2018, the median salary for a working-age graduates was £34,000, compared to median salary of £24,000 for non-graduates.

Full article can be found here:

www.prospects.ac.uk/prospects-press-office/graduate-unemployment-rate-lowest-in-39-years-as-skills-shortages-boost-prospects

Source: Department for Education, April 2019



How University Differs from School or College

MORE ACADEMIC INDEPENDENCE

At university, your child will be expected to take responsibility for their own education. That means for example, knowing when and where their lectures are from planning their own workloads to meet essay and assessment deadlines. This can be a big leap for some students, but there is no need to worry as universities and colleges provide support throughout their studies.

DIFFERENT LEARNING METHODS

Your child may be used to a rigid timetable of lessons and homework. At university, the amount of structured learning time students receive each week varies depending on the course. Some subject areas, such as the arts could have around 12 to 15 hours of timetable sessions per week, with students expected to spend the rest of the time reading, researching and working on projects. Other subject areas such as the sciences require more time in the classroom or laboratories with just a few hours unstructured time each week.

Courses are made up of modules or units, each covering a specific topic and are taught through a combination of:

- Lectures - where an academic presents information to a large group.
- Seminars - interactive sessions facilitated by a tutor in which a smaller group of students explores the subject.
- Tutorials - discussions with a tutor either one to one or with a handful of other students.
- Independent study - reading, researching and working on assignments.

Depending on the degree your child chooses they may also have:

- Workshops - for example conducting experiments in a laboratory, creating artwork in a studio, or learning to use statistics software in a computer suite.
- Fieldwork - where they learn by visiting and studying in a particular location.
- Placements - where they spend time in a company to learn workplace skills.

Many courses involve group study, where a number of students work on projects or offer experimental learning - learning by doing practical tasks and reflecting on the experience.

MORE FREEDOM IN GENERAL

For many young people, going to university means leaving home. This in turn means adjusting to the new-found freedom on offer and coping with new responsibilities. They will have to arrange accommodation for the year, go food shopping, cook for themselves and manage their own finances. They will also have to balance their academic work with the demands of their social life and the many extra-curricular activities on offer at University.

CHOOSING WHAT TO STUDY AND WHERE

With more than 50,000 higher education courses available across UK universities and colleges, it is a big, but not impossible task for your child to find the right course. Something they will need to consider whilst picking a course is the location of the university or college. They may well require some support to narrow down these options. One way to help make these decisions is to attend different institution open days.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

UNIVERSITY DECISIONS

You'll want to be sure that your child makes a good choice, particularly if you're helping to fund their education. However, it's important to avoid imposing your own wishes.

- Get involved in looking at courses and universities with them, make suggestions and offer guidance, but let them take the lead. They're more likely to do well and enjoy their HE university or college

experience if they are doing a subject they have an invested interest in and is in their chosen location, rather than one they have taken to please you as their parent/carer.

- If they feel pressured to make a certain decision that is against their own wishes, they may be reluctant to approach you for advice or support in the future. They could even choose something that takes them down a different path, whether or not its right for them.

Choosing a Course

SINGLE OR COMBINED HONOURS?

If your child can't decide between two subject areas, a combined or joint honours course could be the answer. This offers the chance to study two subjects rather than one, taking roughly the same number of modules in each. Some universities also offer a major / minor degree option, which is similar but with a smaller proportion of modules in the minor subject.

Studying a combination of subjects could mean your child won't have to drop a subject they enjoy, and provides a broad education. However, finding the right combination may mean narrowing down their choice of universities.



CHECKING COURSE DETAILS

Degree courses are made up of individual modules or units, which cover specific topics within the subject area. Most courses include compulsory modules alongside some optional modules which allow students to tailor their subject knowledge towards their areas of interest.

- Encourage your child to look at the modules in detail, as they will vary across different university and college courses. For example, while various universities offer a history degree, for example the topics they cover in their modules might be very different.
- Suggest they find out how the modules are taught and assessed too, to check the course will suit their learning style.
- Does the course offer the amount of flexibility they would like in terms of choosing optional modules? Can they tailor the course to some extent to match their career goals or academic interests?

OTHER THINGS TO CHECK INCLUDE:

- Contact time (time spent in lectures, seminars and tutorials)- do they feel the course offers enough contact time, and are they happy with the balance between timetable learning sessions and independent study time?
- Study abroad - some degrees include a year abroad as part of the course structure; on other courses your child may be able to take part in an exchange programme and spend a semester or term studying at a partner university or college overseas.
- Industry placements - some degrees include a period of time within a relevant working environment, which offers students valuable workplace experience.

- Accreditation- This means a course has been recognised by another relevant industry body and can be an advantage for certain careers, such as accounting, marketing, chartered surveying or healthcare professionals. Accredited courses can count towards professional qualifications or registration with a professional body.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

It's important to check entry requirements carefully. Below are a few aspects to consider:

- Does your child have the required GCSEs and are their level 3 subjects accepted on the types of courses they are interested in?
- They will need to make realistic choices based on their predicted grades.
- Some universities will have higher entry requirements than others. Encourage your child to think about a backup choice with lower requirements in case they don't get their predicted grades.
- The application process may also involve an interview, audition or admissions test, or a combination of these.

ADMISSIONS TESTS

Entry to some courses will require your child to take an admissions test set by the university or college. This is common for courses at Oxford and Cambridge university, and for courses at many other universities in subjects such as law, medicine, and other health professions. Most admissions tests happen between August and November the year before your child starts their studies- some take place even earlier, before they have even sent their UCAS application. Make sure your child checks course requirements carefully to find out about any admissions test requirements.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

CHOOSING A COURSE

If they're not sure which subject to choose, encourage them to think about the following aspects:

WHAT THEY STUDY NOW

Are there particular subjects that they enjoy and are good at? Will one of these hold their interest for another three years? What sort of careers could it lead to?

WHETHER THEY WANT THEIR STUDIES TO RELATE DIRECTLY TO A PARTICULAR CAREER

If they have a particular job in mind do, they need specific qualifications to go into their chosen field?

IS THERE IS A NEW SUBJECT THAT APPEALS TO THEM

They will have a wider choice of subjects at degree level. If they're interested in a subject area they haven't studied before school or college, they should look at course details and teaching approaches carefully to make an informed decision.

Use the UCAS subject guide for more information about courses, what they entail and where they can lead.



Choosing a University

Finding the right degree course will be one of the main factors in your child choice of university, but there are plenty of other things to take into consideration too, such as reputation, location and services and facilities on offer. Also each university and college will have a different 'feel' or culture, so its important that your child finds somewhere that suits them.

REPUTATION

There are many elements that influence people's perception of a university. For example, academic standards, research strengths and whether it has a long-standing history. However ultimately people's judgements of the institutions reputation will be subjective and various employers may view your child's choice of university or college differently.

While reputation is important, your child should avoid making their choices based on reputation alone. Factors such as course content and location are just as important if your child is to do well academically and enjoy student life.

LEAGUE TABLE POSITION

League tables give universities a ranking based on a number of factors, including entry grades, student satisfaction scores, the ratio of staff to students and graduate employability.

These league tables show universities overall scores as well as ranking by subject area. Each calculates their ranking differently, so it's worth looking at more than one.

League tables will give you a useful indication of the quality of a universities course and facilities, but remember they may not always display the full picture, so your child should consider them as just one factor in the decision making process.

Remember that:

- Rankings can be deceptive because the difference between a university or college at the top of the table, to one in the middle or bottom may only be a few points.
- Some universities have an excellent reputation with employers for specific subject areas, but this may not be reflected in league table scores.
- Student satisfaction scores are personal views and may be influenced by a specific set of circumstances that won't affect future students.

THE LEAGUE TABLES ONLINE

- [The Guardian University Guide](http://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide)
(www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide)
- [The Complete University Guide](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
(www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
- [The Times](http://www.thetimes.co.uk)
(www.thetimes.co.uk)
- [Which? University](http://www.university.which.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-course/what-do-university-league-tables-really-tell-you)
(www.university.which.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-course/what-do-university-league-tables-really-tell-you)



FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Student services and facilities will vary depending on campus size, student numbers and funding from student contributions. Large university campuses will usually offer all of the services and facilities below plus more, while smaller private institutions will offer services and facilities more tailored to their student cohort. It's good to consider the below when making these decisions:

- How good are the university academic facilities? What could contribute to a better learning experience for you, an extensive library, a high-tech computing system, the latest laboratory equipment or spacious art studios?
- What are the social, leisure and sports facilities like?
- All that good support services for students, such as advice on finances and housing, career support and health and wellbeing services? If your child needs help during their studies, it helps to know that institutions offer a wide range of support services to assist them with any problems they may face, including those of an academic or personal nature. They'll find that student advisers are very understanding of the issues they may face as a student (after all, that is their job) and can really provide help when it is needed.

LOCATION

The location your child chooses will have implications for their budget and their lifestyle. Below are a few things you and your child may want to consider:

- Does your child plan to study locally and live at home? This is a cheaper option but will be a different experience to living in halls or shared student accommodation.
- If they are planning to study further afield, how far away do they want to be from home? How long will it take to travel home and how much will it cost?
- Living costs are higher in some cities than others.

CITY OR CAMPUS?

Some universities and colleges are in the middle of a city, some are in suburban areas and other have an out of town campus. Your child will need to think about which setup suits them best by considering the below:

- How do they feel about commuting to lectures?
- Are they excited by the idea of big city life or would they feel more comfortable somewhere smaller or more peaceful?

University & College Open Days

Once your child has narrowed down their options, open days are the best way for them to really get a real feel for the institutions on their list before they apply. These days it's common for parents or carers to go with their children, although some young people choose to go on their own or with friends.

If you do go along, seeing the institution for yourself can be reassuring. If you can visualise your child living and studying there, and are happy with the quality of education and support on offer, you will be less worried when they eventually go.

WHAT DOES AN OPEN DAY INVOLVE?

Most open days will include tours of the campus and local area, talks about specific subject areas and services and facilities on offer to all student's, taster sessions, and the chance to chat with staff and current students . There may also be talks specifically for parents or carers.

DATES AND REGISTERING

You and your child can search for open day dates online, where you will find more information about a specific university's open days. Most institutions ask visitors to register beforehand for a place.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

BEFORE THE OPEN DAY

Whether or not you are going along you can help your child beforehand by:

- Checking they have made any necessary practical arrangements. Do they need to register for the open day and if so, have they done it? If they're going on their own, have they planned transport and do they need some money to pay for the bus or train ticket?
- Look through the information together and talk about which sessions they will find most useful and how to structure their time to fit everything in.
- Encourage them to think of things they would like to ask staff and students while they are there.

All these websites have an online directory of open days at universities and colleges, including virtual open days:

- www.opendays.com
- www.whatuni.com/open-days/
- www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/open-days/search
- www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/open-days/open-day-calendar
- www.universitycompare.com/open-days/

If your child would like you to go with them, remember to let them take the lead - resist the temptation to take control yourself. Although you'll have your own questions and opinions, it's important that they get what they need from the day, as ultimately the choice will be theirs!

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

ON THE DAY

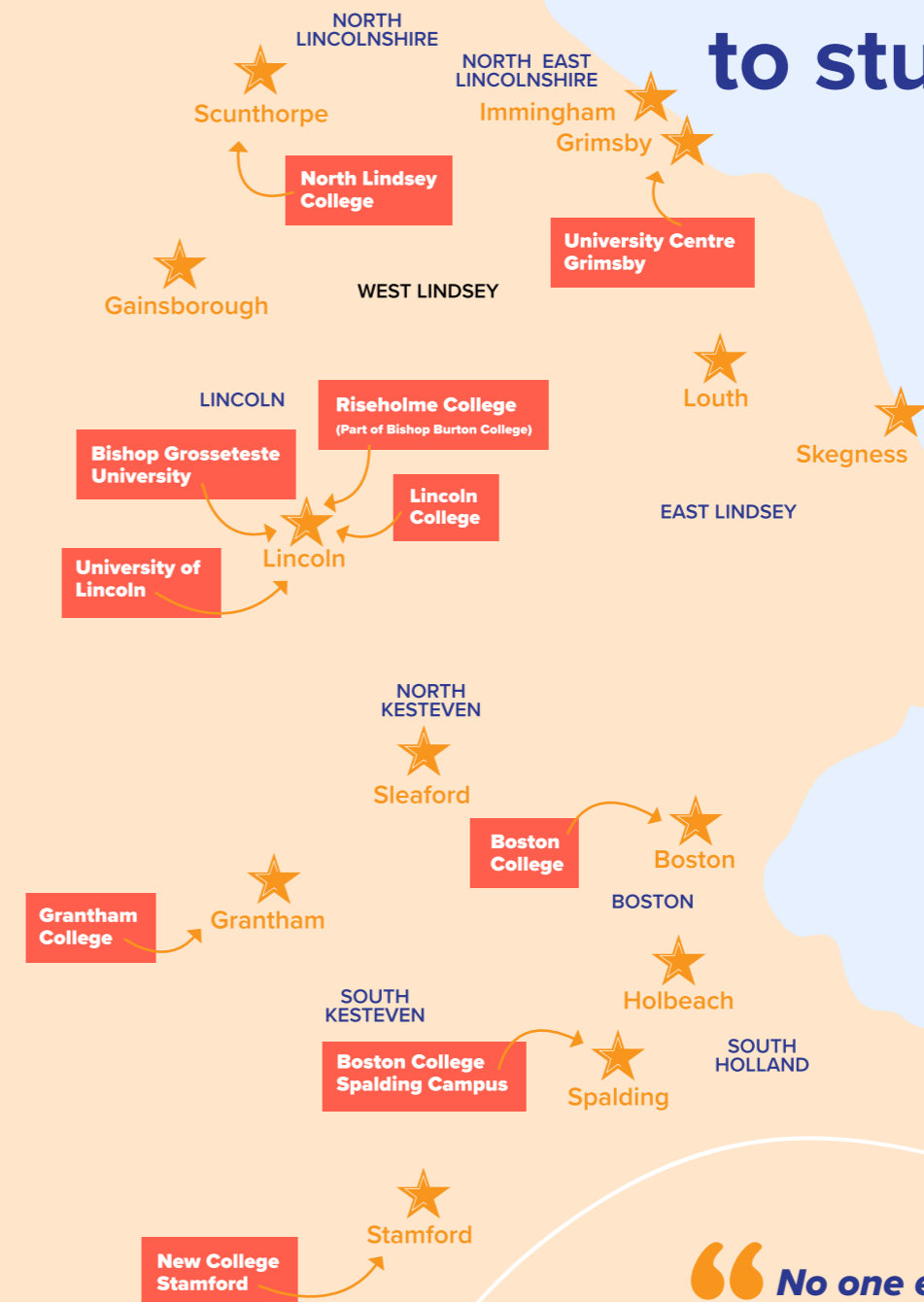
You can support your child on the day by:

- Getting them there - whether you drive or get the bus or train together.
- Staying in the background but encouraging them to get involved in the activities on offer and talk to people. Attending a talk for parents or carers will give you the chance to ask the questions that you want to ask.
- Giving them some space - if they're happy with the idea, leave them to it while you take a walk around the campus or local area.
- Encourage them to look around the city as well as the institution and to think about how they'll feel living there.
- Making sure you both take time to refuel. It will be a busy day, so have an occasional sit down and something to eat and drink to avoid either of you getting tired and grumpy!
- Taking notes of anything important in case your child doesn't.

AFTERWARDS

- Chat with them about what they liked or didn't like about the institution, and whether they can imagine it being their home. Find out what they thought of it compared to others they have visited.
- Be objective. Your Child's opinion is what's important. They might be influenced by what you say, so find out what they think before offering your perspective.
- Encourage your child to contact the university or college admissions team if they were any questions that staff didn't answer on the day.

Local institutions to study Higher Education



GOOD TO KNOW

If your child can't attend an official open day, think about visiting the campers together on a 'normal' day to have a look around and talk to students. If they require beforehand, your child may even be able to arrange a talk with a member of staff from the Department they are interested in.

“ No one ever tells you how tiring they are! Make sure you see universities that are definitely of interest (don't just attend them for the sake of attending), as the days can be expensive. Do research beforehand so you know what to go to see, what questions to ask, particularly if you are going through the process the first time. ”

Quote from a real mum

The University Application Process



Applications to study full time courses at universities, colleges and conservatoires in the UK are processed through an organisation called UCAS. Your child can apply for up to five courses in total.

For full details of the UCAS application process visit www.ucas.com. You can also sign up for the UK's parent email newsletter, which provides useful information and guidance. To register, visit www.web.ucas.com/parents-signup

WHEN TO APPLY

Your child should apply in good time to meet the deadlines which are:

- **15th October** - all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or for most medicine, veterinary and dentistry courses at other universities. If they are only applying for medicine courses they can apply for a maximum of four courses.
- **15 January** - for most other degree courses.
- **24 March** - for some art and design courses (others have a mid-January deadline so be sure your child checks carefully).

Universities don't wait for the January deadline to start offering places but will consider an application before this date equally - so it's good to view 15 January as a deadline rather than a target.

COMPLETING THE ONLINE FORM

UCAS's undergraduate application system is called 'Apply' and the whole process is done online.

- Your child will need to register on the UCAS website by giving some basic details and setting some security questions; they'll be given a username and will need to set a password.
- Their school or college may give them a 'buzz word' to enter in their form; this links their application to their school or college.

AFTER REGISTERING THERE ARE SEVEN MORE SECTIONS TO COMPLETE:

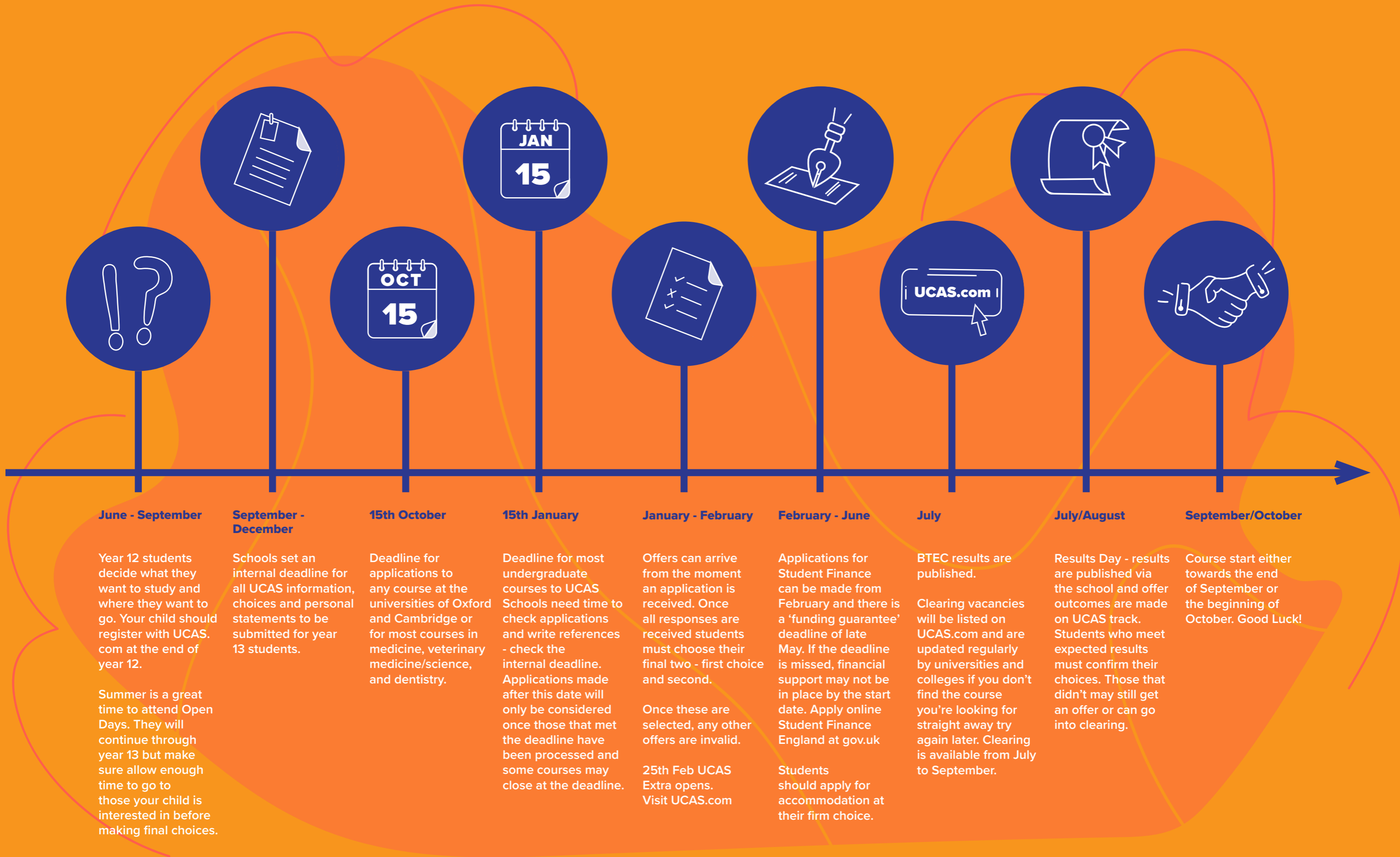
- Personal details.
- Additional information, including a quality monitoring questions, and details of any summer schools or taster courses they have attended in preparation for higher education.
- Student finance - your child can sign up for an alert to let them know when they can apply for student finance.
- Choices - the chosen courses and institutions.
- Education - details of schools attended since the age of 11, exams taken, results and any exams still to be taken.
- Personal statement - their opportunity to tell universities about their strengths and why they should be offered a place.
- Employment - basic details about any part time jobs.

There is also a section at the end for a reference, which is usually completed by a teacher. If your child is applying independently, they can ask an employer or trainer to be their referee.

There is an application fee, which may be payable direct to UCAS or via your child school or college. If your child isn't sure which, encouraged them to check with a teacher.



UCAS Time Trail



DRAFTING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is your child's opportunity to stand out from the crowd by talking about their skills, experience and ambitions. It's a crucial part of the UCAS application, but it's also the section many young people find most difficult.

It's worth doing some research and looking at the resources on the UCAS website.

These resources include videos and a personal statement tool, that helps your child think about what to include and how to structure their statement within their given word limit.

Writing notes about the following may support with writing their statement:

- **What makes them interesting or different (in a positive way).**
- **Why they chose the subject, and why they are excited about the course.**
- **Work experience and other activities, and the skills and qualities they demonstrate.**
- **How these skills and qualities could be useful on the course- for example project management, meeting deadlines or communication.**

If they're stuck for ideas, they could ask you, their teacher and their friends for feedback. Once they've gathered their thoughts, they will need to create a focused structured personal statement.

- **Offer to look through draughts and encourage them to use plain, cliché-free English.**
- **Check their spelling and grammar, or make sure they ask someone else to.**

DEFERRED ENTRY

If your child is thinking about taking a gap year before they start university or college, they can apply now and defer their start date by one year.

They can do this by selecting a deferred start date in the 'Choices' section of the UCAS form. Universities will often have their own guidance on applications for deferred entry; your child should check their website or prospectus for details. Most universities will want students to explain their reason for deferring and their plans for the next year in their personal statement.

Not all courses will accept deferred entry applications so your child should check the entry requirements carefully.

Depending on their chosen course, it may be possible for your child to defer after they have made their application, but they'll need to contact the university to discuss this.

GOOD TO KNOW

Once your child has registered on the UCAS website they can start their application process. Your child can revisit their application as many times as they wish, saving their information as they go. This gives them the flexibility to edit different sections at different points until they're happy with it.

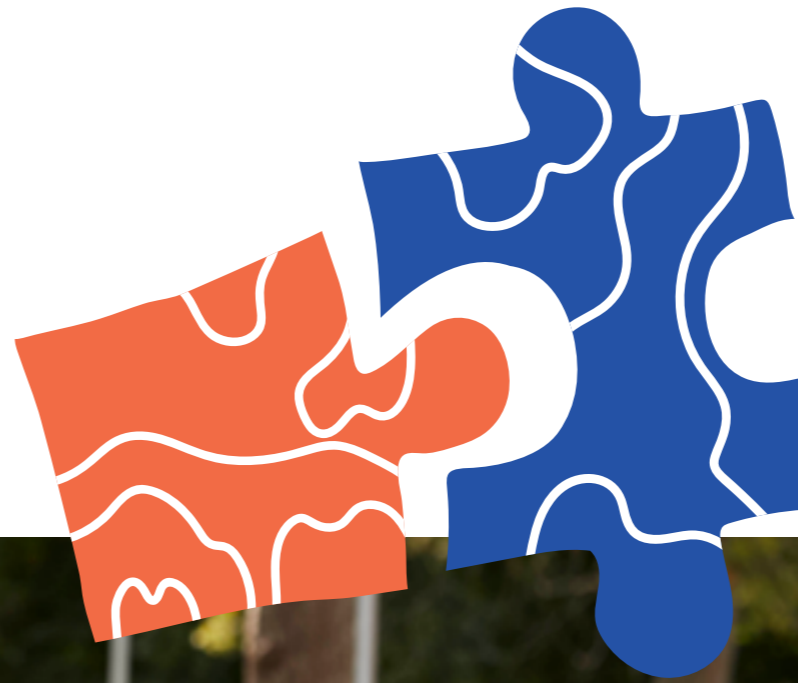


The School/College's Role

If your child is applying through their school or college, when they submit the form it will go to them rather than directly to you UCAS. The school or college will then check the form, add their reference, and submit the form to UCAS.

Encourage your child to talk to the teacher who will be writing the reference about what they are applying for and why, so that the teacher can personalise their reference. The

school/college is likely to give your child an earlier deadline date to complete their UCAS application form by than the one set by UCAS. This is an internal date to give them time to process all their students references before the UCAS cut-off date. It's important to make yourself aware of any internal deadlines so you are able to support your child with the submission of their application in the necessary timeframe for the teacher's approval.



VISIT DAYS

Once your child has applied, they might invite them to a subject or department open day. These are different from general open days as they focus on one area in more detail. They might include a tour of facilities, a taster lecture, and meeting staff and current students. Sometimes universities combine this with an interview (formal or informal) or an audition. If your child can attend these it is well worth it, especially as it gives university staff a chance to meet them in person, which can help staff decide whether to offer a place.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Once your child's form is submitted to UCAS

- UCAS processes the information, which can take up to 48 hours.
- Your child receives a welcome email, explaining how to use Track - the online system that allows them to follow the progress of their application.
- The application will be sent to your child's chosen institutions.
- Your child may be invited to an interview, audition or requested to complete an admissions test.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

INTERVIEWS AND AUDITIONS

When your child prepares for an interview or audition they should bear in mind that interviewers are typically looking for evidence of good subject knowledge, independent thinking and enthusiasm for the course and institution.

- Help your child workout the logistics - check that they know where they need to go and how they will get there. Encourage them to allow plenty of time to avoid any extra stress.
- Ensure they have read through the information that has been sent to them about the interview or audition, so that they know what to expect.
- Check that they have thought about what to wear. The university or college might specify a dress code for interviews, but if not they should wear something comfortable and smart. If it's an audition they should wear something appropriate for the type of performance. If they are unsure, just ask.
- Help them to think about the questions that they may be asked - Why did you choose this subject? Why do you want to study here? are good places to start. They will use their personal statement as a basis for questions, so make sure they can say a little bit more about everything they have put into their personal statement.
- Help them to think of some questions they can ask, about teaching methods or the content of the course.
- Encourage them to take advantage of any mock interview or audition opportunities, for example with teachers or careers advisers.
- If they must choose an audition piece, encourage them to avoid obvious or clichéd choices.

University/College Decisions

Universities and colleges will let UCAS know when they have made a final decision on your child's application. UCAS will then confirm this and send your child an email notifying them of changes and to review Track. The decision could be any of the following:

- **A conditional offer** - an offer of a place that depends on your child meeting criteria, such as grades.
- **An unconditional offer** - if your child already has the required grades, or the institution has decided to give them a place whatever grades they achieve.
- **An unsuccessful application** - where the institution decides not to make an offer.

UNCONDITIONAL OFFERS

Some universities and colleges may make an unconditional offer regardless of whether they have received their results or not. If a student confirms this as their first choice, they will be committing to that place.

This type of unconditional offer can seem tempting as it means your child has a place however they do in their exams. However, it still needs to be the best course and university for them.

If your child decides to accept an unconditional offer, it's really important they still concentrate on their studies. If they change their mind and decide on a different course, their A level or BTEC grades will still be taken into consideration. In addition, the knowledge they gain while doing these qualifications will help to prepare them for further study and work.

When they have received offers from all their applications, they can start the replies:

They should start by reviewing all the offers they have received and chose to accept one as their firm choice. This commits them to that course, at that university or college, assuming they meeting all the necessary offer conditions.

They will also then need to accept an offer as their insurance choice. The insurance choice is designed to offer your child a second option if they don't meet the conditions of their firm choice (e.g. grades), so it's sensible to pick an insurance choice with lower entry requirements.

If your child has used all their five choices and haven't received any offers (or has declined any offers they have received), they could use UCAS Extra, which is a free service to look for another course. Extra is a good opportunity for students with no offers to apply for other courses without having to wait for Clearing. Your child could apply using Extra any time between the end of February and the beginning of July.



THE DIRECT CONTACT SERVICE

This is another UCAS service that can help your child to find a university place if they don't have any offers. They can sign up to be contacted directly by universities who have a place they might be interested in.

Remember that:

- Universities or colleges won't necessarily get in touch – it depends on whether they have places they think would be suitable for your child, based on their UCAS application.
- Signing up doesn't stop your child using Extra or Clearing.

GOOD TO KNOW

Track shows the deadlines by which your child will need to reply to their offers. Make sure they check these – if they don't reply within the deadline their offers will automatically be declined.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

REPLYING TO OFFERS

Before they reply, check that your child has compared the different offers, they are clear about the requirements of their chosen courses and, if relevant, has discussed any particular support needs with their institution of choice. For example, if they need additional support because of a disability or learning difficulty such as dyslexia.

If they are finding it difficult to choose their firm and insurance choices, go over the options with them. Encourage them to think about what they want to get out of university/college life and which of the courses will help them achieve it.

Generally, it's a good idea to pick an ambitious firm choice (one that might be slightly higher than their predicted grades) as students often underestimate their own ability. Also, even if they don't quite get the required grades, it's possible that the university may still accept them if it is a near miss. Their insurance choice should at least be aimed at their predicted grades.

If your child has already made up their mind, ask them how they reached their decision and check that they are confident of their choices.

If there's anything they don't understand about the conditions of their offers, encourage them to contact the university or college.

On Results Day

As well as being sent to your child's school or college, most exam results are sent to UCAS, which shares them with universities. For BTEC results this can happen from mid-July; A levels results come out in mid-August. Universities will then make their decisions.

If your child has achieved the grades for their firm or insurance choice, the university will confirm their place in Track.

If they have done better than expected, they can choose to use Adjustment.

If they haven't met the conditions of their offer, there's a chance that the university could still offer them a place on their chosen course, on another course, or for a different year of entry. The university will confirm this via Track or by contacting your child directly after the results come out. If they are unsuccessful with their firm or insurance choices, your child can choose to use Clearing.

GOOD TO KNOW

There are some types of non-standard exam results that UCAS doesn't share with universities. If your child is taking one of these, they will need to send their results to their firm and insurance choices.

ADJUSTMENT

If your child has done better than expected, and has exceeded the conditions of their firm choice, they might wish to use Adjustment. Adjustment gives them time to look for an alternative course. If they don't find an alternative they will keep their original place.

CLEARING

If after receiving their results your child doesn't have a place, they can look for another course using Clearing. Clearing starts in July, so if your child has received all their results (for example BTEC results), they don't have to wait until A level results day in August to use Clearing.

CLEARING OR CLEARING PLUS?

CLEARING

Browse over 30,000 courses with Clearing vacancies using the UCAS search tool.

CLEARING PLUS

View courses matched to your application in UCAS Track.

FINDING A PLACE THROUGH CLEARING INVOLVES:

- Looking through the official list of Clearing vacancies published online by UCAS and in The Telegraph newspaper. This list is updated regularly, so if your child can't see the course or university or college they are looking for, it's worth trying again later just in case.
- Universities will also advertise clearing places on their websites.
- Talking to the institutions they are interested in to find out if they would be accepted, and getting informal offers over the phone.
- With the agreement of the relevant university or college they will confirm the place in UCAS Track.



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

IF THEY DON'T GET A UNIVERSITY PLACE

If your child has their heart set on going to university or college but doesn't get a place, don't worry. We have a few tips for what to do next:

Encouraging them not to make any hasty decisions. It's probably better for them to step back and think about next steps rather than accept a place on a course they're not really interested in.

Helping them to seek advice – Teachers, school/college careers advisers, and National Careers Service are there to help.

Discussing possible alternatives. Could they retake their qualifications and reapply? Would they be interested in a career-related training option, such as an Apprenticeship or HND? Would they like to take a gap year to give them time to think about their options?



The UCAS Application Process At a Glance



YEAR 12

DURING YEAR 12 AND 13

Research courses and universities

Check entry requirements and the different application deadlines on the UCAS website.

BY 15 OCTOBER, 15 JANUARY OR 24 MARCH, DEPENDING ON THE COURSE

Register and apply online

AFTER APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED

Go for interview/audition if required, wait for universities'/colleges decisions

Universities and colleges will decide whether to make your child an offer. There are two types of offer: unconditional or conditional.

See page 36 for more details.

If your child is not accepted by one or more of their choices, or if they decline an offer, they can use Extra to apply for more choices.

YEAR 13

ONCE ALL OFFERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED

Reply to offers

Your child will need to reply to their offers by a specific deadline. They should:

- Select a firm choice – their first choice.
- Select an insurance choice as a backup, if their firm choice is conditional on getting certain grades.
- Decline any other offers.

JULY/AUGUST

Find out about places

When results come out, your child will be able to see in Track if their place is confirmed.

- If their firm choice is unconditional, their place is confirmed.
- If their place is conditional, the university or college will update their record to show if it is confirmed.

If your child doesn't get a place because they didn't meet the requirements, they can use Clearing to apply for more courses.

If they got better grades than expected, and meet or exceed the conditions of their firm choice, they can choose to look for an alternative course using Adjustment.



Paying for University

Cost is one of the biggest concerns for parents or carers of prospective university and college students. Student fees have risen in recent years, and, understandably, parents and carers worry about how much they can afford to contribute and the amount of debt their child might get into. The following section aims to give you the information you need about student finance and break down some of the myths about the cost of higher education. The good news is that student loan repayments are based on what graduates can afford to pay rather than the amount they borrow. Students don't have to pay anything back until they have finished their degree and are earning over a certain amount.

TUITION FEES

This is the cost of the course and facilities, including things like teaching time, the library and computer facilities.

- Students have to pay their own fees, but they can get a student loan to cover the cost.
- Universities can charge up to £9,250 per year (2020/21).
- This loan is not means-tested – which means the amount your child receives doesn't depend on your household income.

LIVING OR MAINTENANCE LOAN COSTS

Your child will also need to pay for things like accommodation, food, transport, and socialising.

They can apply for a maintenance loan to help towards these costs.

- The amount they can borrow will depend on various factors, including where they will be studying and your household income.
- The amount available to students from higher income households will be less; they – or you – will need to make up the shortfall.

WHO PROVIDES STUDENT LOANS?

Student loans are provided by the Student Loans Company (SLC). SLC is a non-profit making, government-owned organisation. For students living in England, applications for a student loan are made through Student Finance England. There's a different process for students from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, as well as the Channel Islands.

REPAYING STUDENT LOANS

For both types of loan, your child will only have to start making repayments:

- After they have finished their degree.
- When they are earning a salary over a certain amount. The current threshold (as of 2020) is £26,575, with graduates paying 9% of anything they earn above this amount.

The tuition fee and maintenance loans are linked to keep repayments simple, and are paid back directly from graduates' salaries. After 30 years, any outstanding balance is automatically cleared and no further repayments are required.



There's more information about repaying student loans on the Student Loans Company website, www.slc.co.uk/repayment

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST

While they are still studying, the interest in your child's loan will be RPI (Retail Price Index) plus 3%. After they have finished their course, they will pay a rate of interest of RPI plus between 0% and 3% depending their current level of income.

MAINTENANCE LOAN ENTITLEMENT

Figures from 2020

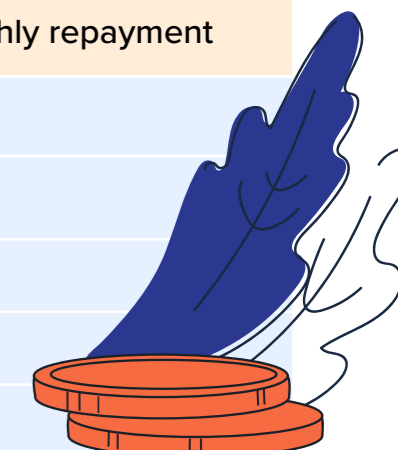
Household Income	Maintenance Loan – Living away from home and studying outside London	Maintenance Loan – Living away from home and studying in London	Maintenance Loan – Living with parents
£25,000	£9,203	£12,010	£7,747
£30,000	£8,544	£11,340	£7,095
£35,000	£7,884	£10,670	£6,442
£40,000	£7,225	£10,000	£5,789
£42,875	£6,845	£9,614	£5,414
£45,000	£6,565	£9,330	£5,137

REPAYMENT STUDENT LOAN TABLE INCOME BEFORE TAX

MONTHLY REPAYMENTS

Figures from 2020

Yearly income before tax	9% will be deducted from	Monthly repayment
£26,750	£2,214	£0
£27,000	£2,250	£3
£29,500	£2,458	£21
£31,000	£2,583	£39
£33,000	£2,750	£54



If your income changes, the amount you repay will change too. But don't worry – this happens automatically.

If you stop working, or start to earn below the repayment threshold, your repayments will stop until you earn over the threshold.

APPLYING FOR STUDENT LOANS

Your child can apply for their tuition fee and maintenance loans online at www.gov.uk/student-finance. Encourage them to do this as early as possible, as it can take up to six weeks to process their application. They don't need to wait to receive offers from universities or colleges before applying. For more guidance and application deadlines visit www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance.

Most of the application process is done online, however your child may need to send proof of identity through the post, and will have to print, sign and return a declaration form. They will then receive a letter confirming how much they can borrow.

Once your child has registered at university or college, the tuition fee will be paid straight to the institution. The maintenance loan will be paid into your child's bank account at the start of each term.

Your input into the student loan application
If your child wants to apply for the maximum amount of maintenance loan, they will be asked to include information about your household's taxable income in their student loan application.

Once their form has been submitted, you may be asked to provide proof of earnings – for example your P60 or Self-Assessment tax return, and your National Insurance number. You will also be asked for evidence of any taxable state benefits, pensions or any investment income. This is just part of the checking process so there's no need to worry if you are asked to provide more details.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will then check the information you have submitted against their records.

Student Finance England will write to your child when all your information has been confirmed.



USEFUL WEBSITES

To find out more about student loan repayments.

GOV.UK www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan/what-you-pay
Student Loans Company <http://media.slc.co.uk/repayment/qsg>
Money Saving Expert www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/



Other Support for Students

DON'T WORRY... If you are a parent or carer of a child that requires additional support, this is available from universities and colleges. Providers are keen to help young people with disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health conditions, long-term health conditions, young people who have been through the care system, and young people who have caring responsibilities themselves. Circumstances and conditions can be disclosed on your child's UCAS form and the university or college should get in touch to arrange an appropriate support plan. If you or your child have concerns, you or your child can contact the universities and colleges before applying to discuss what support they will be able to provide.

...SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE



FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFERED BY UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Depending on their circumstances, your child may be able to access extra financial support from their university, such as:

- **Scholarships** – often these take the form of a lump sum and are offered to academically talented students.
- **Bursaries** (cash grants that don't have to be repaid) and **fee waivers** (reduced fees) – these may be offered to students from lower-income households.
- **Hardship funds** – assistance for students who are experiencing financial difficulties, usually in an emergencies or exceptional circumstances.

Each university or college has its own schemes and eligibility rules, so your child should check with their chosen institution for details.

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE

The Disabled Students' Allowances is designed to cover any extra costs your child may have due to a disability, long-term illness, mental health problem or specific learning difficulty. This could include specialist equipment such as computers or extra travel costs.

For eligibility criteria and more details, visit www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas.

ADULT DEPENDANTS' GRANT

If your child is a full-time student in Higher Education and an adult depends on them financially, they can apply for an Adult Dependents' Grant. This does not have to be paid back and is paid to the student on top of the standard student loan. Up-to-date information on the amount available can be found at www.gov.uk/adultdependants-grant Further information can be found at: www.gov.uk/student-finance

PART-TIME AND HOLIDAY JOBS

Many students choose to earn some extra money by working during term time, vacations, or both. This can also give them useful experience and help to enhance their CV. However, it's important that they leave plenty of time for their studies.

- **Many universities have an employment service that can help students find part-time work on or off campus.**
- **A temping agency may be able to find them short-term jobs during holidays. Or they could ask around in local shops, bars or restaurants.**

Zero-hour contracts can be really advantageous to university students, as it means you contractually are not tied down to working specific hours – this means when you are busy with assignments or want to go home during the holidays, you can do so but keep your job!



Choosing Accommodation

With their place at university secured, your child will need to decide what sort of accommodation they would like to live in.

UNIVERSITY HALLS OF RESIDENCE

- This is the preferred option for most first-year students.
- Most halls comprise a group of bedrooms with a communal lounge and kitchen area, but they vary in size and layout. It's a good idea for your child to look around some halls during open days to get a feel for what they might prefer.
- There may be a choice of room type, for example rooms with a shared bathroom or en suite rooms. Costs will vary accordingly.
- Bills are usually included, and halls may offer a package that includes some meals, so they are a good first step towards living independently.
- Halls may have a warden or supervisor to keep an eye on students' welfare and conduct and to support your young person if required.
- Some universities will guarantee a place in halls for new students who meet their terms and conditions, but this is not always the case, so it's a good idea for your child to apply as early as possible.
- Some halls of residence offer term-time only contracts; this is often cheaper but, depending on the university, may mean that students move out at Christmas and/or Easter.
- The cheapest option is likely to be a shared room with shared bathroom, self-catered and term-time only

PRIVATE HALLS OF RESIDENCE

- These are similar to university halls but owned and managed by a private company.
- Your child should check the amenities and communal facilities on offer, and what is included in the rent.

PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

- Privately renting is a common alternative to traditional halls of residence.
- If your child doesn't manage to get a place in halls, this is a common alternative.
- A good choice for students who are ready for a bit more independence.
- Many students move into a privately rented house or flat for their second and third years, sometimes sharing with friends they have met in halls on their course, or as part of societies.
- Universities often have their own accommodation agency that can help students to find approved private rented accommodation.
- Your child will probably have to sign a tenancy agreement with a landlord; they should make sure they understand the terms of the agreement. The university or students' union will probably have a housing advice service that can help them if they are unsure.

- Students in private rented accommodation could be responsible for paying bills on top of rent, so your child should check what is and isn't included in the rent.
- They may have to pay rent over the summer even if they aren't living there; if so, they will need to budget accordingly.

LIVING AT HOME

- If your child is studying locally they may want to stay at home.
- If you're happy with this, it can save them a lot of money – and save you some worry. However, you might want to set out some ground rules to ensure things remain harmonious.
- Living at home may make it harder to get stuck into student life, so they may need to make extra efforts to socialise and meet people.

GOOD TO KNOW

All universities and colleges have staff who can support students who are struggling to find accommodation. Universities, colleges, and students' unions often have lists of approved landlords and can give advice about contracts. They may be willing to act as guarantors or provide a list of approved guarantors.



Preparing to Go

As their course start date approaches, your child will need to think about the practicalities of moving to university or college, such as what to take and how much money they'll have to spend.

If this is their first taste of independent living, you can help them to prepare by making sure they know how to do some basics. If they can use a washing machine, find their way around a supermarket, prepare a few simple meals, and know what a bill looks like and how to pay it, they'll be off to a good start.

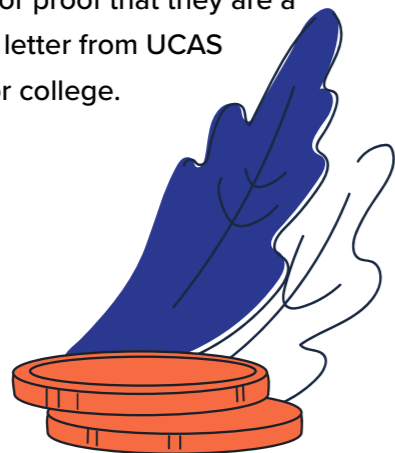
You may also need to prepare yourself for your child's departure, as this will no doubt be an emotional time for you as well as for them.

MONEY MATTERS

Student Bank Accounts

Even if your child already has a bank account, it's worth switching to a student account as this will give them access to an interest-free overdraft and other benefits.

To open an account, they will need to provide proof of their identity, their address, their student status, and a copy of their student loan financial assessment form. Banks will also often ask for proof that they are a student – usually a letter from UCAS or their university or college.



FREEBIES VS LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Encourage your child to compare the different banks' offerings so that they get a deal that suits them.

Banks compete for student custom by offering a range of goodies, such as a free student railcard or shopping vouchers. These might be tempting, but encourage your child to make a judgement based on features that may be more beneficial in the longer term, such as the level of interest-free overdraft on offer.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

As well as day-to-day expenses such as food, socialising, and travel, your child will also need to consider:

- **Utility bills** – these are usually included in halls of residence fees, but if your child moves into privately rented accommodation they should check whether any of the bills are included in the rent. They may be responsible for a share of the electricity, gas or water bills.
- **Internet** – some halls of residence offer free Wi-Fi. In private rented accommodation, your child will probably have to share the cost.
- **Mobile phone** – they might want to review their contract and look at different packages to make sure they are getting the best deal.
- **Insurance** – If your child is in halls they may have some basic insurance covered in their rent. If not, set up a policy that covers everything they take with them.

- **TV licence** – halls of residence may have a licence for communal areas but this won't cover individual rooms. However, if your child will be watching on a device that uses batteries only and is not connected to the mains, they can be covered by your home TV licence. If they are in private rented accommodation with a joint tenancy agreement, they only need one licence to cover the whole household. For more details visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/for-your-home/students-aud1.
- **Additional course costs** – your child may need to budget for course-related materials, optional field trips and things like printing and photocopying. They should check their course information to find out what is and isn't covered by the course fees. It's not necessary to buy all the books on their reading list – they can save money by buying second-hand copies of their core text books and borrowing others from the university library.

GOOD TO KNOW

Households in which all the residents are full-time students don't have to pay council tax. If your child gets a council tax bill by mistake, they should contact the local council to let them know that they are exempt. For more details, visit www.gov.uk/counciltax/discounts-for-full-time-students

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

MONEY MANAGEMENT

They might think it's boring but working out a realistic budget is vital if your child is to remain in control of their student finances. Help them to pull together all the information about their incomings and outgoings which will help them understand how much money they'll have at their disposal.

Add together all their student income and funding, for example:

- Student loans
- Parents' or carers' contribution
- Any scholarships or bursaries
- Savings
- Income from a job

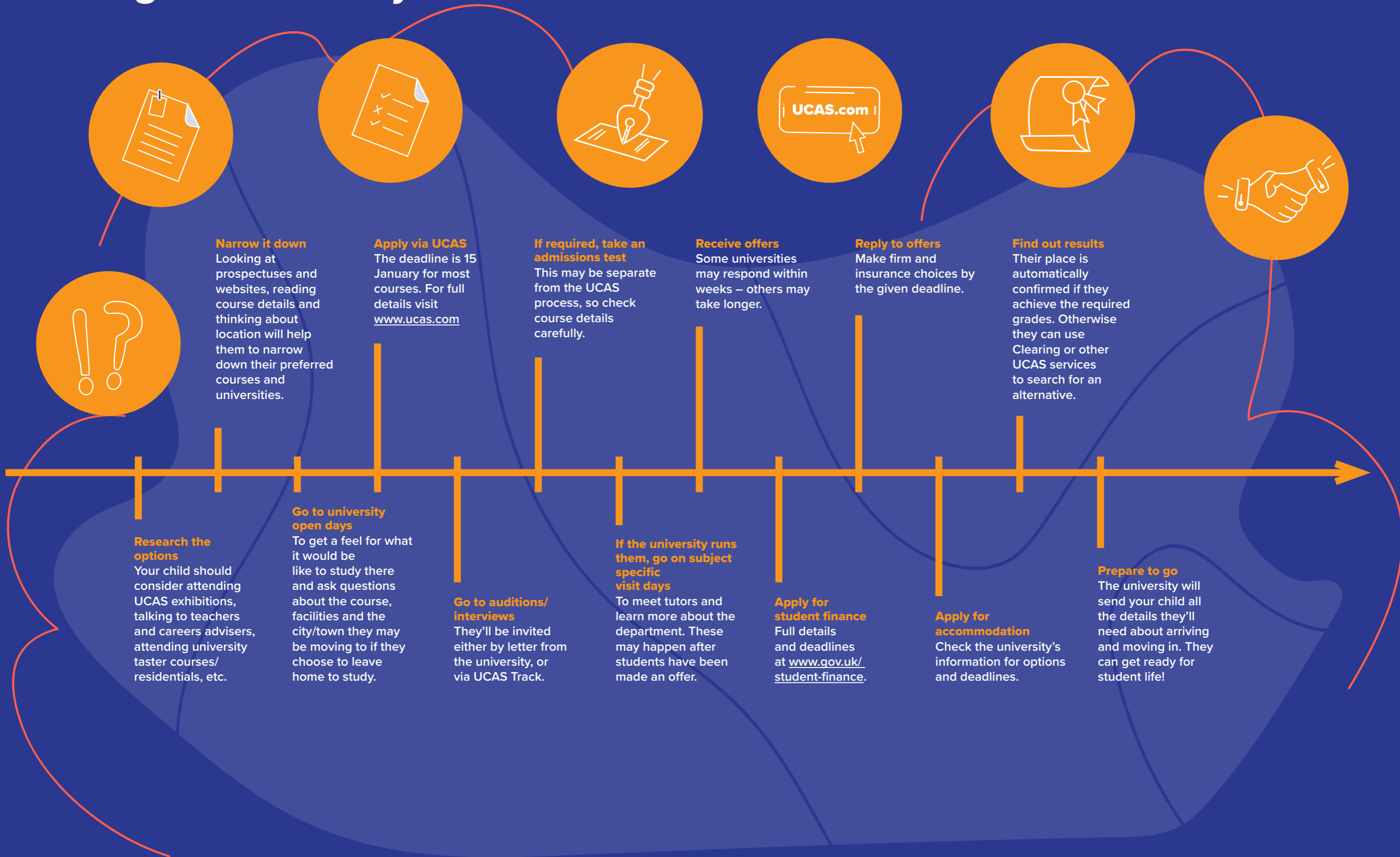
Then take away essential costs such as:

- Rent
- Household bills
- Contents insurance
- Transport costs
- Credit card or debt repayments
- Phone bill
- Food and toiletries

Divide the remainder by the number of weeks until their next student finance installment to come up with a weekly amount for non-essentials such as new clothes, socialising and entertainment. Find out more about student money management:

- **UCAS budget calculator**
www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/financeand-support/budget-calculator
- **The Complete University Guide**
www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/university-tuition-fees/managing-your-money
- **Money Saving Expert budget planner**
www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-budgeting-planner

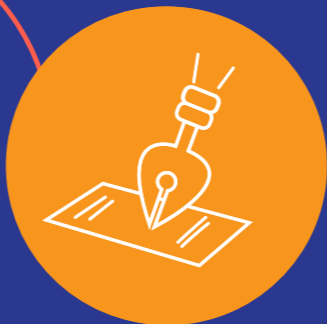
Going to University



Narrow it down
Looking at prospectuses and websites, reading course details and thinking about location will help them to narrow down their preferred courses and universities.



Apply via UCAS
The deadline is 15 January for most courses. For full details visit www.ucas.com



If required, take an admissions test
This may be separate from the UCAS process, so check course details carefully.



Receive offers
Some universities may respond within weeks – others may take longer.



Reply to offers
Make firm and insurance choices by the given deadline.



Find out results
Their place is automatically confirmed if they achieve the required grades. Otherwise they can use Clearing or other UCAS services to search for an alternative.

Research the options
Your child should consider attending UCAS exhibitions, talking to teachers and careers advisers, attending university taster courses/residentials, etc.

Go to university open days
To get a feel for what it would be like to study there and ask questions about the course, facilities and the city/town they may be moving to if they choose to leave home to study.

Go to auditions/interviews
They'll be invited either by letter from the university, or via UCAS Track.

If the university runs them, go on subject specific visit days
To meet tutors and learn more about the department. These may happen after students have been made an offer.

Apply for student finance
Full details and deadlines at www.gov.uk/student-finance.

Apply for accommodation
Check the university's information for options and deadlines.

Prepare to go
The university will send your child all the details they'll need about arriving and moving in. They can get ready for student life!

Alternatives to Higher Education

If your child isn't sure about spending another three years in full-time education, they could consider getting some qualifications while they earn by doing an apprenticeship, or going straight into the world of work, or choose to take a gap year and gain some new life experiences.

HIGHER DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Higher and degree apprenticeships combine work with study at a higher level. The apprentice gains hands-on experience and qualifications while getting paid. There are no university fees – apprenticeships are co-funded by the government and employer. Degree apprenticeships are a new type of programme. Students can achieve a full bachelor's or master's degree as part of their apprenticeship and get to graduate with a cap and gown! There are lots of different apprenticeships available across a wide range of industries and for a wide variety of job roles.



More information can be found here

www.ucas.com/alternatives

www.officeforstudents.org.uk

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS INVOLVE:

- At least 30 hours a week in the workplace.
- Learning from staff at all levels of the business and working closely with a senior colleague who provides coaching and supervision.
- Additional training at a university, college, or training provider, as well as learning at work or online.
- Depending on your child's chosen role or sector, they may also gain professional qualifications or memberships to relevant professional associations.

APPRENTICESHIPS OFFER:

- The same rights and benefits as other employees, with a contract and paid holidays.
- The potential to earn a salary equivalent to similar roles in the company.
- Additional benefits may include a pension, access to a car, or a location allowance if your child needs to move.

THEY ARE OFFERED:

- In a wide range of sectors and occupations, including accounting, broadcast technology, healthcare science, IT and software development, legal services, product design and retail.
- By large companies such as Balfour Beatty, Google, Rolls Royce, Sky and Santander, as well as smaller businesses.

90% of apprentices stay employed after completing their apprenticeship*

71% with the same employer



Career Prospects

Higher and degree level apprenticeships are specially designed to meet industry demand for a highly skilled workforce, so apprentices become valuable employees. Your child might be offered a role within the same company when they complete their training, but if not, they will have an impressive set of skills and knowledge that will help them find a role elsewhere.

Apprentices can reach senior manager and boardroom level, particularly in the fields of construction, engineering, and energy. For example, 30% of the senior UK managers at Rolls Royce were apprentices at the company.

IS AN APPRENTICESHIP RIGHT FOR YOUR CHILD?

This could be a good option if your child:

- Has a firm idea of the type of career they would like to go into.
- They are keen to get into the world of work and start earning straight away, rather than doing more full-time study.
- Wants to gain higher level qualifications but prefers a more practical approach to study.
- Feels they can cope with the challenge of juggling a busy schedule of work and study.

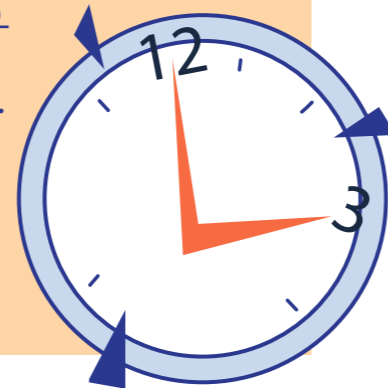
FINDING AND APPLYING FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

- The Find an Apprenticeship tool (www.gov.uk/applyapprenticeship) is a good place for your child to start their search.

- Vacancies are also listed on The Student Room (www.thestudentroom.co.uk) and UCAS websites (www.ucas.com)
- If your child is interested in working for a particular company, it's worth checking their website and following them on social media to hear about vacancies as soon as they come up.

WHEN TO APPLY

- Vacancies are advertised throughout the year and each vacancy will have its own application deadline.
- Typically, larger organisations will start to advertise places in the autumn, with most vacancies coming up in January and February onwards.
- If your child hopes to start their apprenticeship in August or September, they could start looking for vacancies from spring onwards
- Your child shouldn't wait until the last minute to apply, as some companies will close recruitment once they have a certain number of candidates.
- Suggest your child registers for alerts at www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship to hear about new vacancies.



Taking a Gap Year

Some young people decide to take a year out (also known as a gap year) before going on to university, starting an apprenticeship or embarking on their career.

If your young person is considering a gap year, we recommend that they make sure they fill their gap year with something meaningful, so it gives them some experiences to talk about in future interviews.

WHY MIGHT YOUR CHILD WANT TO TAKE A GAP YEAR?

There are lots of reasons why young people think about taking a gap year. They might want to:

- Have a break from full-time education before starting university. For many courses, it's possible to defer a university place for one year.
- Think about what to do next if they didn't get onto their chosen university course.
- Gain new skills and real-world experience to enrich their future learning or help focus their ideas about next steps.
- Learn a language or improve their foreign language skills.
- Earn some money to help fund their studies.
- Take the opportunity to do something they are passionate about, and that is unrelated to their career or study plans, before committing to the responsibilities of work, training or education.

WHAT COULD THEY DO DURING THEIR GAP YEAR?

Here are some popular gap year activities. Your child could choose to take part in an organised programme or make their own plans.

- Travelling or living overseas – to see the world and broaden their horizons, or to immerse themselves in a new language and culture.
- Volunteering in the UK or abroad – to learn new skills, experience new perspectives and feel good about contributing to society. From football coaching in a developing country to supporting people with dementia at a local care setting, there are lots of roles on offer. Your child could choose a role that will help them learn skills relevant to their future studies.
- Working, either abroad or at home – to gain skills and experience, and perhaps to fund travel or other activities later in the year.
- Doing unpaid work experience – to boost their CV and find out more about a sector or career that interests them.
- Doing a combination of two or more of these.

Websites such as The Gap-Year Guidebook (www.gap-year.com), Gapyear.com (www.gapyear.com) and Gapforce (www.gapforce.org) will give you a good idea of the opportunities on offer, as well as information about what your child will need to do to prepare for a successful gap year.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The idea of your child travelling the globe or spending time away from their education might make you feel a bit anxious. However, taking a gap year can have lots of benefits.

- It is a chance for your child to reflect on their future if they are unsure about what to do next.
- It can broaden your child's horizons and help them to mature and develop as a

- person, which will help them to cope better with the challenges of university, training, or a career.
- They could choose an activity that relates to the subject area they plan to study, enhancing their future education.
- They can draw from their experiences to add new skills to their CV – and demonstrate to recruiters or admissions tutors that they have drive, confidence, and initiative.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

PLANNING A GAP YEAR

Talk to your child about the different gap year options and offer to help them work out what they want to achieve from the year and make plans. Hopefully this will reassure you that, whatever they decide, they've really thought it through.

The following might give you some useful starting points for your discussions.

IS A GAP YEAR RIGHT FOR THEM?

Taking a gap year doesn't suit everyone. If your child is unsure about it, help them to weigh up the positives and negatives and to think about the benefits (like the ones listed on the previous page), your child should also consider whether taking a gap year might:

- Distract them from their longer-term goals.
- Make it harder to return to study or work.
- Be expensive and leave them in a worse financial position.
- Require more confidence or

independence than they feel ready for. If they would like to do something more adventurous but feel anxious about it, they could consider volunteering overseas as part of an organised group, or going travelling with a friend.

MONEY MATTERS

If your child wants to travel, talk about how they will pay for it. Are they thinking of working while they travel? Or will they stay at home and work for a few months to save up for their travels?

MAKING A PLAN

Careful planning is crucial if your child is going to make the most of their year. Talk to them about the logistics and practical arrangements – for example the application process for a formal volunteering programme, or getting visas, vaccinations, and insurance for travel.



Higher Education Terminology explained

ALUMNI – a university/college past students.

CAMPUS – the grounds and building of the university.

CAMPUS UNIVERSITY – a university where everything is based on one site such as accommodation, lecture rooms and libraries.

CONSERVATOIRE – a specialist higher education institution for the study of performance-based courses, such as music or drama.

CONTEXTUALISED OFFER – universities/colleges consider applicants' personal circumstances when making an admissions decision

FRESHERS WEEK – a structured programme of activities for new students to help them meet new friends, find their way around and prepare for university level study.

HALLS OF RESIDENCE – student accommodation.

LECTURES, SEMINARS AND TUTORIALS – lessons.

LECTURERS, TUTORS AND ACADEMICS – teachers.

METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY – Usually campus is spread across different buildings across a town or city.

STUDENTS UNION – a student run organisation that runs sports and social activities as well as support services for students.

RUSSELL GROUP – a group of universities that are 'research intensive', meaning that they place a strong emphasis on research through their teaching.

OXBRIDGE – is a combination of Oxford and Cambridge and is often used as a quick way to refer to both Universities. They are separate universities though.

SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES – universities with the highest entry requirements, that require applicants to take an admissions test, or that interview the majority of applicants.

UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE – a group of universities that have close links with business and are committed to driving innovation and enterprise.

UNDERGRADUATE – a student studying their first degree.

GRADUATE – someone who has completed an undergraduate degree.

POSTGRADUATE – people who are studying for a Postgraduate Diploma, Masters or PhD.

ADJUSTMENT – an optional service that gives students who get better grades than they expected the opportunity to find a different course.

APPLY – the name of UCASs online application system.

BUZZWORD – a code supplied by the schools/ colleges to link students' UCAS applications to their school/college.

CHOICE – the university/college course(s) you apply for.

CLEARING – a process through which students who did not achieve their firm or



insurance choice can look for alternative courses, or for anyone making a first-time application after 30 June.

CONDITIONAL OFFER – an offer of a university/college place that requires the student to get certain grades or meet certain requirements.

DIRECT CONTACT SERVICE – an optional service for students with no offers that allows universities/colleges to get in touch with students about courses that might interest them.

EXTRA – a service that allows students to add another course choice if they don't have any university or college offers or have decided not to proceed with the offers they have.

FIRM CHOICE – your first choice of course.

INSURANCE CHOICE – Your second choice of course – usually one with lower entry requirements than the firm choice

PERSONAL STATEMENT – part of the UCAS application form in which students demonstrate their skills and qualities to persuade universities or colleges to offer them a place.

TRACK – the online system through which students can track the progress of their university/college application.

UNCONDITIONAL OFFER – an offer of a university or college place to a student who is deemed to have met the requirements, typically through already having the required grades.

UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATION – when a university/college decides not to offer a student a place.

WITHDRAWAL – when a choice is withdrawn either by the university/college or by the applicant.

STUDENT FINANCE – refers to student loan provided by the government to meet course and living costs.

UCAS – University and Colleges Admissions Service. Everyone who applies for an undergraduate degree course applies through UCAS.

LOAN – Money lent to you which you must pay back (when you're working and earning above the repayment threshold).

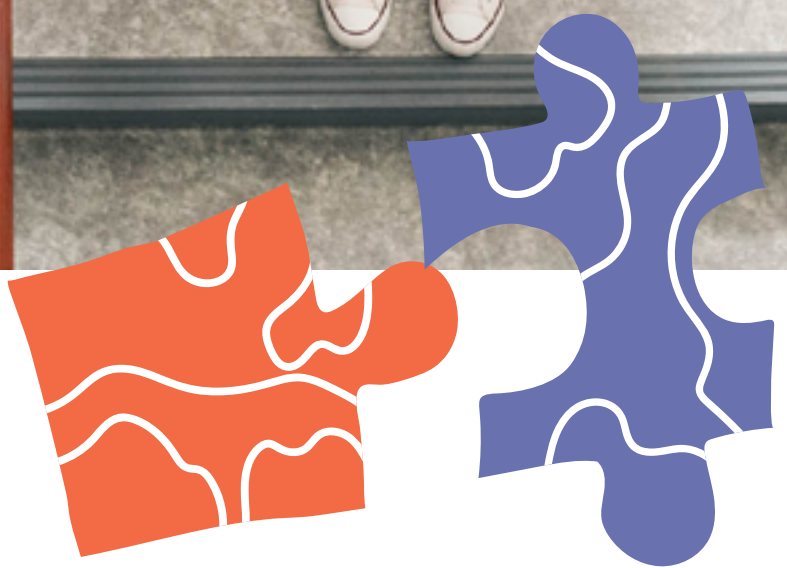
MAINTENANCE – Relating to your living expenses and any other non-degree related costs.

TUITION – Often used in the term of 'tuition fees'. These cover the costs to your university for teaching, maintenance of university facilities, resources, and academic support.

BURSARY – Non-competitive monetary awards (circumstance dependent/academic achievement).

SCHOLARSHIP – Competitive monetary awards (circumstance dependent/academic achievement).

GRANT – Money given to you that you don't have to pay back.



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