

Information about the different
options in Higher Education

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Future Focus Magazine

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Hello

Welcome to your Future Focus Magazine, powered by LiNCHigher. This magazine will provide all the information you need about options available in Higher Education, helping you make informed decisions about your future.

LiNCHigher is part of the OfS Uni Connect programme, a collaboration of Universities, Colleges and organisations from across Lincolnshire. Our goal is to provide high quality outreach activities for students. We want to maximise access to information and opportunities, particularly around progression routes to Higher Education, and the range of options available to inspire and support your aspirations.

The information in this magazine will get you up to speed, wherever you are on your education or career journey. This will enable you to access the right support at the right time, ensuring you are well placed to make informed decisions about your future. Throughout this magazine you'll find an introduction to the many options available to you after turning 18. Including facts and stats, helpful hints to support your progression, useful charts, 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.

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What is Higher Education?

The Higher Education landscape is ever changing, seeing more young people heading off to university or college than ever before. Young people are also completing higher or degree apprenticeships, gaining hands on experience whilst achieving a qualification.

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, these institutions 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, Technical or 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. The most well-known academic HE qualifications are degrees.

TECHNICAL OR VOCATIONAL

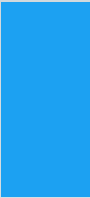
These qualifications allow students to develop a knowledge base so that they can learn important theory. However, they also offer more practical learning opportunities and

link to specific careers or jobs. Qualifications such as Higher National Certificates or Higher National Diplomas are considered vocational.

APPRENTICESHIPS

This route can result in obtaining either an Academic or Technical 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.

A higher and degree apprenticeship is much like an apprenticeship at any other level in terms of you being an employee with a wage and contract who attends an education establishment part time. However, with a higher apprenticeship you can get qualifications such as a foundation degree, higher national certificate or Higher national diploma. With a degree apprenticeship you can attain a Bachelor's or Master's degree. Both of these, will mean that you have a qualification which is relevant to your role and years of on-the-job experience.



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.**
- ▶ **Teacher 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. These qualifications are delivered at Higher Education institution's such as universities and colleges. There are various qualifications at different levels.

FOUNDATION DEGREE

Foundation degrees are equivalent to a HND or two thirds of a Bachelor's degree. These are not to be confused with a foundation year. Foundation degrees are taught at universities or colleges, sometimes both in some cases. These qualifications focus on specific job or sector skills in areas such as Arts, Media Management, Electronic Engineering, Healthcare and Wildlife Conservation. Foundation degrees take usually two years to complete if studying full time. A Foundation degree might take longer to complete if studying part time. These qualifications have abbreviations such as FdSc (Science Foundation Degree) FdA (Arts Foundation Degree) and FdEng (Engineering Foundation Degree). There is also the option to continue studying after a Foundation degree for an additional year to gain a full degree.

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION (NVQ)

National Vocational Qualifications test abilities in the workplace, developing skills and knowledge required to do a job. National Vocational Qualifications are work based qualifications where students complete training and are assessed on work related tasks. This might be through completing a portfolio or an observation. A portfolio assessment involves building up evidence of what you've done at work. An observation is where an assessor watches and checks that required tasks can be done. The levels are based on national standards of the job and each unit is signed off as and when standards are met. These qualifications do not have to be completed in a specific amount of time. NVQs may not be available qualifications options at your chosen institution. It is worthwhile checking with them before to find out what options they provide.



FOUNDATION DIPLOMA/ FOUNDATION YEAR

A foundation diploma/foundation year is a one-year qualification that can be a stepping-stone to a Bachelor's degree course for students who want to explore a particular subject area for one year or who don't meet the degree entry requirements. This qualification is usually delivered at a university or a college and allows students to develop the skills and knowledge that is needed to start a degree course.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Bachelor's degrees are also known as undergraduate, first or honour degrees. This is the most common form of Higher Education qualification. An undergraduate degree usually takes three years of full-time study to complete. Some courses may take longer due to the course involving a year abroad or a year's work placement. It is important to have a look at different courses and see what they involve. There are different qualification titles, but many subjects fall under BSc (Bachelor of Science) or BA (Bachelor of Arts). There are other common titles such as BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) and LLB (Bachelor of Laws). Courses can focus on a single subject (Single honours) or two subjects (Combined/Joint honours, or major/minor). There is also the option to choose an integrated master's degree. This usually leads straight into a further year of master's level study after completing usually three-year bachelor's degree.

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

There is also the option to study a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or a Higher National Diploma (HND) at Higher Education. These are work related courses provided by Higher and Further Education institutions. A HNC takes one year to complete. A HND takes two years to complete and is roughly equivalent to the first two years of a university/college degree. It can be used as a stepping-stone to a full degree with the option to top up the HND to complete a full Bachelor's degree. This can be done by entering a specific top up course or deciding to continue by entering year three of a degree.

Top Tip:

You'll find more information about choosing a university/college course and the application process on page 22 in the 'going to university/college' section.

CERTIFICATES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION (CERTCE)

A Certificate of continuing education (CertCE) is equivalent to the first 60 credits of an undergraduate degree. On completion, these certificates can be put towards a full undergraduate degree.

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

Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE) and Diploma of Higher Education (DIPHE) 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. These qualifications can be taken as a standalone qualification or be awarded to a student if they leave the course early.

HIGHER/DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships give you the chance to gain a qualification whilst also gaining experience. Higher apprenticeships are equivalent to foundation degrees and range from a Level 4 to a Level 7 qualification. Degree Apprenticeships give students the opportunity to gain a bachelor's degree or even in some cases a

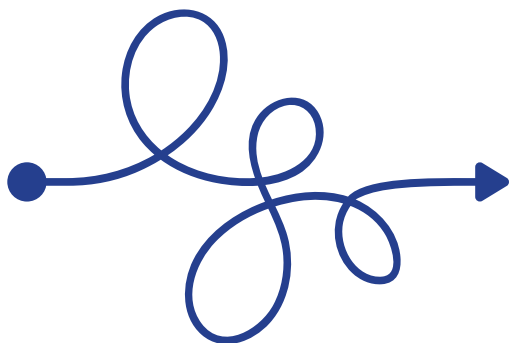
master's degree. These can be Level 6 or Level 7 qualifications. Some apprenticeships, depending on the sector, can give students the opportunity as well to gain a professional qualification or become a member of relevant professional associations. Please see page 86 for more information on Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

Qualification pathway explained

| | | | |
|---------|---|---|--|
| LEVEL 8 | Doctorate | BTEC Professional Qualifications, City and Guilds, OCR, etc. | |
| LEVEL 7 | Masters, post graduate Diploma, post graduate Certificate | BTEC Professional Qualifications, City and Guilds, OCR, etc. | NVQ Level 7 |
| LEVEL 6 | 3rd Year Honours Degree Top up year to honours Degree from a foundation Degree/HNC/HND | BTEC Professional Qualifications, City and Guilds, OCR, etc. | 3rd Year Degree Apprenticeship Higher Apprenticeship NVQ Level 6 |
| LEVEL 5 | 2nd Year Honours Degree Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) | BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) offered by colleges Foundation Degree Year 2 HNDs | 2nd Year Degree Apprenticeship Higher Apprenticeship NVQ Level 5 |
| LEVEL 4 | 1st Year Honours Degree Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) | BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) offered by FE colleges Foundation Degree Year 1 HNCs | 1st Year Degree Apprenticeship Higher Apprenticeship NVQ Level 4 |
| LEVEL 3 | A and AS Levels International Baccalaureate | Applied General Qualifications T Levels Vocational/Level 3 BTEC, City and Guilds, Diploma | Advanced Apprenticeship NVQ Level 3 Access to Higher Education Diploma |
| LEVEL 2 | GCSE Grades 4-9 Maths/English/IT Functional Skills courses | Technical and Vocational Qualifications - eg. Level 2 - BTEC Certificate/Diploma, OCR/City and Guilds | Intermediate Apprenticeship NVQ Level 2 |
| LEVEL 1 | GCSE Grades 1-3 Maths/English/IT Functional Skills courses | Technical and Vocational Qualifications - eg. Level 1 - BTEC Certificate/Diploma, OCR/City and Guilds | NVQ Level 1 |

Qualification definitions:

Here is a list of qualifications but they are missing their definitions. Draw a line from the correct answer to the correct qualification. Use the terminology after you have completed the task to see if you got it right.



BACHELOR'S DEGREE

FOUNDATION DEGREE

HIGHER APPRENTICESHIP

HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATES

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMAS

ACCESS COURSES

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

FOUNDATION DIPLOMA/ YEAR

CERTIFICATES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Takes one year to complete and is a level 4 Technical and Vocational qualification offering practical based courses.

Equivalent to a Foundation degree. These can be Level 4 or 5.

Is the same as one year of study. This can be taken as a standalone qualification or are sometimes awarded to students if they leave early.

Can also be known as an undergraduate degree, first or honours degrees. Usually take three years of full-time study to complete.

These are work based qualifications where students complete training and are assessed on work-based tasks.

Are taught at specific universities and colleges and focus on specific job or sector skills. They are equivalent to a HND or two thirds of a Bachelor's degree.

Equivalent to a Bachelors or Master's degree qualification. These can be level 6 or 7.

Is a one-year qualification that can be a stepping stone to a Bachelor's degree for students wanting to learn more information about a particular subject or don't meet the entry requirements.

Are a route into Higher Education for those without formal qualifications.

Takes two years to complete and is roughly equivalent to the first two years of a Bachelor's degree.



Year 12 (Level 3, Year 1) students

EXPLORING POST 18 OPTIONS

You are currently in further education; this means that you are close to your next step: Higher Education. However, although it may seem that Higher Education is just one step away there is a lot you can still be doing on your journey to Higher Education to help make sure that you get there.

One of the biggest things you need to do is research. The best time to do this is in the summer term of Year 12 or equivalent and the summer holidays before Year 13 or equivalent. Doing this will mean you have a clear picture of what you want to do moving forward with applications.

Some of the things you could do in the summer term and summer holidays include:

UCAS EXHIBITIONS

UCAS Exhibitions 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. You can find more details on the next UCAS Exhibition near you on www.ucas.com/ucas/events-exhibitions. Because UCAS Exhibitions are usually big places with lots of people and lots to see, it is a good idea to look through the exhibition information and consider the following:

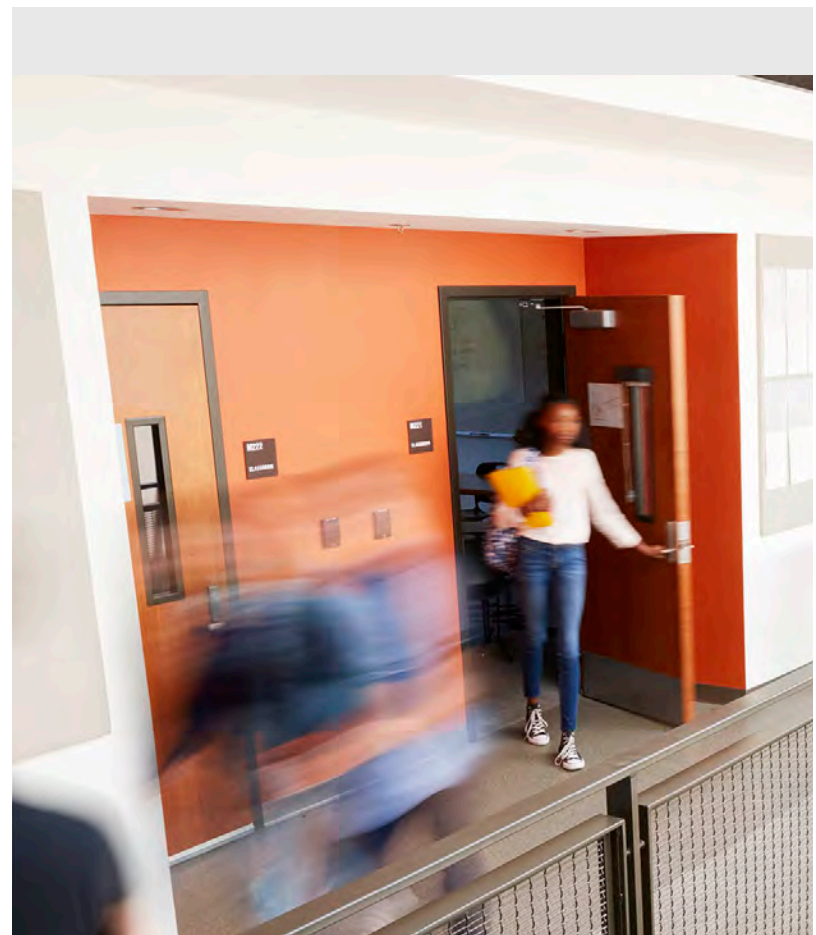
- ▶ **What do you want to get out of the day?**
- ▶ **Are there any university or college stands you would like to visit?**
- ▶ **What questions do you need to ask?**
- ▶ **What specific talks do you want to go to?**

There is lots of information at these events so take a spare bag for all the prospectuses and information you will pick

up and then go through it in your own time. Think about the different details of the courses, where different institutions are and where you would like to live and study.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE TASTER COURSES AND RESIDENTIAL

These are short subject-specific courses, lasting between half a day to one week and may involve staying overnight. These courses are designed to give students a taste of campus life, the chance to experience university/college teaching methods, and meet the academic staff and current university/college students. Most courses are generally free of charge; however you may have to cover travel and food costs.





SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CAREERS FAIRS


School and college career fairs 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 IN SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

This will generally be delivered by representatives from universities, colleges and apprenticeship providers or even the LiNCHhigher team.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE OPEN DAYS

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



You'll find more information on Page 44 on open days in the 'choosing a course' section.



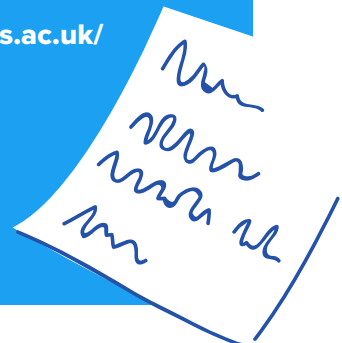
However, your research phase does not have to end with summer. You can still find lots of information all year round from:

- ▶ **LiNCHigher** (www.thefuturefocus.co.uk)
- ▶ **Careers advisers at your school or college**
- ▶ **The National Careers Service** (nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)
- ▶ **UCAS** (ucas.com)
- ▶ **Prospects** (prospects.ac.uk)
- ▶ **The Complete University Guide** (thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
- ▶ **Find an Apprenticeship** (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>)
- ▶ **Discover Uni** (discoveruni.gov.uk)
- ▶ **UniTasterDays** (unitasterdays.com)

TASK

Go to the 'Prospects' website and take the quiz on your perfect career. You can choose to take the career planner quiz or job match beta quiz (or both of course). Pick your top three jobs from your matches and research what you need to attain that job.

www.prospects.ac.uk/



Final Year Further Education students

By the start of Year 13 (or equivalent) you will hopefully have a good idea of what you want to do next. The time has arrived for you to start making decisions and begin applying to and securing the Higher Education course, training opportunity or job that is right for you.

You will have to begin the year by making some decisions which are hopefully informed by your research phase. Decisions you will have to make include:

- ▶ **Type of Higher Education you want to attend.**
- ▶ **What course you want to study.**
- ▶ **Where you want to study.**

If you're still unsure, have a look back at your research or speak to a careers adviser at your college or school who will be able to support you further.

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

If you want to study a Higher Education course at university or college, you should begin applying in your final year of further education. The main way people apply to university and college is through UCAS. Not all colleges use UCAS, so if you're thinking of studying Higher Education at a college check on their website for how they would like you to apply. There are two different deadlines for applying through UCAS. Early Entry is usually in October in the year prior to the course starting and is important as this is the deadline if you are applying for Oxford, Cambridge or most Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Science/Medicine courses. All other courses has an application deadline of January in the year you would attend

the course. The deadline dates change year on year so its important you check the dates on the UCAS website <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-when-apply>

AFTER APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED

After you have submitted your application, UCAS will send you information to log into your UCAS Hub. This is where you can see the progress of your application and accept and decline offers. Go for an interview/audition if required and wait for universities and colleges decisions. Universities and colleges will decide whether to make you an offer. There are two types of offer: unconditional or conditional.

A conditional offer

An offer of a place that depends on you getting certain grades.

An unconditional offer

If you already have the required grades, or the university or college has decided to give you a place whatever grades you achieve.

Extra is an option if you have used all five of your choices and did not get accepted at any of the universities/colleges you applied to or you declined all your offers. It is another chance for you to gain a place between Mid-February and early July at universities and colleges. You will be able to add another choice as long as you didn't use all the five choices in your application and you haven't accepted

or declined any offers you have received. Remember, if you originally only applied to one choice and want to add more, you'll be asked to pay an additional application fee.

The steps of the process are:

1. Find a course with vacancies.
2. Ask the college or university if you would be considered for that course.

ONCE ALL OFFERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED

Reply to offers

You will need to reply to your offers by a specific deadline. You should:

- ▶ **Select a firm choice – your first choice.**
- ▶ **Select an insurance choice as a backup, if your firm choice is conditional on getting certain grades.**

All of these are big choices so it is important to take your time and consider each offer. Your firm choice is the institution you would most like to go to. Your insurance choice should then be the one you would be happy to go to if you did not get the required grades for your firm choice. Therefore, you should choose an institution that has lower entry requirements than your firm choice. Also make sure you are certain about your declined choices as you cannot undo them at a later date. It is always a good idea to talk to people and get advice. People such as parents, teachers and careers advisers are always good to go to. However, ultimately you should make the choice that you think is best for you.

JULY/AUGUST

When results come out, you will be able to see in your UCAS Hub if your place is confirmed. If your firm choice is unconditional, your place is confirmed. If your place is conditional, the university or college will update their record to show if it is confirmed. If you don't get a place because you didn't meet the requirements, you can use Clearing and Clearing Plus to apply for more courses.

You are eligible for clearing if you have not met the conditions of your offer or have declined your firm place on UCAS Hub. You also need to have paid the multiple choice application fee. You will need to contact universities/ colleges with spaces on courses available to see if you will be offered a place on that course. Once you receive an offer you can then accept it on UCAS Hub and will have a place at that institution. See page 68 for more information on clearing.

Another option you have is Clearing Plus where you can browse available courses matched to you from the information on your application. This may make finding courses easier for you, and if you express interest universities/ colleges may contact you, but it may also be a good idea to contact them yourself. See page 68 for more information on Clearing Plus.

If you got better grades than expected and meet or exceed the conditions of your firm choice, you can choose to look for an alternative course using Adjustment. You can browse adjustment without losing your offer but will lose it if you confirm yourself to go to another course. This is great as if you do not see anything you want you can still go to your firm choice. See page 66 for more information on Adjustment.

Other things to do on the way to Higher Education

MAKE A PLAN B

It is always worth thinking about a backup plan just in case things go wrong.

Some things you might like to think about are:

- ▶ What would you choose if you couldn't get onto your preferred course?
- ▶ Would you find a similar course elsewhere with lower entry requirements?
- ▶ Would you retake exams and reapply?
- ▶ Take a year out for a rethink?

EXAMS / COURSEWORK

Your offer to get into university or college will likely be conditional. This means that you still need to work hard on your exams or coursework to get onto Higher Education. Start revision early and use techniques that suit your learning style. Remember as well, even if you get an unconditional offer not to let your grades slip as your further education qualifications will still be important for future employment, and further education forms the foundations of your Higher Education qualification.





RESULTS DAY

This can be a stressful time, so it is helpful to know what to expect.

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 you will get the results will depend on your school or college; you 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 and T-Level results are available in mid-August.**

If you are collecting your results in person, make sure you know what time your school or college will be open on results day.

If you get the entry requirements for your course, your university or college will confirm your place on UCAS Hub and you will just have to accept it. You may even see this before you get your results.

Going to University/College

Your decision to go to university or college can raise many questions. How do you apply? How much will it cost? What financial help is available? Where will you live? This section aims to answer these questions and more, enabling you to prepare for your next adventure.

WHY GO?

Going to university or college is a big commitment, in terms of both time and money, but by getting a Higher Education qualification you will be making a big investment in your future. It will increase your chances of getting a job and improve your 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 Higher Education qualification is essential for some professions, for example if you want 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.

YOU ARE 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 YOU TO BECOME CAREER READY

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

YOU WILL HAVE A GREAT TIME

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



STUDY ABROAD

The Turing Scheme is the UK government's scheme to provide funding for international opportunities in education and training across the world. You can take a semester abroad or travel for a placement or project abroad.

It helps you develop transferable skills, gain vital international experience and broaden your horizons. You can develop cultural awareness and become more open-minded. It's also a great addition to your CV, helping you to stand out in the global job market and boost your employability. If this is something you are interested in, make sure to check your institution's website as each institution and each course offers different places for study abroad options.



Paying for Higher Education

Higher Education does cost money and it is one of the biggest concerns for prospective university and college students.

Student fees have historically increased, and understandably, there are concerns about the amount of debt students might get into or if it's affordable. DO NOT panic as financial support is available, so money should not be a deciding factor when considering Higher Education.

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 that is borrowed. Students don't have to pay anything back until they have finished their higher education qualification 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 pay their own tuition fees, but you can get a student loan to cover the cost if you are eligible.**
- ▶ **A Universities can charge up to £9,535 per year (2025/26). This will increase in line with inflation from 2026 onwards.**





LIVING OR MAINTENANCE LOAN COSTS

You will also need to pay for things like accommodation, food, transport, and socialising. You can apply for a maintenance loan to help towards these costs.

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE BURSARIES

Many universities/colleges offer bursaries to qualifying students. These do not have to be repaid. Information can be found on the individual university or college's websites.

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.

REPAYING STUDENT LOAN

What you pay back is based on what you earn, not what you owe, so it's more like a tax, and it is calculated for you.

If you stop earning or earn less, you'll stop paying or pay less.

After 40 years any remaining balance is cleared.

Visit www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan for up to date repayment information.

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST

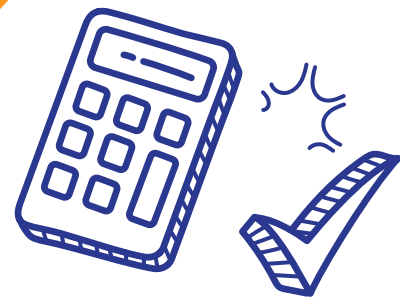
While you are still studying, the interest on your loan will be RPI (Retail Price Index) +3%. After you have finished your course, you will pay a rate of interest of RPI plus between 0% and 3% depending on your income.

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.

If you're unsure about questions such as fees and support entitlements, for example if you've been living abroad, give your chosen university or college admissions team a ring.

There's more information about repaying student loans at, www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan



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**
www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan
- ▶ **Money Saving Expert**
www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/



APPLYING FOR STUDENT LOANS

You can apply for your tuition fee and maintenance loans online at www.gov.uk/student-finance.

We encourage you to do this as early as possible, as it can take up to six weeks to process your application. You 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 you may need to send proof of identity through the post, and will have to print, sign and return a declaration form. You will then receive a letter confirming how much you can borrow.

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

If you are an international student or a student from the EU with non-settled status, then you will not be eligible for any student finance and may face higher tuition fees. However, there may be bursaries and grants available to you from your university and these can be found on your university's website.

NEW: Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)

- **The Big Change:** A flexible student loan allowing you to train, retrain, or upskill throughout your working life, not just at age 18.
- **The Pot:** You get a tuition loan entitlement worth £38,140 (equivalent to 4 years of study) to use for full degrees or short modules.
- **Eligibility:** Available for learners aged 18 to 60. Even if you have studied before, you may still be entitled to residual funding.
- **Key Dates:** Applications open September 2026 for courses starting from January 2027.

For more information search 'Gov.uk LLE'



Other support for students

DON'T WORRY... If you require 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, estranged from their parent/s and young people who have caring responsibilities themselves. Circumstances and conditions can be disclosed on your UCAS form and the university or college should get in touch to arrange an appropriate support plan. If you have concerns, you can contact the universities and colleges before applying to discuss what support is available.

This is not an exhaustive list of options; it is always best to do your own research to find options that best suit you as an individual. The best places to find out about support open to you is your university or college website.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFERED BY UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to access extra financial support from your institution, 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 emergencies or exceptional circumstances. Each university or college has their own schemes and eligibility rules, so you should check with your chosen institution for details.

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE

The Disabled Students' Allowance is designed to cover any extra costs you 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-allowance-dsa. You can also find information about local institutions via our website at <https://www.thefuturefocus.co.uk/students/information-for-students-with-a-disability/>

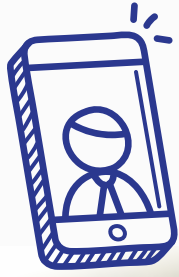
PART-TIME AND HOLIDAY JOBS

Many students choose to earn some extra money by working during term time, holidays, or both. This can give you useful experiences and help to enhance your CV. However, it's important that you leave plenty of time for your studies.

- ▶ **Student groups on social media may also be a good place to find out what sort of job opportunities are available locally.**
- ▶ **A temping agency may be able to find you short-term jobs during holidays. Or you could ask around in local shops, bars or restaurants. Zero-hour contracts can be really advantageous to students, as it means you 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!**







Do graduates really get more job opportunities

WHAT DO GRADUATES DO (PROSPECTS.AC.UK) 2024/25 FOUND THAT:

75% of employed graduates were in a professional-level job.

Source: <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/what-do-graduates-do>

The average salary for graduates who went straight into full-time employment in the UK in 2024/25 was £32,000.

Source: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-labour-market-statistics-2024



FIGURES FROM 2024

The average annual salary of graduates in 2024 remained over £11,500 higher than non-graduates.

In 2024, the average salary for graduates was £42,000, and for postgraduates, £47,000.

Statistics from www.statista.com/statistics/1191970/annual-salary-of-graduates-in-england/ (2024)



How Higher Education differs from Further Education

MORE ACADEMIC INDEPENDENCE

When studying at a university or college for Higher Education, you will be expected to take responsibility for your own education. That means, knowing when and where your lectures are, planning your own workloads, to meeting 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 your studies.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF LEARNING

You may be used to a rigid timetable of lessons and homework. In Higher Education, the amount of structured learning time students receive each week varies. 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 course you choose you 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 you learn by visiting and studying in a particular location.**
- ▶ **Placements - where you spend time in a company to learn workplace skills.**

Many courses involve group study, where students work on projects or offer experiential 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/care. This in turn, means adjusting to the new-found freedom on offer and coping with new

responsibilities. You will have to arrange accommodation for the year, go food shopping, cook for yourself and manage your own finances. You will also have to balance your academic work with the demands of your social life and the many extra-curricular activities on offer at university. You can also move away to study Higher Education at a college. However not all colleges have accommodation, so it is important to check this when applying.

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 you to find the right course. Something you will need to consider whilst picking a course is the location of the university or college. You may well require some support to narrow down these options. One way to help make these decisions is to attend open days.



Choosing a Course

SINGLE OR COMBINED HONOURS?

If you can't decide between two subject areas, a combined or joint honours course could be the answer. These are typically offered at university and provide the chance to study two subjects rather than one, taking roughly the same number of modules in each.

Studying a combination of subjects could mean you won't have to drop a subject you enjoy and provides a broad education. However, finding the right combination may mean narrowing down your choice of universities. You may also find that there is less choice over what modules you can study too.

CAREER DEGREES

Some colleges offer career degrees. These are much like standard degrees but students are offered bursaries so that students can undertake professional courses which will enhance their CV. This work is undertaken alongside the regular degree and therefore, they require more commitment than a standard degree.



CHECKING COURSE DETAILS

Higher Education 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 allows students to tailor their subject knowledge towards their areas of interest.

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

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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

- ▶ **Do you have the required GCSEs and are your level 3 subjects accepted on the types of courses you are interested in?**
- ▶ **You will need to make realistic choices based on your predicted grades.**
- ▶ **Some universities will have higher entry requirements than others. You should consider a backup choice with lower requirements in case you don't get your predicted grades.**
- ▶ **The application process may also involve an interview, audition, admissions test, or a combination of these.**
- ▶ **Not all colleges base admissions solely on grades. They may look to your personal statement to consider your suitability for the course itself, a portfolio of work for you to show your skillsets or even your previous employment and professional qualifications. Therefore, it is essential to show yourself to be a well-rounded individual who is interested in their subject.**

OTHER THINGS TO CHECK INCLUDE:

- ▶ Contact time (time spent in lectures, seminars, and tutorials) - do you feel the course offers enough contact time, and are you 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 you 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 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 other professional qualifications or registration with a professional body.

Here is a table where you can jot down some interests and potential subjects you may want to learn more about at Higher Education.



Subject/Interest

| Subject/Interest | |
|------------------|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |



ADMISSIONS TESTS

Entry to some courses will require you 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 you start your studies- some take place earlier, before you have even sent your UCAS application. The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) is an example of these admissions tests. They test your suitability for courses by looking at attitude, thought processes and behaviour as well as your knowledge. It is important however, to make sure you check course requirements carefully to find out about any admissions test requirements.

Top Tips:

CHOOSING A COURSE

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

WHAT YOU STUDY NOW

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

WHETHER YOU WANT YOUR STUDIES TO RELATE DIRECTLY TO A PARTICULAR CAREER

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

IS THERE A NEW SUBJECT THAT APPEALS TO YOU?

You will have a wider choice of subjects at Higher Education. If you're interested in a subject area, you haven't studied before, you 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/College to study Higher Education

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

REPUTATION

There are many elements that influence people's perception of a university or college. For example, academic standards, research strengths and whether it has a long-standing history. However ultimately people's judgements of the institution's reputation will be subjective and various employers may view your choice of university or college differently. While reputation is important, you should avoid making your choices based on reputation alone. Factors such as course content and location are just as important if you are to do well academically and enjoy student life.

LEAGUE TABLE POSITION

League tables give universities a ranking based on several 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. League tables will give you a useful indication of the quality of a course at a university and facilities but remember it may not always display the full picture. Therefore, it is important

to look at more than one league table and researching what determines the ranking to help inform your decisions.

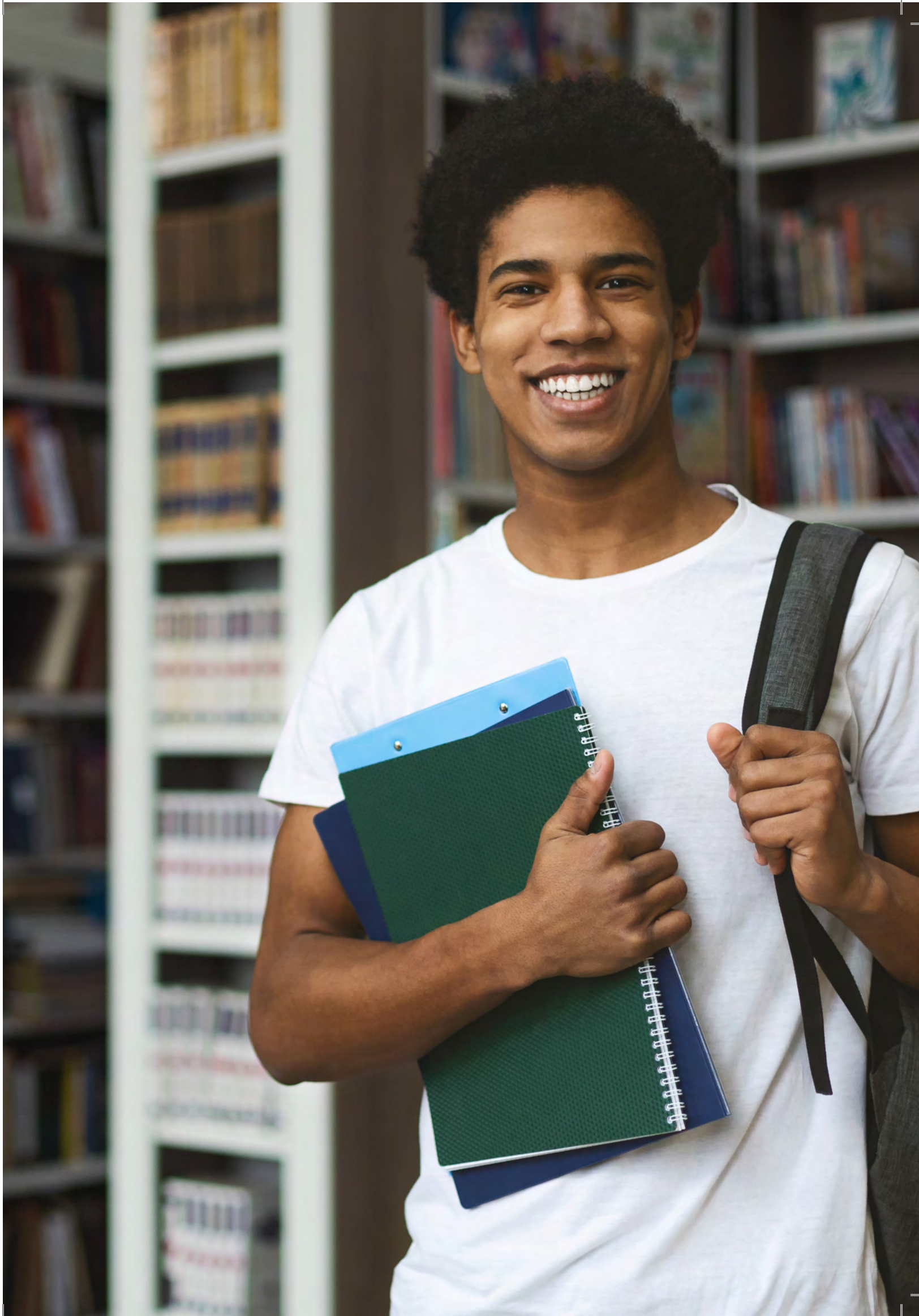
Remember that:

- ▶ **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.**

TOP TIP:

THE LEAGUE TABLES ONLINE

- ▶ **The Guardian University Guide**
(www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide)
- ▶ **The Complete University Guide**
(www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
- ▶ **The Times UK University Rankings League Table**
(www.thetimes.com/uk-university-rankings/league-table)



LOCATION

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

- ▶ **If you are planning to study further afield, how far away do you want to be from carers, family and friends? How long will it take to travel back, and how much will it cost?**
- ▶ **Living costs are higher in some cities than others.**

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

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

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 the services and facilities below plus more, whilst 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 academic facilities? What could contribute to a better learning experience for you, an extensive library, a high-tech computing system, the latest laboratory.**
- ▶ **What are the social, leisure and sports facilities like?**



- ▶ **Are there good support services for students, such as advice on finances and housing, career support and health and wellbeing services? If you need help during your studies, it helps to know that institutions offer a wide range of support services to assist you with any problems you may face, including those of an academic or personal nature. You'll find that student advisers are very understanding of the issues you may face as a student (after all, that is their job) and can really provide help when it is needed.**



PASTORAL:

Starting Higher Education can be a stressful time for students, to help students adapt to university or college life; universities and colleges can help in the following way.

- Many universities/colleges have a named member of staff to support students.
- Some universities/ colleges may also offer a network for students to meet up and socialise. If you are interested in whether that institution has such a network, contact the named contact.
- All universities / colleges have some level of wellbeing and counselling provision for students. Therefore, if you encounter stress during your studies there will always be someone to talk to.
- Some institutions also run wellbeing events, allowing students to meet up and take part in initiatives such as therapy dogs.

More information about support, including who the named contact is can be found on the individual university/ college website.

Search for a course

Using either a prospectus, UCAS or an institutions website have a look at some courses that are available. Find a course you are interested in and fill out this activity.



LIKE



Course Title and Institution

Entry Requirements



**What is covered
on the course?**

**Why have you
chosen this course?**

Which careers could this lead to?

University & College Open Days



Once you have narrowed down your options, open days are the best way for you to really get a real feel for the institutions on your list before you apply.

WHAT DOES AN OPEN DAY INVOLVE?

Most open days will include tours of the campus and local area, talks about specific

subject areas, services and facilities on offer, taster sessions, and the chance to chat with staff and current students.

DATES AND REGISTERING

You can search for open day dates online, where you will find more information about universities and colleges open days. Most institutions ask visitors to register beforehand for a place.



TOP TIP:

BEFORE THE OPEN DAY

- ▶ Check you have made any necessary practical arrangements. Do you need to register for the open day and if so, have you done it? If you're going on your own, have you planned transport and do you need some money to pay for the bus or train ticket?
- ▶ Look through the information sent before you arrive and think about which sessions you will find most useful and how to structure your time to fit everything in.
- ▶ Think of things you would like to ask staff and students while you 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.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/open-days/
- ▶ www.universitycompare.com/open-days/
- ▶ www.unitasterdays.com/events

Remember many universities and colleges have specific resources designed to support a smooth transition to Higher Education and enable you to access the support you may need. They are ready and waiting for you and usually have a dedicated member of staff on hand to help and answer your questions.





Top Tips:

ON THE DAY

- ▶ Getting there - you could walk (if it is local), drive or get the bus or train.
- ▶ Have a look at the activities on offer, get involved and talk to people.
- ▶ Look around the city as well as the institution and think about how you'll feel living there.
- ▶ Make sure you take time to refuel. It will be a busy day, so have an occasional sit down and something to eat and drink to avoid getting tired and grumpy!
- ▶ Take notes of anything important.

AFTERWARDS

- ▶ Review your notes and consider what you thought of the open day compared to others you have visited.
- ▶ Consider sitting down with a friend or carer to talk it through with them. Sometimes it helps getting other people's views and may help work out your own thoughts on the places you have been.
- ▶ Contact the university or college admissions team if you have any questions that staff didn't answer on the day.

Please see the next page for a table that you can use after attending open days where you can jot down your thoughts and make notes. This will help preventing all the open days merging into one!

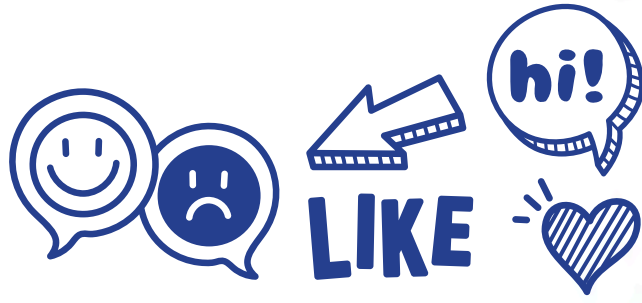
GOOD TO KNOW



If you can't attend an official open day, think about visiting the campus on a 'normal' day to have a look around and talk to students. You may even be able to arrange a talk with a member of staff from the department you are interested in.

Local Institutions to study Higher Education



Open day



| WHICH INSTITUTION DID YOU ATTEND? | WHAT COURSE ARE YOU INTERESTED IN STUDYING? |  POSITIVES |  NEGATIVES | ADDITIONAL COMMENTS |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|---------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |



The University/College Application Process

It's important to have a look to see what the application process is for the course you are applying to. Some institutions use UCAS to apply for Higher Education courses whereas some require you to apply through their own website. It is important to check before applying to understand when the deadline is. If you have any questions on where to apply for a course, you can speak to that institution directly. You can apply for up to five courses on UCAS in total. For full details of the UCAS application process visit www.ucas.com

The UCAS Hub is a great tool which is available to you which provides everything you need as part of your Higher Education application. It has personalisable features which you can use to explore different courses, calculate UCAS tariffs and build a strong high-impact personal statement. The higher education application process can easily become confusing, and the organisational features of UCAS Hub help to keep you in control of the process.

WHEN TO APPLY

You should apply in good time to meet the deadlines for UCAS which are:

- ▶ **Early October – Some conservatoires (make sure you research the individual deadline for your conservatoire so you don't miss it)**
- ▶ **Mid-October - all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or for most medicine, veterinary and dentistry courses at other universities. If you are only applying for medicine courses, you can apply for a maximum of four courses.**
- ▶ **Mid-January - for most other degree courses.**

- ▶ **Mid-March - for some art and design courses (others have a mid-January deadline so be sure you check carefully).**

UCAS deadlines can change year on year. Make sure to check the deadline on the UCAS Website for the year you are applying <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-when-apply>

Institutions 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 the January date as a deadline rather than a target. Remember not all institutions use UCAS for you to apply to their courses so it is important to check to see when their deadlines will be.

UCAT

For those thinking of studying medicine or dentistry, some universities require a test to be completed. The University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT) test looks at how you think, your behaviours, your knowledge and skills to determine your suitability for clinical courses. It is important you find out if the universities you are applying to require an assessment, and if so, what assessment it is they want you to undertake.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

UCAS undergraduate application system is through UCAS Hub and the whole process is done online.

- ▶ **Head to UCAS Hub to register and complete the registration questions. You will then be taken to your UCAS Hub where you can customise your**



dashboard. There will be a tile called ‘your application’ where you can start your application.

- ▶ If you’re at school or college, they may give you a ‘buzz word’ to enter in your form, this links your application to your school or college.

AFTER REGISTERING THERE ARE SEVEN MORE SECTIONS TO COMPLETE:

- ▶ **Personal details.**
 - ▶ **Additional information, including equality monitoring questions, and details of any summer schools or taster courses you have attended in preparation for Higher Education.**
 - ▶ **Student finance - you can sign up for an alert to let you know when you can apply for student finance.**
 - ▶ **Choices - Your 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 – your opportunity to tell universities and colleges about your strengths and why you should be offered a place.**
- ▶ **Employment - basic details about any part time jobs.**

DEFERRED ENTRY

If you are thinking about taking a gap year before you start university or college, you can apply now and defer your start date by one year. You can do this by selecting a deferred start date in the ‘Choices’ section of the UCAS form. Individual universities and colleges will often have their own guidance on applications for deferred entry; you should check their website or prospectus for details. Most universities and colleges will want students to explain their reason for deferring and their plans for the next year in the personal statement. Not all courses will accept deferred entry applications so you should check the entry requirements carefully. Depending on your chosen course, it may be possible for you to defer after you have made your application, but you’ll need to contact the university/college to discuss this.

UCAS Time Trail



June - September

Students in their first year of Further Education decide what they want to study and where they want to go. It is a good idea to register with UCAS during this time period too. Summer is a great time to attend open days, they continue through your final year of further education but make sure to allow enough time to go to those you are interested in before making your application choices.



September - December

Further Education providers set an internal deadline for all UCAS information, choices and personal statements to be submitted for students in their final year of further education.



Mid-October*

Deadline for applications to any course at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge or for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/ science and dentistry.



Mid-January*

Deadlines for most undergraduate courses to UCAS. Further Education providers need time to check applications and write references – check your institutions internal deadline. Applications made after this date will only be considered once those that met the deadline have been processed and some courses may close at the deadline.

* UCAS deadlines change year on year. To make sure you know the deadline date for the year you applying, visit the UCAS website <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-when-apply>





January - February

Offers can arrive from the moment an application is received. Once all responses are received students must choose their final two – first choice and second. Once these are selected, any other offers are invalid.

Mid-Feb* UCAS Extra opens
Visit UCAS.com

February - June

Applications for student finance can be made from February and there is a 'funding guarantee' deadline of late May. If the deadline is missed, financial support may not be in place by the start date. Apply online with Student Finance England at gov.uk

Students should apply for accommodation at their firm choice.

July

BTEC results are published.
Clearing vacancies will be listed on UCAS.com and are updated regularly by universities and colleges. If you don't find the course you're looking for straight away try again later. Clearing is available from July to September.

July/August

Results Day - results are published via the school and offer outcomes are made on UCAS Hub. Students who meet expected results must confirm their choices. Those that didn't may still get an offer or can go into clearing.

September/October

Courses start either towards the end of September or the beginning of October. Good Luck!

Personal Statements

WHAT IS A PERSONAL STATEMENT?

A personal statement is part of your application to a university or college to study Higher Education. It is a crucial part of the application process. It's your chance to talk about you and why you would like to study that subject or course! Personal statements are read by admissions staff at universities and colleges. You are telling them why you would like to study at their university or college.

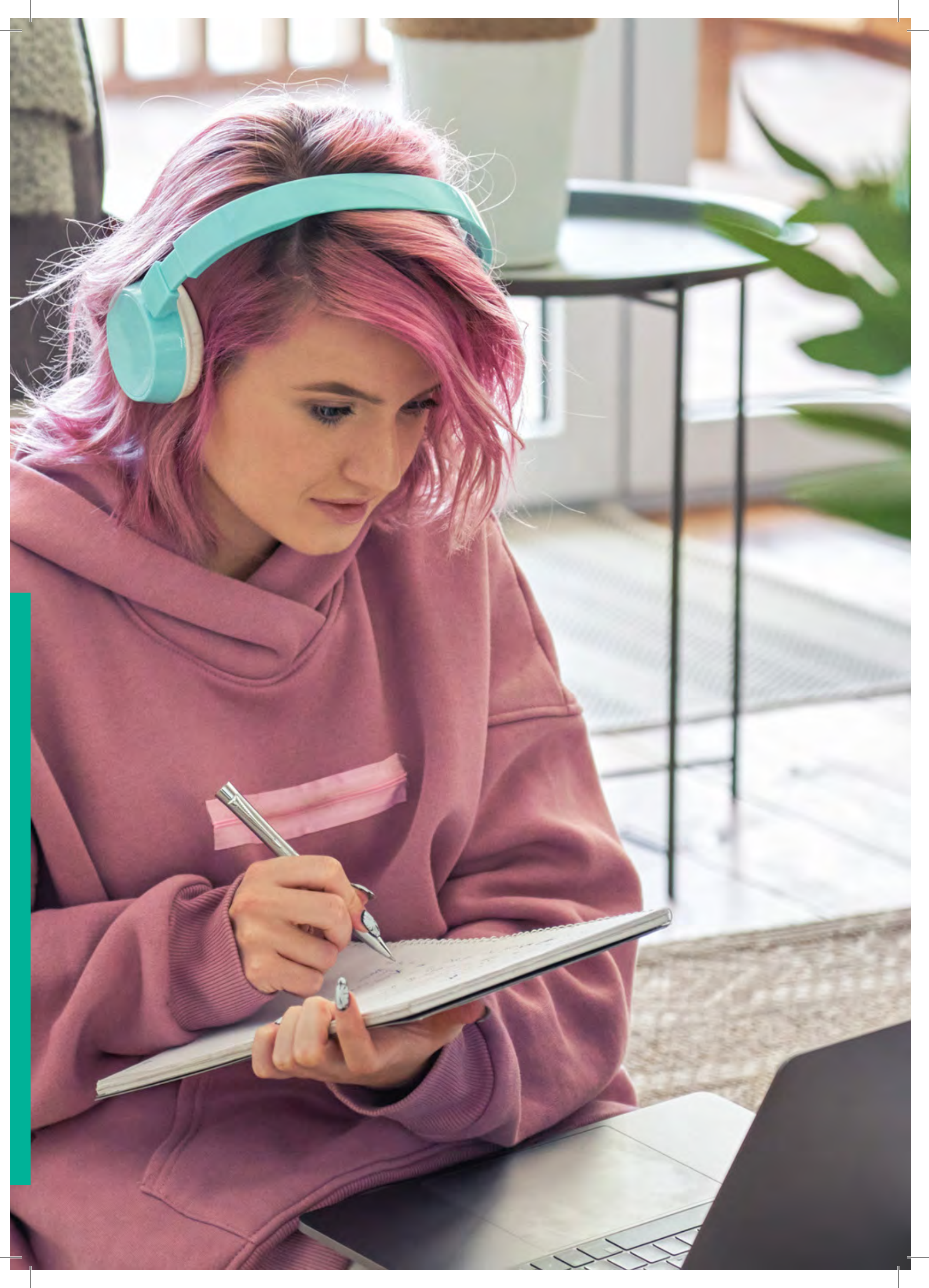
Top Tips

As a student, the prospect of starting university or college can be daunting. Remember there is always support for you at university/college to help you achieve your goals. Follow our top tips to help your journey...

1. **On your application/personal statement, showcase the broad range of experiences and skills sets you possess.**
2. **Get in touch with the named contact at the university/college you wish to attend to seek support.**
3. **When applying for grants and bursaries, check that you meet the eligibility criteria and check the deadline as some grants and bursaries may have early deadlines.**

To view a list of dedicated resources and contacts, visit our website, thefuturefocus.co.uk





PERSONAL STATEMENT CONTENT

The personal statement is made up of your answers to three questions. These three questions will help you to scaffold your answers and ensure you include exactly what universities and colleges want to see, to help you succeed in your applications. Each answer will have a minimum count of 350 characters, which is clearly labelled on the question boxes, along with an overall character counter, so you can keep track. Overall you have a 4,000 character limit (including spaces).

PERSONAL STATEMENT TIPS

- ▶ Write notes about what makes you interesting or different (in a positive way).
- ▶ Why you chose the subject, and why you are excited about the course.
- ▶ Work experience and other activities, and the skills and qualities you demonstrate.
- ▶ How these skills and qualities could be useful on the course- for example project management, meeting deadlines or communication. If you're stuck for ideas, you could ask your teachers and friends for feedback. Once you've gathered your thoughts, you will need to create a focused structured personal statement.
- ▶ It is important to use plain, cliché-free English.
- ▶ Check your spelling and grammar, or make sure you ask someone else to.

UCAS application checklist

- Personal details
- Contact and residency details
- Education
- Employment
- Nationality details
- Supporting information
- English Language skills
- Finance and Funding
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Personal statement
- Reference

WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is made up of your answers to three questions.

Why do you want to study this course?

Universities want to understand your motivation. Start by identifying the specific spark—such as a book, lesson, or experience—that first piqued your curiosity. Then, explain how your interest evolved through further exploration, creating a clear narrative that leads directly to your decision to apply for this course.

Demonstrate independent curiosity by going beyond a simple list of activities. Focus on what you learned or discovered outside the classroom.

Instead of just stating you attended an event, explain how that experience deepened your understanding and solidified your motivation to pursue the degree.

Write with authentic enthusiasm, linking your passion to specific course topics or methods. This proves you have researched the degree and fully understand what to expect.

Finally, if relevant, link your motivation to your future ambitions. You don't need a detailed career plan, but a short connection—such as wanting to work in healthcare, publishing, or education—shows that you have direction.

What have you done that makes you suitable to study this subject at university?

What sets strong applicants apart is their preparation and evidence of relevant skills... Which subjects relate most closely to your chosen degree? Mention particular topics or projects that gave you valuable insights. For example, if you're applying for engineering, talk about maths or physics assignments that tested your problem-solving or creativity. If you're aiming for English, reference essays that challenged your interpretation and analysis.

Focus on how these tasks helped you develop specific abilities—such as critical thinking, independent research, writing clearly, or managing time effectively.

Then include experiences beyond school that strengthen your suitability. Work experience, volunteering, or extracurricular activities can all demonstrate relevant skills or interests

When writing, connect each example back to your potential as a student. For instance: "Leading my debate team improved my confidence in presenting arguments clearly, which will support my academic writing in university discussions." This kind of reflection turns activities into evidence of competence.

Admissions tutors want to see that you will adapt well to the independent learning environment of university. Mention moments when you had to manage your own workload, handle deadlines, or solve problems independently.

End this section with a short summary sentence linking your skills and experiences to your preparedness to succeed in your chosen subject.

What do you do outside of your studies that demonstrates your skills and interests?

This question allows you to show your personality, interests, and how you use your free time constructively. These experiences can illustrate skills such as teamwork, leadership, creativity, or resilience, all of which are valued at university.

Think about your hobbies, part-time jobs, volunteering, or responsibilities at home. Each one tells a story about your character. The key is not to list everything you do but to choose examples that add something meaningful to your overall profile.

You can also link extracurricular experiences back to your chosen subject if there's a natural connection. For example, helping at a primary school supports an application for education studies, while working in a charity shop could relate to social sciences or business.

Universities value students who will contribute positively to campus life. Show this by emphasising teamwork, leadership, or initiative. You might explain how you helped organise an event, improved a club's performance, or supported peers. These kinds of examples give tutors a glimpse of the energy, curiosity, and reliability you'll bring to university.

In closing, tie together what makes you unique—your motivation for the course, your academic preparation, and your wider experiences. End on a confident, forward-looking note, expressing excitement about developing both academically and personally during your degree.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

- ▶ Start early
- ▶ Plan your content
- ▶ Show, don't just tell
- ▶ Be authentic and honest
- ▶ Check course requirements
- ▶ Relate your examples
- ▶ Proofread
- ▶ Keep within limits

Don'ts

- ▶ Don't exaggerate or lie
- ▶ Don't plagiarise or copy
- ▶ Don't be negative
- ▶ Don't make unsupported claims
- ▶ Don't include irrelevant details
- ▶ Don't list everything
- ▶ Don't exceed the character or line limits
- ▶ Don't write in a gimmicky, jokey or over-confident tone

Once your application is submitted

If you are applying through your school or college, when you submit the form, it will go to them rather than directly to UCAS. Your school or college will then check the form, add their reference, and submit the form to UCAS. You could talk to the teacher who will be writing the reference about what you are applying for and why, so that the teacher can personalise your reference.

The school/college is likely to give you an earlier deadline date to complete your UCAS application form 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 to ensure submission of your application in the necessary timeframe for the teacher's approval.

VISIT DAYS

Once you have applied, you might be invited 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 you can attend these it is well worth it, especially as it gives university staff a chance to meet you in person, which can help staff decide whether to offer you a place.

INTERVIEWS AND AUDITIONS

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

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





OXBRIDGE

Oxford and Cambridge universities are internationally recognised institutions and some of the most academically prestigious universities in the world. They are also two of the longest standing universities in the English-speaking world. Their courses are often more challenging than courses at other universities and require a lot from students such as lectures 6 days a week and more regular assignments. However, students are often taught by national and global subject leaders. Because of the intensity of courses at these universities semesters are shorter than other universities. They are also both collegiate universities which means you will apply to a college within the university, and you will live and study at that college. You can have an open application where they assign you to a college if you don't have a preference.

SAQ

For Cambridge applicants, after your UCAS application you will need to complete the Supplementary Application Questionnaire, to ensure Cambridge holds complete and consistent information about all applicants. It also helps them to gather information they don't get from the UCAS application which can help them to assess their applicants. You can find more information on these individual processes on the Cambridge and UCAS websites.



ADMISSIONS TESTS AND ASSESSMENTS

Both Universities will require you to do an admissions test or assessment of some kind, which will further allow them to decide if they want to shortlist you for an interview or reject your application. Interviews are held in December and are the last stage of the application process. Decisions are made in January. There are six key factors that Oxbridge use to assess your application and suitability for their course. These are academic achievement, admissions test/assessment, written work, UCAS personal statement, UCAS teacher's reference and the interview.



INTERVIEWS

Interviewers don't have a hidden agenda and aren't there to give you trick questions. It is an assessment of knowledge, understanding and flexibility of thought. They may ask you about your personal statement so you should know what you have written and be able to defend it. If you are applying for humanities/social sciences, they might also show a text or picture to discuss. If you are studying a science, they could give you a problem to work through or a specimen to discuss. They might even ask you about essays you have submitted as part of your application, so keep that research fresh in your mind. If you want to

know more about the Oxbridge application process or want support, there are lots of online platforms available to help you. The university websites, UCAS.com, Oxplore and HE+ are just some of the sites that provide a wealth of knowledge and support.

CONSERVATOIRES

Conservatoires provide performance-based Higher Education, including music, drama, screen and production courses – both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Courses are based around individual tuition, practical training, and frequent opportunities to perform.

Each conservatoire has its own strengths and specialisms, so it's important to research all of them to find the right fit for you. For example, although all conservatoires offer music courses, very few offer drama courses, and some offer subjects like film and production. To help decide, research what graduates from each conservatoire have gone on to do, to see if this fits with your aspirations.

The UCAS Conservatoires (formerly CUKAS) was specially made to process applications to conservatoires as the process and deadlines are a little different. There are 9 conservatoires in the UCAS Conservatoire scheme. The conservatoires outside of this scheme will require you to apply directly, or, through the usual UCAS application process. There are lots of options of where to study, with 5 conservatoires in London alone, so make sure wherever you decide to go, that you have researched their application process and deadline information.

ASSESSMENTS/AUDITIONS

You will need to complete an assessment on top of your application. This may be an audition, interview, review of a portfolio, or a recording. You may have to complete more than one assessment; this will be based on the course or institution you are applying to. For example, if you have a joint main specialism then you would have two auditions, one for each specialism. Below is what you can expect out of an assessment for each course type:

- ▶ **Music performers usually play at least two different pieces in a live audition at the conservatoire (or in some cases a video recording) to showcase their skill set.**
- ▶ **Musicians usually play or sing scales, read or sing at sight, take an aural test or have an interview.**
- ▶ **Composers usually submit a portfolio or similar evidence of practical ability or asked to have an interview.**
- ▶ **Dance and drama applicants usually prepare a monologue, performance piece, participate in a dance class or have an interview.**
- ▶ **Drama production applicants are usually given tasks before the interview that they will then have to discuss in the assessment, alongside their understanding of the course, career aspirations among similar interview questions.**

Your chosen conservatoire will have details of their application and assessment process on their website so if you want to be in the best position ahead of your application and assessment then researching is the way to go so you can be as prepared as possible.

Check out Conservatoires UK and the UCAS website for more information and support.





University/College Decisions

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

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

THINKING ABOUT YOUR OFFERS

Some universities and colleges may make an unconditional offer regardless of whether you have received your 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 you have a place no matter how you do in your exams. However, it still needs to be the best course and institution for you. If you decide to accept an unconditional offer, it's important you still concentrate on your studies. If you change your mind and decide on a different course, your grades will still be taken into consideration. In addition, the knowledge you gain whilst doing these qualifications will help to prepare you for further study and work.

When you have received offers from all your applications, you can start the replies.

You should begin by reviewing all the offers you have received and

choose to accept one as your firm choice. This commits you to that course, at that university or college, assuming you meet all the necessary offer conditions.

We recommend that you also select an insurance choice when making decisions on what offers to accept. The insurance choice is designed to offer you a second option if you don't meet the conditions of your firm choice (e.g. grades), so it's sensible to pick an insurance choice with lower entry requirements that you would still like to attend. If you have used all your five choices and haven't received any offers (or have declined all the offers you have received), you 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. You could apply using Extra any time between the end of February and the beginning of July.

REPLYING TO OFFERS

It is a good idea to pick a firm choice which you are likely to get accepted into, this way you stand a higher chance of going to university or college. Have discussions with tutors about what entry requirements are within your reach and have a look at what your predicted grades for the end of the year are.

Your insurance choice should be below your predicted grades so that if you miss out on your firm choice you still have a chance of a university place.

Don't worry about limiting yourself. If you do better than expected you can use the UCAS Clearing to look for courses which will meet your new grades



GOOD TO KNOW

UCAS Hub shows the deadlines by which you will need to reply to your offers. Make sure you check these – if you don't reply within the deadline your offers will automatically be declined.

On Results Day

As well as being sent to your school or college, most exam results are sent to UCAS, which shares them with universities and colleges. For BTEC results this can happen from mid-July; T level & A level and results come out in mid-August. Universities and colleges will then make decisions on applications based on exam results. If you have achieved the grades for your firm or insurance choice, the institution will confirm your place in Track.

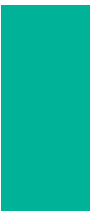
If you have done better than expected, you can enter into Clearing. If you haven't met the conditions of your offer, there's a chance that the institution could still offer you a place on your chosen course, on another course, or for a different year of entry. The institution will confirm this via UCAS Hub or by contacting you directly after the results come out. If you are unsuccessful with your firm or insurance choices, you can choose to use Clearing.

GOOD TO KNOW

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







CLEARING

If, after receiving your results you don't have a place, you can look for another course using Clearing. Clearing starts in July, so if you have received all your results (for example BTEC results), you don't have to wait until A level results day in August to use Clearing. Clearing is used by universities and colleges to advertise any places that are remaining on their courses. You will know you're in Clearing if your Hub status says 'you are in Clearing' or Clearing has started. Don't worry, talk to advisers at school or college. Look to see what courses are available at Clearing and speak to universities and colleges about the courses they have available. If you haven't applied to a university or college before Clearing, you will need to register and complete your application to be able to apply to a course that's available in Clearing. Conservatoires do not use Clearing so you will have to make direct contact to them to see if they are still taking applications.

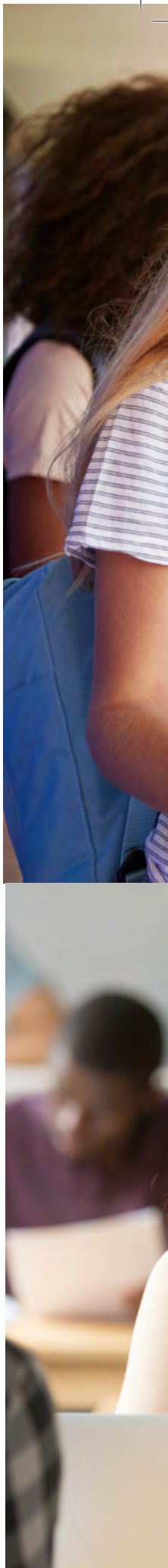
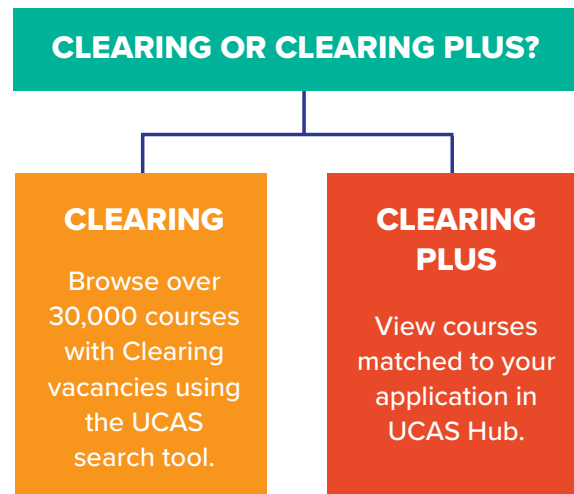
FINDING A PLACE THROUGH CLEARING INVOLVES:

- ▶ Looking through the official list of Clearing vacancies published online by UCAS and in The Telegraph newspaper. This list is updated regularly, so if you can't see the course, university or college you are looking for, it's worth trying again later, just in case.
- ▶ Have a look at universities' websites as clearing places will also be advertised there.
- ▶ Talk to the institutions you are interested in to find out if you would be accepted and getting informal offers over the phone.

- ▶ **With the agreement of the relevant university or college, your place will be confirmed in UCAS Hub.**

CLEARING PLUS

Clearing Plus was introduced in 2020 to help you find another course if after receiving your results you don't have a place at a university or college for Higher Education. It helps you find the right option based on what UCAS know about you from your application and suggest some possible options for you. In a nutshell, Clearing Plus matches you with courses based on your original courses, qualifications, and grades. Possible matches will be shared with you so you can look into them further. If you're eligible, a button will appear in UCAS Hub, 'see matches' and you will be able to look at all the matches here. If you express an interest in a course, the university or college can contact you or you will need to contact that university or college to talk to them further about that course.





IF YOU DON'T GET A UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE PLACE

If you had your heart set on going to university or college but don't get a place, don't worry. Here are a few tips for what to do next

- ▶ **Try not to make any hasty decisions. It's probably better for you to step back and think about next steps rather than accept a place on a course you're not really interested in.**
- ▶ **Seek some advice – Teachers, school/college careers advisers, and the National Careers Service are all there to help.**
- ▶ **Discuss possible alternatives. Could you retake your qualifications and reapply? Would you be interested in an Apprenticeship or HND? Would you like to take a gap year to give you time to think about your options?**

Choosing Accommodation

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

UNIVERSITY HALLS OF RESIDENCE

University halls of residence are the preferred option for most first-year students. University halls comprise of a group of bedrooms with a communal lounge and kitchen area but vary in size and layout. It's a good idea to look around some halls during open days to get a feel for what you might prefer. At some universities there is a choice of room type. This might be rooms with a shared bathroom or rooms where you have an en suite. It is important to have a look at the costs as these will vary. When staying in university halls of residence, in most cases bills are usually included. Halls can offer a package which include some meals. These are a good first step towards living independently. They sometimes have a warden or a supervisor who keeps an eye on students' welfare, conduct and provide support if required.

Some universities will guarantee a place in halls for new students, but not all. It is a good idea to apply as early as possible if this is an option for you. It is important to have a look at the contract as well. Some halls of residence offer term-time only contracts. These can often be cheaper, but depending on the university, it may mean that you must move out at Christmas and/or Easter. Have a look at the options that are available to you. The cheapest option is likely to be a shared room with shared bathroom, self-catered and term-time only.





PRIVATE HALLS OF RESIDENCE

Private halls of residence are like university halls but owned and managed by a private company. It is important to check the amenities and communal facilities on offer, and what is included in the rent.

PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

Private rented accommodation is a common alternative to traditional halls of residence. If you're wanting more independence, it is a good option! Many students move into private rented accommodation in their second and third years. They sometimes share with friends they have met in halls, on their course or as part of societies. Speak to universities as they often have an accommodation agency that can help students to find approved private rented accommodation. If you decide private rented accommodation is an option, you will probably have to sign a tenancy agreement with a landlord. Read through the tenancy agreement and make sure you understand the terms of the agreement. Some universities or student unions have housing advice services that can help you if you are unsure. Have a look to see what is included in the rent, you may have to pay bills that aren't included as well as paying the rent fee. You may have to pay rent over the summer even if you aren't living there; if so, you will need to budget accordingly.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS STUDYING HIGHER EDUCATION AT A COLLEGE

Living away from home is still an option if you choose to study Higher Education at a college, but still want to enjoy the independence of the student lifestyle. Although colleges are less likely to have their own dedicated student accommodation you may be able to live in local student accommodation blocks that provide accommodation to university students. As they are not university owned they could allow students from colleges to live there. Equally, private shared houses are also an option. You are still entitled to the same rights as other student renters if you are in full time education, such as not having to pay council tax.

Preparing to Go

As your start date approaches, you will need to think about the practicalities of moving to university or college, such as what to take and how much money you'll have to spend. If this is your first taste of independent living, you can prepare by making sure you know how to do some of the basics. If you can use a washing machine, find your way around a supermarket, prepare a few simple meals, and know what a bill looks like and how to pay it, you'll be off to a good start.

MONEY MATTERS STUDENT BANK ACCOUNTS

Even if you already have a bank account, it's worth switching to a student account as this will give you access to an interest-free overdraft and other benefits. To open an account, you will need to provide proof of your identity, your address, student status, and a copy of your student loan financial assessment form. Banks will also often ask for proof that you are a student – usually a letter from UCAS or your university or college.

FREEBIES VS LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Compare the different banks' offerings so that you get a deal that suits you. 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 try and 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, you will also need to consider:

- ▶ **Utility bills** – these are usually included in halls of residence fees, but if you move into privately rented accommodation, you should check whether any of the bills are included in the rent. You 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, you will probably have to share the cost.
- ▶ **Mobile phone** – you might want to review your contract and look at different packages to make sure you are getting the best deal.
- ▶ **Insurance** – If you are in halls, you may have some basic insurance covered in your rent. If not, set up a policy that covers everything you take with you.
- ▶ **TV Licence** – halls of residence may have a licence for communal areas but this won't cover individual rooms. If you are in private rented accommodation with a joint tenancy agreement, you only need one licence to cover the whole household. For more details visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/
- ▶ **Additional course costs** – you may need to budget for course related materials, optional field trips and things like printing and photocopying. You should check your 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 your reading list – you can save money by buying second-hand copies of your core textbooks and borrowing others from the university or college library.



GOOD TO KNOW

Households in which all the residents are full-time students don't have to pay council tax. If you get a council tax bill by mistake, you should contact the local council to let them know that you are exempt.



MONEY MANAGEMENT

You might think it's boring but working out a realistic budget is vital if you are to remain in control of your student finances. Pull together all the information about your incomings and outgoings which will help you understand how much money you'll have at your disposal. Add together all your student income and funding, for example:

- ▶ **Student loans**
- ▶ **Any scholarships or bursaries**
- ▶ **Savings**
- ▶ **Income from a job**

Then take away essential costs such as:

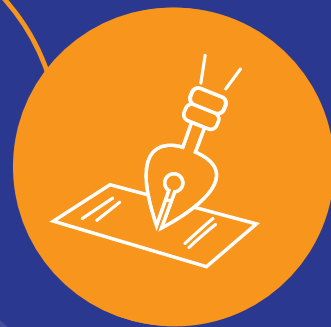
- ▶ **Rent**
- ▶ **Household bills**
- ▶ **Contents insurance**
- ▶ **Transport costs**
- ▶ **Credit card or debt repayments**
- ▶ **Phone bill**
- ▶ **Food and toiletries**

Divide the remainder by the number of weeks until your next student finance instalment 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/finance/managing-money/budget-calculator
- ▶ **The Complete University Guide**
www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/after-you-start/budgeting-for-university
- ▶ **Money Saving Expert budget planner** www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-budgeting-planner/



Going to Higher Education



Narrow it down

Looking at prospectuses and websites, reading course details and thinking about location will help you to narrow down your preferred courses and institution.

Apply via UCAS

The deadline is Mid-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.

June - September

September - December

September - January

October

January - February

Research the options

You should consider attending UCAS exhibitions, talking to teachers and career advisers, attending taster courses/residentials, etc.

Attend 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 you may be moving to if you choose to leave home to study.

Go to auditions/interviews

You'll be invited either by letter from the institution, or via UCAS Hub.

If the institution 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.



Receive offers

Some institutions may respond within weeks – others may take longer.

Reply to offers

Make firm and insurance choices by the given deadline.

Find out results

Your place is automatically confirmed if you achieve the required grades. Otherwise you can use Clearing or other UCAS services to search for an alternative.

February

May

August

September

Apply for student finance

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

Apply for accommodation

Check the university or colleges information for options and deadlines.

Prepare to go

The university or college will send you all the details you will need about arriving and moving in.

What is Freshers' Week/Welcome Week



WHAT IS FRESHERS' WEEK?

Freshers' Week or Welcome Week is your first opportunity to meet people both on and off your course and try out some of the exciting things that university or colleges have to offer. It is usually the week before your academic sessions start to give you time to settle in and is filled with activities organised by your student union or the institution itself. You can choose to be as sociable as you want, so whether you say yes to everything, try a couple of new things or take time to settle in and adjust, it is completely up to you! Some universities and colleges will release information before so you know what's going to be on offer.

WHAT HAPPENS

There is usually lots on in Freshers' Week from themed nights out across the town or city where your university is (both on and off campus) to walking tours and inflatable games. It's all about having fun and getting

to know your new course mates and surroundings. Some clubs and companies will offer deals for freshers to get tickets for multiple events throughout the week. Make sure you do a bit of research about them before buying so you know exactly what it is you are getting. Consider speaking to your new flatmates ahead of time (there are often Facebook groups for accommodation so you can find your flatmates before you move in) and see what they are doing so you have people to go with too. However, if drinking is not your thing don't worry! Universities accommodate all different interests with a wide range of activities throughout the first week and first month that don't include alcohol or nights out. These could be events such as open-air cinema's, comedians, bands or even yoga sessions. Courses may also run informal socials so you can mix with classmates and lecturers outside of a lecture theatre.



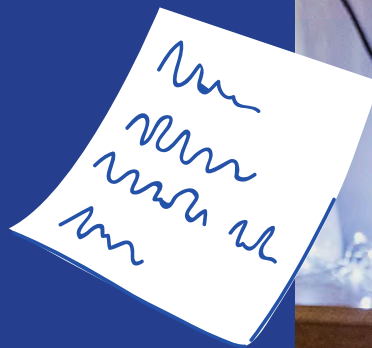
FAIRS, FAIRS AND MORE FAIRS

Freshers/ Welcome week is also a great opportunity to find out a bit more about all the different opportunities which are available at your university or college. In some institutions, there might be sports or societies fairs where you can sign up to taster sessions and find out a bit more information. Sports teams and societies are a great way to meet people, so it is worth giving it a go.

Another great opportunity is to attend freshers' fairs. These are where local companies or different parts of the institution are available to give you some information. These almost always have lots of free things for you to be able to get hold of and are good for knowing what the institution has to offer in terms of things like the student's union and welfare.

TASK

Visit your chosen (or top favourite) institution's student union website and search through the societies. Make a note of the societies you might want to join and keep them with your first week timetable.



OTHER THINGS TO EXPECT

The first week, however, is not just about Freshers' Week, it is also a time when courses start to do their introductory lectures. So, it is important that you balance your social timetable with your academic timetable so that you can attend these sessions and get the most out of them.

SETTLING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

The first week after moving to university and college is when you begin to settle in. This can be an exciting time. This might be excitement for the term ahead. It is also perfectly normal and valid to feel homesick, anxious, disappointed or like you don't deserve to be there.

University and college is something which you have spent a long time getting excited for and everyone adjusts at their own rate. It is important not to put pressure on yourself to enjoy the first few weeks.

The great thing about university and college is that it is an incredibly individual experience, although there are lots of people who may all do similar things, every one of them will experience university and college a little bit differently.





THINGS WHICH MIGHT WORRY YOU

One of the things which can alter the experience of Higher Education is your course. You may feel once you are doing your course that you are on the wrong one. That again is fine! Transferring in the first couple of weeks of term can sometimes be as simple as speaking to your personal tutor about putting in a transfer request. However, every institutions' policy might differ.

A transfer after Christmas is a bit different. You may have to complete your first year and then transfer or drop out and start the new course from the beginning. Again, it depends on the institutions' policy so make sure to check. This is less than ideal for many people, but if the long term is doing a course you are unhappy on, then it might be the better option. Speak to your personal tutors to see what they can recommend as they are there to help you.

Another part of your experience that you may worry about in your first week is not enjoying your accommodation. If you live away for Higher Education, then this is where you will spend a lot of your spare time, so it is important that you feel comfortable there. Some people make friends for life with their flatmates, others may struggle to get on with their flatmates. It is always worth trying to find some common ground and bond with your flatmates.

If your accommodation is making you unhappy, then it may be worth considering changing it. Dependent on the institutions/ accommodation provider policy you may be able to move room or flat within the accommodation you are in or move accommodation building altogether. Your first port of call should be the accommodation office for your accommodation, and they will guide you through the process of changing if you can.

Getting ready to go

MOVING AWAY

Moving away is both nerve-wracking and exciting. You will be in a new town or city, with new people. It can be really overwhelming. One thing to be aware of is homesickness. Don't think that you will be the only person who is missing home, speak to your flatmates or course mates about how you are feeling, and they might be able to help. Setting up regular times to talk to your family is also a really good idea, especially video calls so it feels a bit more personal. Perhaps also take some recipes of your favourite meals at home so that when you are missing home you can cook those.

Although it is important to pack things that will make your room feel like home don't pack too much. Remember it will have to be moved out at the end of the year and it must fit into what might be a smaller room than you are used to. Take cooking equipment, some food for your first few days and toiletries for the first few days.

Moving away can also be quite daunting in terms of making friends as you move away from your "home" friends. A great place to start making friends is your flat. Try to bond with your flatmates, this could be done by going out or communal activities like board games, card games or even cooking. Also think about societies and sports teams. These are a great way to meet people who share similar interests to you. Finally make sure you attend your welcome week sessions for your course. These often give you an opportunity to meet your course mates in a more informal way.

The best thing you can do to try and maximise your university experience is to try new things. Try different sports teams and different societies and meet as many people as possible. University is a great opportunity to push your boundaries and doing that will help your experience massively.

STAYING AT HOME

Staying at home can also be a nerve wracking and exciting experience. You will be starting at a new institution and possibly not know anyone. It is important to remember, you won't be the only one. A lot of students do decide to stay at home to study at Higher Education. On your first week, speak to people on your course, get involved in group tasks. You could also look at attending some of the events that take place on freshers' week with people on your course. Joining societies, sports teams and clubs is also a great way to meet new people. Have a look to see what societies are available to join and see if any of them interest you.

Staying at home can also be a great way to become more independent. You could help with some of the household tasks as well as cooking some of your own meals throughout the week. Your parents/carers may ask you to contribute towards the cost of staying at home such as bills.



Apprenticeships at Higher Education

Another option available at Higher Education is Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. This gives you the option to gain some qualifications and experience whilst you earn. These are an option to gain level 4 or above qualifications.

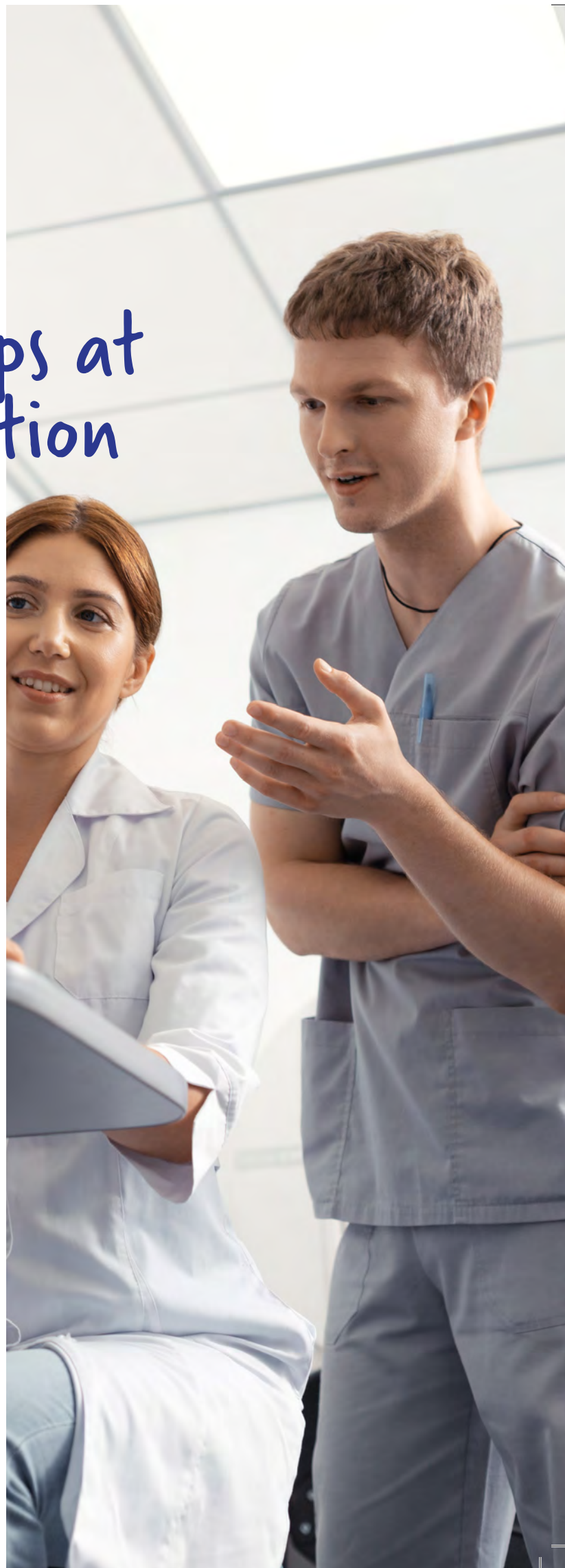
More information can be found here www.ucas.com/alternatives.

Apprenticeships

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships will give you on the job and off the job training and maybe even some assessment. This will mean that you get an industry recognised qualification. The great thing about apprenticeships is that you can progress on to even higher qualifications.

- ▶ **You are treated just like all other employees, with a contract of employment, a salary and holiday leave.**
- ▶ **You are given real responsibilities.**
- ▶ **You will spend at least 20% (equivalent to 1 day a week) of your time completing off-the-job training, often at a college, university or with an independent training provider.**
- ▶ **You will train to be fully competent in your chosen occupation.**





WHAT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS DO I NEED?

It really depends on what you are aiming for! If you are going into an advanced apprenticeship at level 3 then you will probably need some GCSEs. However, if you are going for a higher or degree apprenticeship at levels 4,5 and 6 then you will likely need some further education qualifications such as BTEC or A-levels.

You can also build up your apprenticeships. So, if you do an advanced apprenticeship, you can potentially use that to go onto a higher or degree apprenticeship. It is always worth asking around and seeing what different employers and education providers would like you to have.

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Higher apprenticeships are equivalent to foundation degrees or above. Degree apprenticeships can give you a bachelor's degree or even a master's degree. In fact, depending on your chosen role or sector, you could also gain professional qualifications or memberships of relevant professional associations. These apprenticeships combine work with study at a higher level. This is usually 30 hours per week in work, and the rest with a Higher

Education provider. You will also get hands-on experience in the career you choose whilst also getting a qualification. Apprentices completing a Higher or a Degree apprenticeship are employed and the training costs are funded by the government and the employer. A benefit of a degree apprenticeship is that you enter the graduate job market with experience. One of the challenges that faces graduates is that they don't have the relevant experience for many roles. As part of your training in work, you will work with staff at all levels of the business you work for, giving you a well-rounded experience, which is complemented by what you do with a Higher Education provider.

WHO CAN I WORK FOR?

There are some big names which offer higher and degree apprenticeships, companies such as Google, Rolls Royce, BBC, Sky and Santander. Plenty of smaller employers also run degree apprenticeships and so it is worth researching what is available. You can head to 'Find an Apprenticeship' on the government site to see what opportunities are available in your local area – www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship Some of the sectors you can work in include: Accounting, broadcast technology, healthcare science, legal services, product design and retail.

CAREER PROSPECTS

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

Although you will be working for these companies under an apprenticeship contract, 90% of apprentices stay employed after completing their apprenticeship and 71% with the same employer.

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.

WHAT CAN AN APPRENTICE EARN?

Levels of starting salaries for apprentices are variable and are dependent on many factors such as:

- ▶ the level of apprenticeship
- ▶ the sector you are working in
- ▶ the type of employer you are working for e.g. small business, large corporation, public or private sector
- ▶ your age, experience and existing qualifications

Apprentices are entitled to the apprentice rate if they're either:

- ▶ aged under 19
- ▶ aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship

Example: An apprentice aged 21 in the first year of their apprenticeship is entitled to a minimum apprentice hourly rate of £7.55 (as of April 2025).

THE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING YOURSELF ABOUT WHETHER THIS IS RIGHT FOR YOU ARE:

Do I have a specific job that I want to do?

- ▶ Apprenticeships are very career specific. You will get the most out of it if you are doing it in something you want to do in the future.

Do I enjoy learning on the job?

- ▶ This is the primary way of learning so make sure this is how you like to learn.

Would I be ok missing out on some of the student experience you might get at university?

- ▶ It won't be sustainable to live the typical student lifestyle and hold down a job. So, this is something which you should consider.

Do you mind taking a bit longer to complete a qualification?

- ▶ Degree qualifications can take up to six years to complete. Is this something you would be alright with? Remember you will be getting industry experience during this time, and it is not a pause on working life as you will still be earning.

My Job checklist

Before you think about what job you want to have, think about what you *want* from a job. This could be flexibility, structure or something different every day. Knowing what you want from a job will help you to be able to make choices about what kind of apprenticeship you will apply for.

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| Getting experience relevant to your future | |
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Finding and Applying for an Apprenticeship



As there are so many different providers out there offering apprenticeships, there are loads of different apprenticeships to apply for.

The government compiles a monthly list of different ones that are available.

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 you hope to start your apprenticeship in August or September, start looking for vacancies from spring onwards. Many degree schemes open up in September onwards for the following year.
- ▶ Don't wait until the last minute to apply, as some companies will close recruitment once they have a certain number of candidates.
- ▶ Register for alerts at www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship to hear about new vacancies.

HOW TO APPLY

Follow this step by step guide:

1. Visit www.apprenticeships.gov.uk
2. Every type of apprenticeship is graded at a certain level and this affects the entry requirements.
3. For some apprenticeships everyone has to start at a Level 2 no matter what level of qualifications they already have - for example in hairdressing - everyone has to learn how to wash and dry hair before moving on to cutting.
4. For some Level 3 jobs you may have to work unsupervised, so if you haven't had much experience of work so far, you may start on a Level 2 before moving on to the Level 3.
5. Most apprenticeships have pathways for you to progress, but it depends on the job, so you do need to check what opportunities there are for progression.
6. Go to 'Find an Apprenticeship' on the government site.
7. Nearly all apprenticeship vacancies are listed on the government site.
8. It is a good idea to 'create an account'.



OTHER WAYS TO FIND AND APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP:

- ▶ Vacancies are also listed on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com)
- ▶ If you are interested in working for a particular company, it's worth checking their website and social media to hear about vacancies as soon as they come up.
- ▶ Approach an employer directly – If you know exactly who you would like to work for, consider approaching the company directly and asking if they have any opportunities either now or in the future.
- ▶ Use the internet to research vacancies with local providers or employers
- ▶ College or training provider websites can also provide local apprenticeship listings and opportunities.
- ▶ www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

FURTHER SUPPORT

Additional financial support is available for care leavers starting apprenticeships.

- ▶ For care leavers starting their apprenticeship on or after 1 August 2023, the bursary will be £3,000. It is payable in instalments over the first year of the apprenticeship.
- ▶ For help with apprenticeship applications or professional advice visit:
www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk or a webchat with an adviser or call: 0800 100 900 (free from landlines and mobiles).

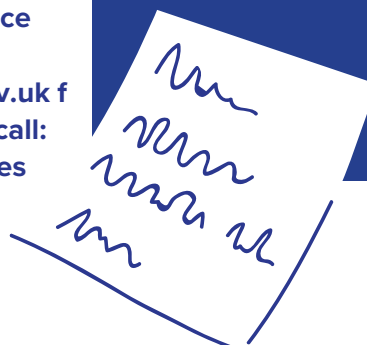
More information, including videos of current apprentices, are available at apprenticeships.gov.uk.

The government has created a new website, Amazing Apprenticeships <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/> with lots of useful information and help in finding apprenticeships. See what apprenticeship vacancies are coming up soon with big international companies like Google.

Contact the National Apprenticeship Helpdesk for further support on 0800 015 0400 or by emailing: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk.

TASK

Head over to www.apprenticeships.gov.uk and enter your postcode in the find an apprenticeship search. Compare two apprenticeships you're most interested in. Look at the pay, duration and responsibilities and keep them on the same worksheets as the rest of your tasks so you can see all your future research and options in one place.



Access Courses

ACCESS QUALIFICATIONS – WHAT ARE THEY?

Access qualifications are a route into Higher Education for those without formal qualifications. These would traditionally provide a route into Higher Education. These courses ensure that Higher Education remains an option throughout life.

These qualifications are typically delivered by colleges and can be specific to different Higher Education courses.

WHAT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS DO I NEED?

Entry requirements differ from course to course, so it is always best to do your research.

HOW LONG ARE THEY?

Access courses are typically only a year long, so you won't be falling years behind your peers whilst studying one.

WHERE DO I APPLY?

To study an access course, it is best to contact a provider which does your chosen course and apply directly to them. Remember to treat it as if you were going to study any other course, by doing your research and going to open days if you can.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?

You can read through more information about access courses here www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he

You can have a look at what courses are available around you here <https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/en/course-search>

Taking a Gap Year

Some young people decide to take a year out (also known as a gap year) before going on to university or college, starting an apprenticeship or embarking on their career. If you're thinking of taking a gap year before going on to Higher Education, is there something you could do that relates to the subject you plan on studying as well as gaining experience and new skills?



WHY MIGHT YOU WANT TO TAKE A GAP YEAR?

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

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

WHAT COULD YOU DO DURING YOUR GAP YEAR?

Here are some popular gap year activities. You could choose to take part in through an organised programme or by making your own plans.

- ▶ **Travelling or living overseas – to see the world and broaden horizons, or to immerse yourself 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. You could choose a role that will help you learn skills relevant to your 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 your CV and find out more about a sector or career that interests you.**
- ▶ **Doing a combination of two or more of these.**

www.ucas.com/discover/gap-years will give you a good idea of the opportunities on offer, as well as information about what you will need to do to prepare for a successful gap year.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

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

- ▶ **If you are unsure about what to do next it is a chance for you to reflect on your future.**
- ▶ **It can broaden your horizons and help you to mature and develop as a person, which will help you to cope better with the challenges of Higher Education, training, or a career.**
- ▶ **You could choose an activity that relates to the subject area you plan to study, enhancing your future education.**
- ▶ **You can draw from your experiences to add new skills to your CV – and demonstrate to recruiters or admissions tutors that you have drive, confidence, and initiative.**

Planning a Gap Year

Think about the different gap year options and what you want to achieve from the year and start making plans. The following might give you some useful starting points.

IS A GAP YEAR RIGHT FOR ME?

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

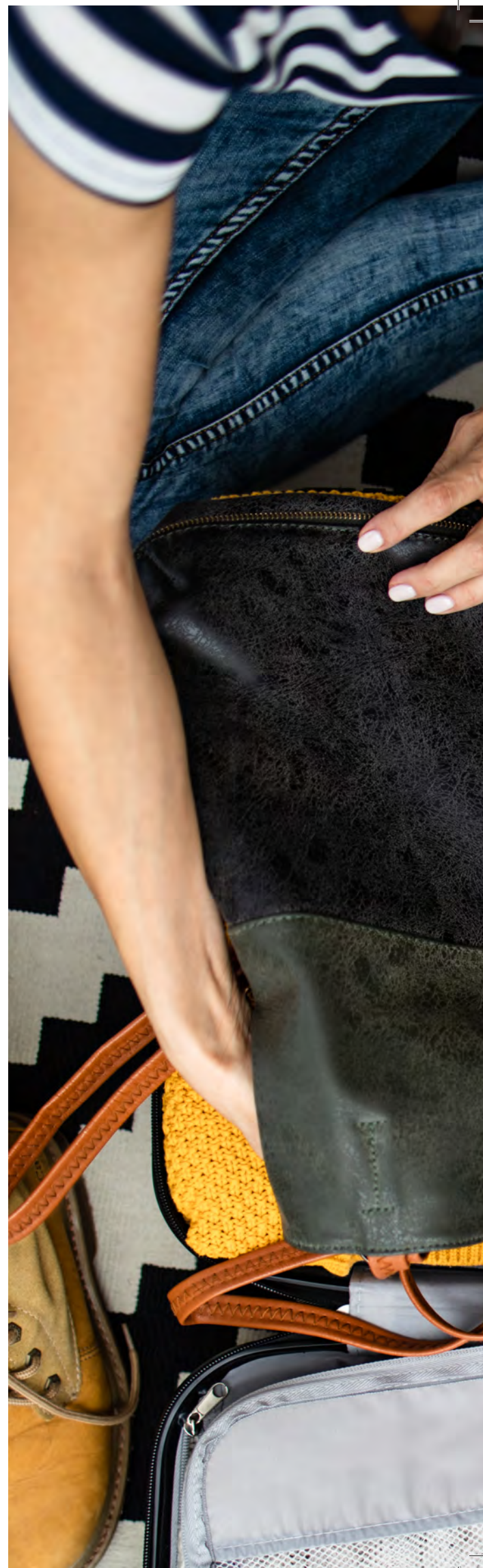
- ▶ **Distract you from your longer-term goals.**
- ▶ **Make it harder to return to study or work.**
- ▶ **Be expensive and leave you in a worse financial position.**
- ▶ **Require more confidence or independence than you feel ready for. If you would like to do something more adventurous but feel anxious about it, you could consider volunteering overseas as part of an organised group or going travelling with a friend.**

MONEY MATTERS

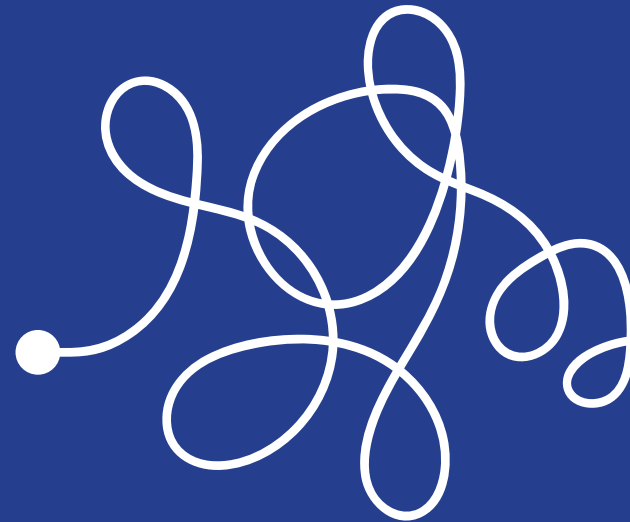
If you want to travel, think about how you will pay for it. Are you thinking of working while you travel? Or will you stay at home and work for a few months to save up for your travels?

MAKING A PLAN

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

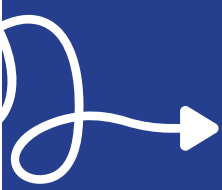


Wordsearch on Higher Education



Here is a wordsearch for you to complete on Higher Education. Find the words in the wordsearch.

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UCASHUB WAGE
FRESHERS LOAN **OPENDAY**
ALUMNI
ACADEMIC LECTURE **HND**
UCAS **ACCOMODATION** CAMPUS
BURSARY **UNIVERSITY** HNC
STUDENT COLLEGE **OFFER**
GRADUATE **CLEARING**
UNDERGRADUATE **UCAT** TUITION DEFER
APPRENTICESHIP
VOCATIONAL **CONDITIONAL**
DEGREE INTERVIEW **COURSE**
TUTOR TRACK **EXTRA**
FOUNDATION
RESULTS



Q & A page

I HAVEN'T RECEIVED ANY OFFERS, WHAT DO I DO?

If you haven't received any offers from universities or colleges, you can use UCAS extra which is a service to look for another course. Extra is available between the end of February and the beginning of July to apply for other courses. This means you don't have to wait till clearing. Not all universities and colleges will have places available in Extra for all their courses.

WHEN DO I APPLY FOR ACCOMMODATION?

This can vary from institution to institution. It is important to do your research, so you are aware of when applications open for the accommodation at your chosen institution. For some institutions, you can apply once you've accepted an offer. For some this might be only to those who have chosen them as a firm choice, however some do allow you to apply even if they're your insurance option.

DO I HAVE TO APPLY THROUGH UCAS TO STUDY HE AT COLLEGE?

It is important to check on the institutions website to see how they would like you to apply for that course. Some colleges do not use UCAS, so it is important to do your research.

WHAT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE AT HIGHER EDUCATION?

If you require additional support, this can be available from universities and colleges.

Circumstances and conditions can be disclosed on your application and the university or college should be in touch. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to access financial support in the form of bursaries and scholarships. Bursaries are cash grants that don't have to be repaid. These can often be offered to students from lower income households. Scholarships often take the form of a lump sum and are offered to academically talented students. There is also assistance for students who are experiencing financial difficulties, usually in emergencies or exceptional circumstances. These are hardship funds, and each university or college has its own schemes and eligibility rules, so it is important to check with your chosen institution for more information. There is also the disabled students allowance which is designed to cover any extra costs you may have due to a disability. This might be specialist equipment to support with your studies or extra travel cost. For more information and eligibility criteria, please visit www.gov.uk/disabled-studentsallowances-dsas. This is not an exhaustive list, so it is important to do your research to see what support is available to suit you as an individual.

I'VE MISSED THE DEADLINE; CAN I STILL APPLY?

If you miss the deadline for UCAS, you can still apply up until the 30th June. However not all institutions will have places as they could have filled up. Contact the institution to see if they have any vacancies and if they would consider you as a late applicant. Applications after the 30th June will be entered into clearing.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HIGHER AND A DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP?

Higher apprenticeships are equivalent to foundation degrees or above. These can be at a level 4 or 5, whereas Degree apprenticeships can give you a bachelor's degree or a masters degree. These can be level 6 or 7. Apprenticeships combine work with study at a higher level. This is usually 30 hours a week in work and the rest with a higher education provider gaining your qualification. You will also get hands on experience in the career you choose.

WHEN DO I APPLY FOR STUDENT FINANCE?

You can apply online at www.gov.uk/studentfinance. It is important to check when student finance will open for your year of entry to university so you are prepared for when you can apply. It can take up to six weeks to process student finance applications so make sure you get your application in early. You can apply for student finance if you have a conditional offer. If this changes you can amend or cancel your application for student finance.

I DIDN'T GET THE RESULTS FOR MY FIRM AND INSURANCE CHOICE, WHAT CAN I DO?

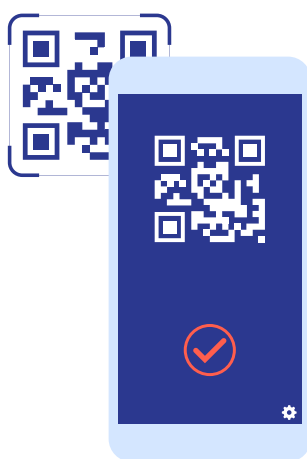
If you don't get the results you need for your firm or insurance choice, don't worry, you can look for another course using Clearing and Clearing Plus. Clearing is used by universities and colleges to advertise any remaining courses they have left. Try not to make any hasty decisions. Have a think about your next steps and speak to teachers, school/ college career advisers who will be able to help you.

HOW MUCH DO APPRENTICES GET PAID?

This varies by apprenticeship and can be dependent on many factors such as your age, experience and any existing qualifications. It can also be dependent on the sector you are working in and the type of employer you are working for. This could be a small company or a large business. Apprentices are entitled to the apprentice rate if they're either aged under 19 or aged 19 or over and in their first year of their apprenticeship.

Scan for additional resources

Here are some of our other resources that are available for you to access. Scan the QR code to access the resource.



FUTURE FOCUS WEBSITE:

www.thefuturefocus.co.uk/



LINCHIGHER CARE LEAVERS GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION:

www.thefuturefocus.co.uk/resources/detail/40



STUDENTS FROM ARMED FORCES FAMILIES GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION:

www.thefuturefocus.co.uk/resources/detail/39



STUDENT GUIDE TO APPRENTICESHIPS:

www.thefuturefocus.co.uk/resources/detail/65



LINCHIGHER PARENT/CARER GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION:

www.thefuturefocus.co.uk/resources/detail/82



Scanning...



other key websites

STUDENT FINANCE APPLY

www.gov.uk/students-finance-register-login



GOV APPRENTICESHIPS APPLY:


www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship



UCAS APPLICATIONS:

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university





Higher Education Terminology Explained

ACADEMIC – focus on developing deep knowledge on specific subjects. These can take place at a university or a college.

ACCESS COURSES – Access qualifications are a route into Higher Education for those without formal qualifications.

ALUMNI – University or colleges' past students.

APPLY – the name of UCAS online application system.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE – can also be known as undergraduate, first or honour degrees and are the most common form of Higher Education. They usually take three years of full-time study to complete.

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

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

CAMPUS – the grounds and buildings of the university.

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



CARE LEAVERS/CARE-EXPERIENCED –

someone who has spent 13 weeks or more in the care of the local authority (e.g. foster care or children’s home) between their 14th and 16th birthday, were privately fostered until the age of 16 or who were ‘looked after’ until they were subject of a Special Guardianship Order.

CERTIFICATES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

– is equivalent to the first 60 credits of an undergraduate degree and can be put towards a full undergraduate degree on completion.

CERTIFICATES OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION –

a Certificate of Higher Education is the same as one year of study and the Diploma of Higher education is the same as two years of study. These can be taken as a standalone qualification or are sometimes awarded to students if they leave early.

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.

CLEARING PLUS – matches you with courses based on your original courses, qualifications and grades.

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

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.

Higher Education Terminology Explained

Continued

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP – Equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree qualification. These can be Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships.

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.

FOUNDATION DEGREES – are taught at universities and colleges and focus on specific job or sector skills. They are equivalent to a HND or two thirds of a bachelor's degree.

FOUNDATION DIPLOMA/ FOUNDATION YEAR – is a one-year qualification that can be a stepping-stone to a bachelor's degree for students wanting to learn more about a particular subject for a year or don't meet the entry requirements.

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.

GAP YEAR – Taking a year out before going on to Higher Education or embarking on a career.

GRADUATE – someone who has completed an undergraduate degree.

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

HALLS OF RESIDENCE – student accommodation.

HIGHER APPRENTICESHIP – Equivalent to a foundation degree. These can be Level 4 or 5 apprenticeships.

HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE – takes one year to complete and is a level 4 vocational qualification offering practical based courses.

HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA – takes two years to complete and is roughly equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree. It can be used as a stepping-stone to a full degree with the option to top up a HND to a full bachelor's degree.

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

LECTURES, SEMINARS AND TUTORIALS – lessons.

LECTURERS, TUTORS AND ACADEMICS – teachers.

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.

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

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION – test abilities in the workplace, developing skills and knowledge required to do a job. They are work based qualifications where students complete training and are assessed on work related tasks.

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

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



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

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

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

TECHNICAL OR VOCATIONAL – allow students to develop a knowledge base so they can learn important theory. They also offer more practical learning opportunities and link to specific careers or jobs.

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.

TURING SCHEME – a government scheme providing funding for international opportunities across the world. These are in education and training.

UCAS – University and Colleges Admissions Service. Most people who apply for an undergraduate degree course apply through UCAS.

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

UCAT – stands for University Clinical Aptitude Test. This is a test that is used by some universities across the UK for their medical and dental courses that they offer.

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.

UNDERGRADUATE – a student studying their first degree.

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.

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