



CARE LEAVERS GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Information and guidance
to support care leavers
with their higher
education choices

LINCH[↑]HIGHER

linchigher.co.uk



Who are we?

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

What is a Care Leaver?

A care leaver is a person who has been in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, including some point at the age of 16-17 and is under the age of 25. Most institutions offer support for care leavers.



Introduction

This guide is for anyone who is care experienced, to help you find the support you may need to make the first steps towards Higher Education. You'll learn about your qualification options, as well as specific resources and contacts available as you get ready to leave care.

Familiarising yourself with the information in this guide will get you up to speed wherever you are on your 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 guide 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, and guides and much more. There's also a glossary for any confusing terminology! If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact our team, we are always happy to help.



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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.

Higher education refers to qualifications at Level 4 and above, such as Bachelor 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 through training providers.

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



CHOOSING QUALIFICATIONS:

WHAT'S WHAT?

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

ACADEMIC

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

VOCATIONAL

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

APPRENTICESHIPS

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

What are Higher Education Institutions?

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

SPECIALIST HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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

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

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



FOUNDATION DEGREE

- These have abbreviations such as FdSc (Science Foundation Degree) FdA (Arts Foundation Degree) and FdEng (Engineering Foundation Degree).
- Equivalent to a HND or two-thirds of a bachelor's degree.
- They focus on specific job or sector skills, in areas as broad as arts and media management, electronic engineering, healthcare and wildlife conservation. Some include work placements for hands on learning.
- Most take two years to complete full time, or longer if taken part time.
- You can choose to study for an additional year to gain a full degree.
- Taught at university or college, or often both.
- Not to be confused with a foundation year – which is an extra year before a degree to help you prepare for study.

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION (NVQ)

- Test abilities in the workplace.
- Students complete training and are assessed on work related tasks by completing a portfolio and observations. Portfolio assessment – build up evidence of what you've done at work. Observation - an assessor watches and checks that required tasks can be done.

- Levels are based on national standards of the job and each unit is signed off as and when standards are met.
- Doesn't have to be completed in a specific amount of time.

FOUNDATION DIPLOMA/ FOUNDATION YEAR

- These are one-year qualifications that can be a stepping stone to a 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.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

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

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

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

CERTIFICATES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION (CERTCE)

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

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

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

TOP TIP

You'll find more information about choosing a university/college course and the application process on page 16 in the "Going to university/college" section.



Qualification pathway explained

Higher level study

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



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

Year 12 (Level 3) Students

Including Exploring Post 18 Options

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



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

UCAS EXHIBITIONS

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

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE TASTER COURSES AND RESIDENTIAL

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

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CAREERS FAIRS

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

CAREER-FOCUSED SESSIONS OR TALKS IN SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

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

TOP TIP

Getting the most out of UCAS exhibitions

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

Before you go to a UCAS exhibition we advise you look through the exhibition information and consider following aspects:

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

On the day, we recommend you take a spare bag for all the prospectuses and information you will pick up. After the fair think about how it went and the sorts of courses and careers you are thinking about. Check your prospectuses and compare the details of the courses that interest you. Look at where different institutions are and start to think about where you would like to live and study.



TOP TIP

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

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

You can also seek advice from

- Careers advisers at your school or college
- The National Careers Service, which offers advice by phone, webchat, and email.

For details visit nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

HIGHER EDUCATION DECISIONS

If you decide you would like to go to university or college, during the summer you'll need to decide on the courses and universities you want to apply to. The following quick guide to higher education explains the range of post 18 qualifications and some of the terminology you might come across in your research.

POST 18 DECISION'S

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

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



Year 13 (Level 3) 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 apply and secure the higher education course, training opportunity or job that is right for you. We understand that you will be busy studying for your Level 3 qualifications which is why it's important you have a good network of people to support you.

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

If you want to study a higher education course at university or college, you should begin applying in Year 13.

MAKING A PLAN B

Hopefully you will get the results you are hoping for, but it's worth thinking about a backup plan just in case. For example, what would you choose to do if you couldn't get on to your preferred degree course? Would you find a

similar course elsewhere with lower entry requirements? Or retake your exams and reapply? Or take a year out for a rethink?

EXAMS

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



RESULTS DAY

Results for different qualifications come out at different times:

- BTEC results are released from mid-July. The timing will vary depending on the course and how it is assessed. The way 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 results are available in mid-August.

To minimise stress, it's important to know what to expect on results day and what to do if things don't go to plan. Hopefully you will have thought of a plan B. If you are collecting your results in person (this will be the case for A-Levels and possibly for BTECs), make sure you know what time your school or college will be open on results day. If you are applying to university or college through UCAS, there's more information about what happens next later in this guide.

Going to University

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 degree 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 degree 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 their 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.

Do graduates really get more job opportunities?

PROSPECTS' WHAT DO GRADUATES DO? 2018 FOUND THIS:

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

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

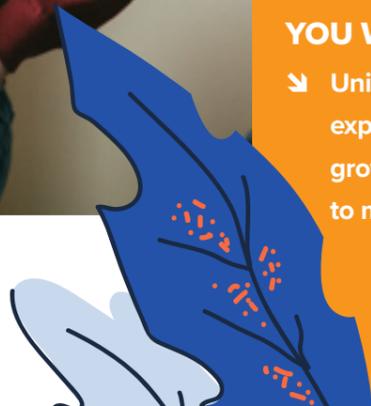
In 2018, working age graduates earned on average £10,000 more per year than non-graduates, and had higher employment rates.

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

Source: Department for Education, April 2019

Full article can be found here:

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



How University Differs from School or College

MORE ACADEMIC INDEPENDENCE

At university, 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 LEARNING METHODS

You may be used to a rigid timetable of lessons and homework. At university, 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 degree 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.

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. This offers the chance to study two subjects rather than one, taking roughly the same number of modules in each. Some universities also offer a major / minor degree option, which is similar but with a smaller proportion of modules in the minor subject.

Studying a combination of subjects could mean 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.



CHECKING COURSE DETAILS

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

- We encourage you to look at the modules in detail, as they will vary across different university and college courses. For example, while various universities offer a history degree, 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?

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.

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.

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. Make sure you check course requirements carefully to find out about any admissions test requirements.

TOP TIP

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 degree level. 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

Finding the right degree 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 institutions 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. Each calculates their ranking differently, so it's worth looking at more than one. League tables will give you a useful indication of the quality of a universities course and facilities but remember they may not always display the full picture, so you should consider them as just one factor in the decision-making process.

Remember that:

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

THE LEAGUE TABLES ONLINE

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

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 or friends? How long will it take to travel back and how much will it cost?
- Living costs are higher in some cities than others.

CITY OR CAMPUS?

Some universities and colleges are in the middle of a city, some are in suburban areas and other have an out-of-town campus. 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 university academic facilities? What could contribute to a better learning experience for you, an extensive library, a high-tech computing system, the latest laboratory equipment or spacious art studios?
- What are the social, leisure and sports facilities like?
- 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 university can be a stressful time for students, to help care-experienced students adapt to university life; universities can help in the following way.

- Many universities have a named member of staff to support care leavers and care experienced students, the named contact provides information to care-experienced students before and throughout their studies.
- Some universities may also offer a network for care experienced students to meet up and socialise. If you are interested in whether a university has such a network, get in touch with the named contact.
- All universities have some level of wellbeing and counselling provision for students and often, care-experienced students will be prioritised for these services. Therefore, if you encounter stress during your studies there will always be someone to talk to.
- Some universities also run wellbeing events, allowing students to meet up and take part in relevant initiatives.

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

LOCAL AUTHORITY SUPPORT:

As a Care leaver you are still entitled to support from your personal advisor if you are in education or training and under the age of 25. As well as supporting you with your education, they can support you with other things, such as your housing, money, health, and wellbeing. All the support you require from your local authority should be in your Pathway Plan, so it is important that you contact your PA/social worker before starting university or college to agree this.

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 a specific university's 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.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/open-days/search
- www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/open-days/open-day-calendar
- www.universitycompare.com/open-days/

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 TIP

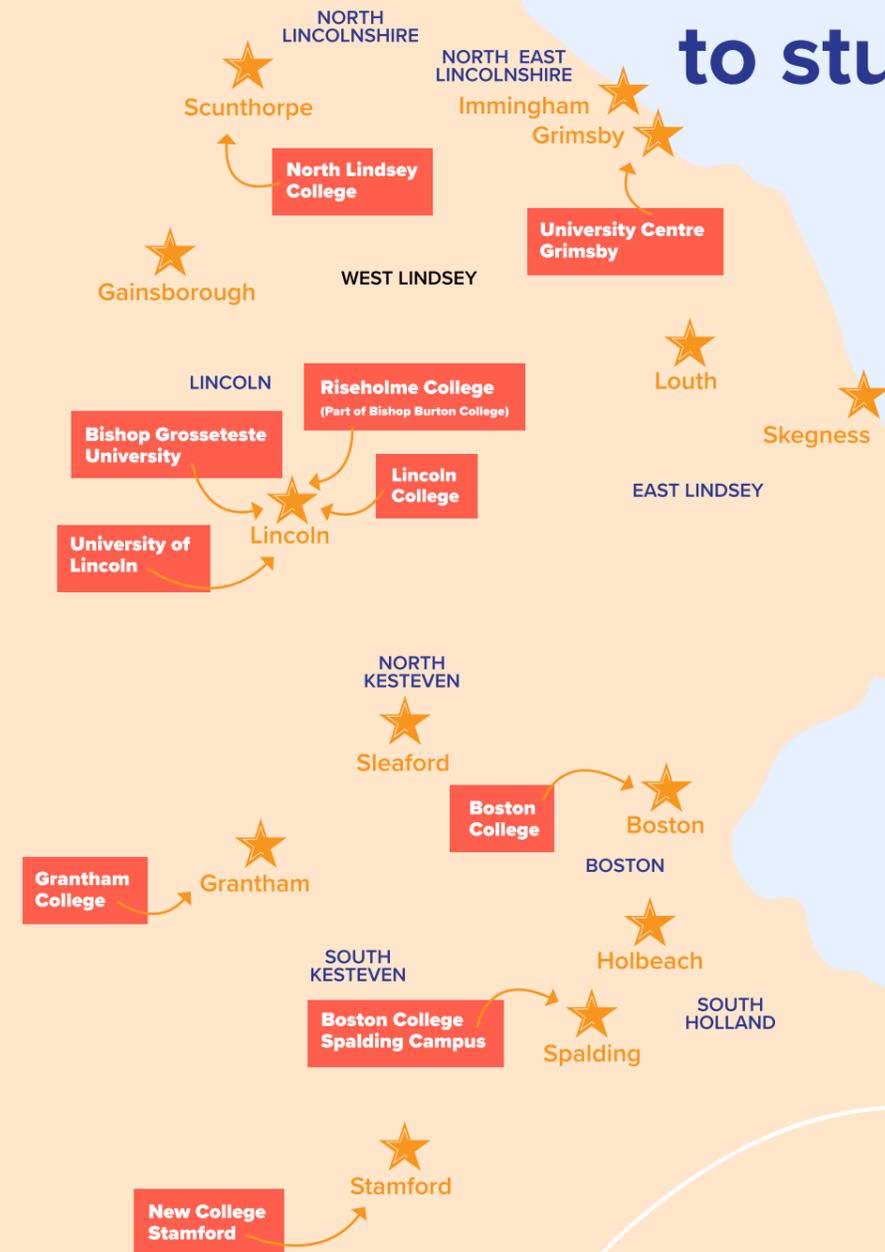
ON THE DAY

- Getting there - you could walk (if it is local), drive or get the bus or train.
- We encourage you to get involved in the activities on offer and talk to people.
- Look around the city as well as the institution and think about how you'll feel living there.
- Making 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, a social worker 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.
- We encourage you to contact the university or college admissions team if there were any questions that staff didn't answer on the day.

Local institutions to study Higher Education



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.

The University Application Process

Applications to study full time courses at universities, colleges and conservatoires in the UK are processed through an organisation called UCAS. You can apply for up to five courses in total. For full details of the UCAS application process visit www.ucas.com.



WHEN TO APPLY

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

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

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

COMPLETING THE ONLINE FORM

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

- You will need to register on the UCAS website by giving some basic details and setting some security questions; you'll be given a username and will need to set a password.
- 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 a quality 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 about your strengths and why you should be offered a place.
- Employment - basic details about any part time jobs.

GOOD TO KNOW

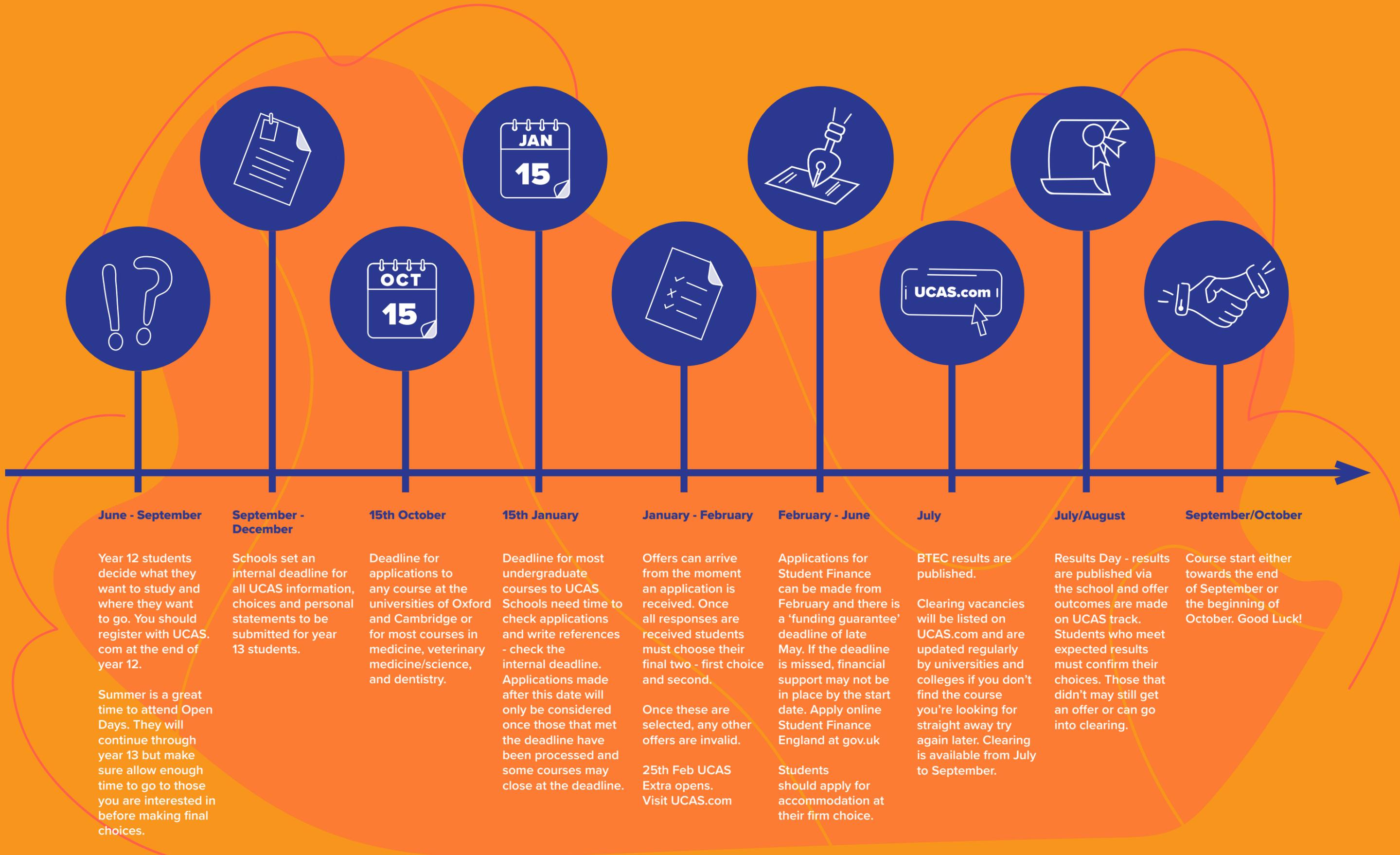
When you fill out your UCAS application, there will be a tick box to let your university or college know that you are a care leaver. This allows your university and college to contact you to let you know what support you are entitled to.

Disclosing your background has several benefits:

- Institutions will proactively contact you to offer help and support during enrolment.
- Some universities and colleges will provide a dedicated student support worker to work with you throughout the duration of your course.
- They will review your application and take into consideration your circumstances and may consider a contextualised offer.
- Your personal statement is a chance for you to explain why the institution should accept you on their course, including how your experiences both inside and outside the classroom have given you skills and personal qualities ideal for a student. Disclosing your background will not negatively affect your application.
- The referee that you include in your UCAS application could inform the university of your circumstances.

There is also a section at the end for a reference, which is usually completed by a teacher. If you are applying independently, you can ask an employer or trainer to be your referee. There is an application fee, which may be payable direct to UCAS or via your school or college. If you aren't sure which, we suggest you check with a teacher.

UCAS Time Trail



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. Universities will often have their own guidance on applications for deferred entry; you should check their website or prospectus for details. Most universities will want students to explain their reason for deferring and their plans for the next year in 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.

GOOD TO KNOW

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



TOP TIP

DRAFTING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

The personal statement is your opportunity to stand out from the crowd by talking about your skills, experience, and ambitions. It's a crucial part of the UCAS application, but it's also the section many young people find most difficult. It's worth doing some research and looking at the resources on the UCAS website. These resources include videos and a personal statement tool, that helps you think about what to include and how to structure your statement within the given word limit.

Writing notes about the following may support with writing your statement.

- 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.
- We encourage you to use plain, cliché-free English.
- Check your spelling and grammar, or make sure you ask someone else to.

The School/College's Role

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. We encourage you to 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 by than the one set by UCAS. This is an internal date to give them time to process all their students references before the UCAS cut-off date. It's important to make yourself aware of any internal deadlines to ensure submission of your application in the necessary timeframe for the teacher's approval.

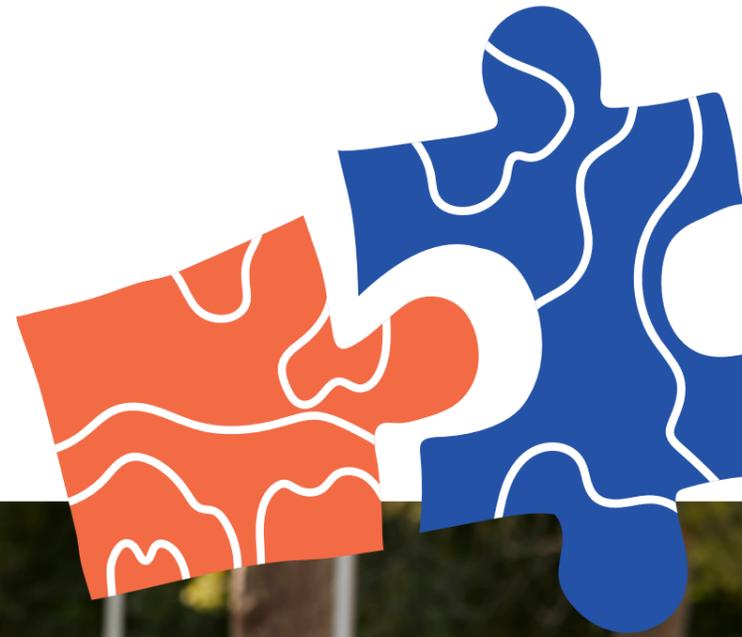
VISIT DAYS

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 a place.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Once your form is submitted to UCAS

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



TOP TIP

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 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? 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 must choose an audition piece, encourage them to avoid obvious or clichéd choices.

University 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 Track. The decision could be any of the following:

- **A conditional offer** - an offer of a place that depends on you meeting getting 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.

UNCONDITIONAL 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 however you do in your exams. However, it still needs to be the best course and university 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 start by reviewing all offer you have received and chose 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.

You will also need to accept an offer as your insurance choice. 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. If you have used all your five choices and haven't received any offers (or have declined any 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.

THE DIRECT CONTACT SERVICE

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

Remember that:

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

GOOD TO KNOW

Track 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



TOP TIP

REPLYING TO OFFERS

Before you reply, check that you have compared the different offers, you are clear about the requirements of your chosen courses and, if relevant, have discussed any particular support needs with your institution of choice.

If you are finding it difficult to choose your firm and insurance choices, go over the options. Think about what you want to get out of university/college life and which of the courses will help you achieve it.

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

If you have already made up your mind, think about how you reached the decision and check you are confident of that choices. If there's anything you don't understand about the conditions of your offers, we encourage you to contact the university or college.

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. For BTEC results this can happen from mid July; A levels results come out in mid-August. Universities will then make their decisions.

If you have achieved the grades for your firm or insurance choice, the university will confirm your place in Track.

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

If you haven't met the conditions of your offer, there's a chance that the university could still offer you a place on your chosen course, on another course, or for a different year of entry. The university will confirm this via Track 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. If you are taking one of these, you will need to send your results to your firm and insurance choices.

ADJUSTMENT

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

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 OR CLEARING PLUS?

CLEARING

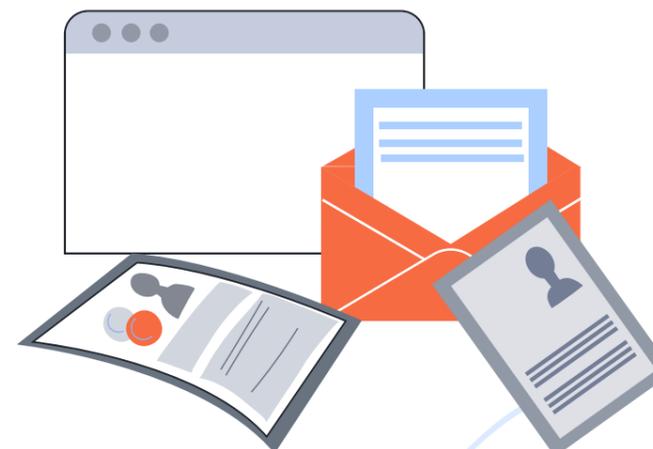
Browse over 30,000 courses with Clearing vacancies using the UCAS search tool.

CLEARING PLUS

View courses matched to your application in UCAS Track.

FINDING A PLACE THROUGH CLEARING INVOLVES:

- Looking through the official list of Clearing vacancies published online by UCAS and in The Telegraph newspaper. This list is updated regularly, so if you can't see the course or university or college you are looking for, it's worth trying again later just in case.
- Universities will also advertise clearing places on their websites.
- 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 they will then confirm the place in UCAS Track.



TOP TIP

IF YOU DON'T GET A UNIVERSITY PLACE

If you had your heart set on going to university or college but don't get a place, don't worry. We have 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?



The UCAS Application Process At a Glance



DURING YEAR 12 AND 13

Research courses and universities/colleges

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

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

Register and apply online

AFTER APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED

Go for interview/audition if required, wait for universities'/colleges decisions. Universities and colleges will decide whether to make you an offer. There are two types of offer: unconditional or conditional. See page 36 for more details.

If you are not accepted by one or more of your choices, or if you decline an offer, you can use Extra to apply for more choices.

YEAR 13

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.
- Decline any other offers.

JULY/AUGUST

Find out about places

When results come out, you will be able to see in Track 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 to apply for more courses. 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.



Paying for University

Higher Education does cost money and it is one of the biggest concerns for prospective university and college students. Student fees have risen in recent years, and understandably, there are concerns about the amount of debt they might get into or if they can even afford to go. **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 they borrow. Students don't have to pay anything back until they have finished their degree and are earning over a certain amount.

TUITION FEES

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

- Students pay their own fees, but they can get a student loan to cover the cost. As a care experienced individual, you will get support to pay your tuition fees.
- Universities can charge up to £9,250 per year (2020/21).
- This loan is not means-tested – which means the amount you receive doesn't depend on your household income if you are living with a foster carer.

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.

As a care leaver you will be classified as an 'independent student' and therefore, household income will not be considered when calculating how much student finance you will get, therefore you will get the maximum amount available. You will need to prove your independent student status, but your personal advisor or social worker will be able to help you access the documents you need.

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE BURSARIES

Many universities and colleges will offer bursaries for students who are care leavers or care experienced. These do not have to be repaid. Information can be found on the Propel website (<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/for-young-people/>) or the individual university websites.

LOCAL AUTHORITY HIGHER EDUCATION BURSARY

If you are a care leaver starting higher education for the first time before your 25th birthday, you will be entitled to the Leaving Care Grant which is a one-off legal limit of £2000 higher education bursary from your local authority. Each local authority will pay this in a different way – some may split it over your course, some may pay in one lump sum, and some will offer more than the minimum. This can be used to help furnish your accommodation. Ask your local authority about these before you start university and if possible, get them written into your Pathway Plan.

Depending on your circumstances you may be able to receive funding, bursaries and support from other foundations and charities, depending on eligibility. These include:

- Care Leavers Foundation
- Capstone Care Leavers Trust
- Buttle UK

- Spark Foundation
- The Prince's Trust
- Turn2Us

WHO PROVIDES STUDENT LOANS?

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

REPAYING STUDENT LOANS

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

- After you have finished your degree.
- When you are earning a salary over a certain amount. The current threshold as of 2021-22 is £27,295 (£2,2275 a month or £525 per week), with graduates paying 9% of anything they earn above this amount. The tuition fee and maintenance loans are linked to keep repayments



simple and are paid back directly from graduates' salaries. After 30 years, any outstanding balance is written off and no further repayments are required.

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

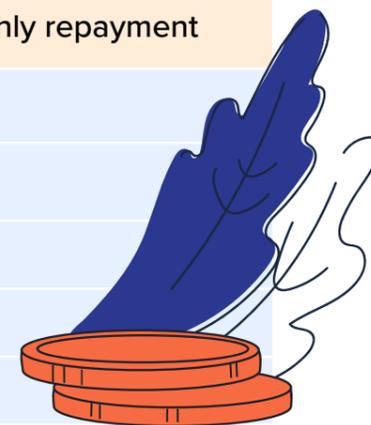
STUDENT LOAN INTEREST

While you are still studying, the interest on your loan will be RPI (Retail Price Index) plus 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..

REPAYMENT STUDENT LOAN TABLE INCOME BEFORE TAX MONTHLY REPAYMENTS

Figures from 2020

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



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

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

APPLYING FOR STUDENT LOANS

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.

As a care leaver if you want to apply for the maximum amount of maintenance loan, you will be asked to include information about your status as and 'independent student' as household income will not be considered when calculating how much student finance you will get on your student loan application.

Once your form has been submitted, you may be asked to provide proof of your independent student status, which your personal advisor or social worker will be able to help you access. This is just part of the checking process so there's no need to worry if you are asked to provide more details. Student Finance England will write to you when all your information has been confirmed.



USEFUL WEBSITES

To find out more about student loan repayments.

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



Other Support for Students

DON'T WORRY... If you 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, 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 they will be able to provide.

...SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT OFFERED BY UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

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

- **Scholarships** – often these take the form of a lump sum and are offered to academically talented students.
- **Bursaries (cash grants that don't have to be repaid) and fee waivers (reduced fees)** – these may be offered to students from lower-income households.
- **Hardship funds** – assistance for students who are experiencing financial difficulties, usually in emergencies or exceptional circumstances. Each university or college has its own schemes and eligibility rules, so you should check with your chosen institution for details.

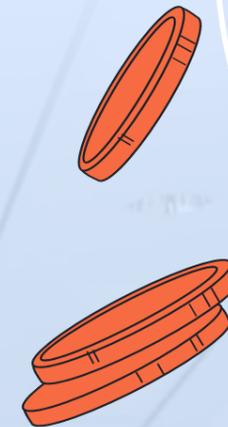
DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE

The Disabled Students' Allowances 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-studentsallowances-dsas.

PART-TIME AND HOLIDAY JOBS

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

- Many universities have an employment service that can help students find parttime work on or off campus.
- A temping agency may be able to find them short-term jobs during holidays. Or you could ask around in local shops, bars or restaurants. Zero-hour contracts can be really advantageous to university 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!



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

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

PRIVATE HALLS OF RESIDENCE

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

PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION

- Privately renting is a common alternative to traditional halls of residence.
- A good choice for students who are ready for a bit more independence.
- Many students move into a privately rented house or flat for their second and third years, sometimes sharing with friends they have met in halls, on their course, or as part of societies.
- Universities often have their own accommodation agency that can help students to find approved private rented accommodation.
- You will probably have to sign a tenancy agreement with a landlord; you should make sure you understand the terms of the agreement. The university or students' union will probably have a housing advice service that can help you if you are unsure.
- Students in private rented accommodation could be responsible for paying bills on top of rent, so you should check what is and isn't included in the rent.
- You may have to pay rent over the summer even if you aren't living there; if so, you will need to budget accordingly.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Many universities/colleges offer 365 day year-round accommodation for care leaver students.
- **Guarantor support:** many universities also offer independent students (which can include care experienced students) a guarantor scheme to help with rent.
- **The Unite Foundation Scholarship:** this is offered in partnership with 27 universities and provides free accommodation for the duration of your degree. To be eligible you need to be under 25, a statutory care leaver or estranged from your family, holding UK home fee status and applying to a partner university. Please note that the Unite Foundation cannot guarantee this scholarship.

GOOD TO KNOW

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



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

We encourage you to 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/for-yourhome/students-aud1.
- 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 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. For more details, visit www.gov.uk/counciltax/discounts-forfull-time-students

HOW TO ACCESS THIS SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE

- To access support, it is important that you tell your university or college that you are care experienced. Please be assured that the information is only used by the care-experienced team. No one else will know unless you choose to make more people aware.
- You may be asked at enrolment if you are a care leaver or care experienced. Again, it is important to tick this box to let the university know.
- Once you join your university or college, get in touch with the named contact and inform them that you are care experienced. They will be able to inform you of the support available and make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to. You can contact them at any time during your course if you decide not to disclose this initially.



TOP TIP

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:

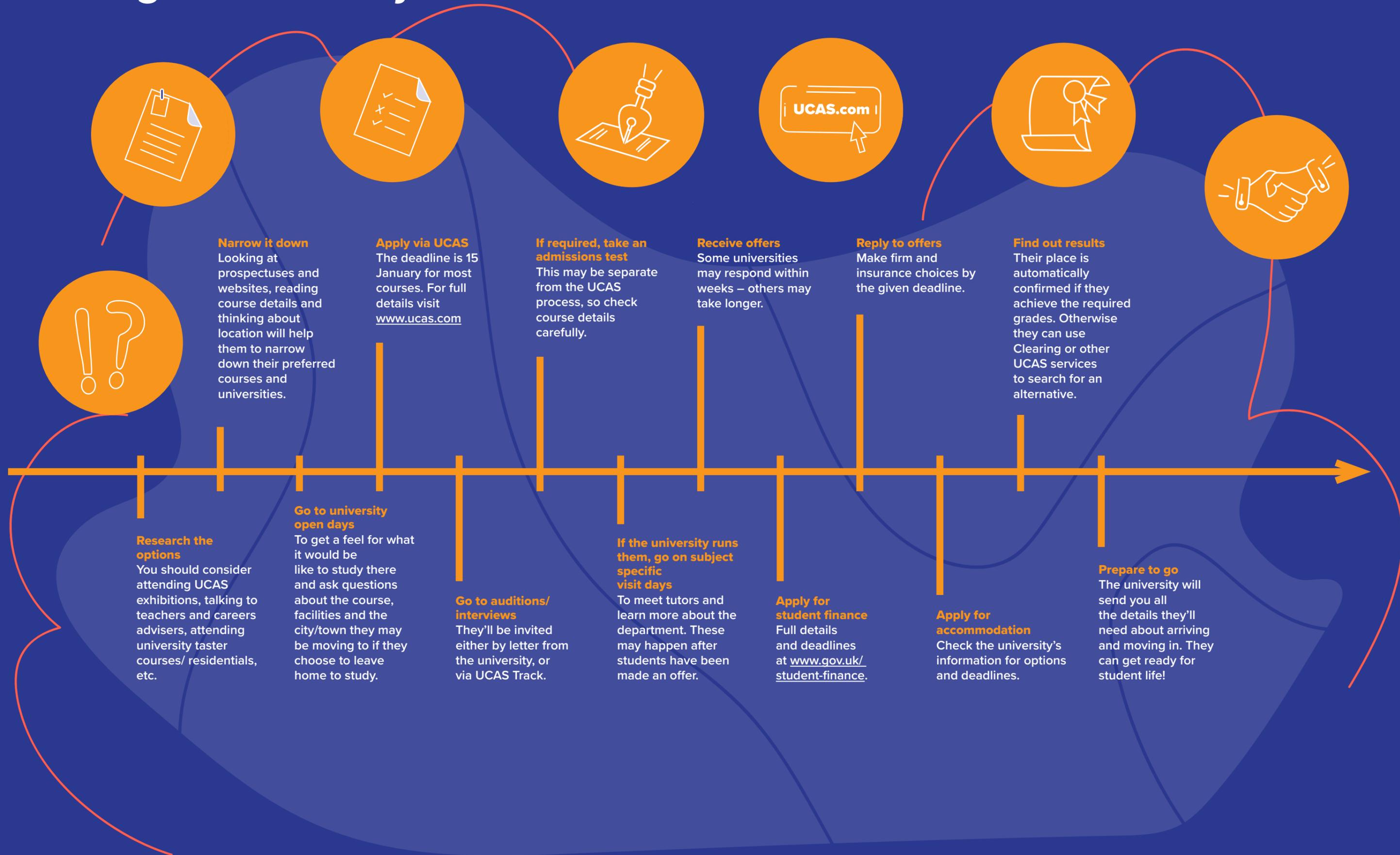
- Rent
- Household bills
- Contents insurance
- Transport costs
- Credit card or debt repayments
- Phone bill
- Food and toiletries

Divide the remainder by the number of weeks until your next student finance installment to come up with a weekly amount for non-essentials such as new clothes, socialising and entertainment.

Find out more about student money management:

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

Going to University

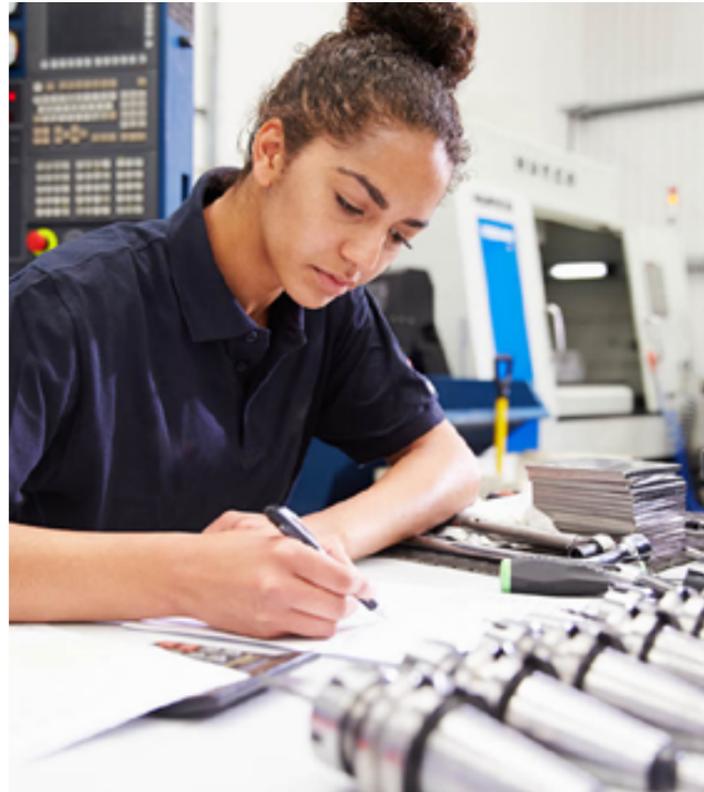


Alternatives to Higher Education

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

HIGHER DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

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



More information can be found here

www.ucas.com/alternatives

www.officeforstudents.org.uk

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS INVOLVE:

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

APPRENTICESHIPS OFFER:

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

YOU ARE OFFERED:

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

90% of apprentices stay employed after completing their apprenticeship*

71% with the same employer



Career Prospects

Higher and degree level apprenticeships are specially designed to meet industry demand for a highly skilled workforce, so apprentices become valuable employees. 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.

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

IS AN APPRENTICESHIP RIGHT FOR YOU?

This could be a good option if you:

- Have a firm idea of the type of career you would like to go into.
- Are keen to get into the world of work and start earning straight away, rather than doing more full-time study.
- Want to gain higher level qualifications but prefer a more practical approach to study.
- Feel you can cope with the challenge of juggling a busy schedule of work and study.

FINDING AND APPLYING FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

- The Find an Apprenticeship tool (www.gov.uk/applyapprenticeship) is a good place for you to start your search.
- Vacancies are also listed on The Student Room (www.thestudentroom.co.uk) and UCAS websites (www.ucas.com)

- If you are interested in working for a particular company, it's worth checking their website and following them on social media to hear about vacancies as soon as they come up.

WHEN TO APPLY

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



LINCOLNSHIRE'S CARE LEAVERS' APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME (CLAS)

CLAS is a tailor-made apprenticeship scheme where looked after children and care leavers are employed by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and seconded, where appropriate, to host organisations for the duration of the apprenticeship.

Under this scheme there are employees in sectors ranging from forestry to joinery, motor vehicle mechanics, animal care, elderly care, plumbing, ICT, hairdressing, hospitality and almost any other vocational area you can think of. If you want to do Business Administration, you will usually work directly in LCC.

Apprenticeships vary in duration and entry requirements depending upon the vocational area, but all include studying 1 day a week, and extra maths and English tuition if you

don't already have at least a C grade at GCSE (that's grades 4 - 9 under the new system).

The usual route to get onto CLAS is via the Work Preparation Programme. This is a 2-day course followed by up to 13 weeks of work experience. The course runs 3 times a year, February, June, and October, in Sleaford. To qualify, you need to be the legal responsibility of LCC (i.e. taken into care by LCC) and live within a 45 mile radius of Sleaford.

All work experience and CLAS placements are tailor-made to meet your needs. Employment through CLAS is dependent upon successful completion of work experience, including at least 95% attendance. Both schemes are managed by Barnardo's Lincolnshire Leaving Care Service.

Taking a Gap Year

Some young people decide to take a year out (also known as a gap year) before going on to university, starting an apprenticeship or embarking on their career. If you are considering a gap year, we recommend that you make sure you fill your gap year with something meaningful, so it gives you some experiences to talk about in future interviews.

WHY MIGHT YOU WANT TO TAKE A GAP YEAR?

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

- Have a break from full-time education before starting university. For many courses, it's possible to defer a university place for one year.
- Think about what to do next if you didn't get onto your chosen university 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.

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

TOP TIP

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.



Lincolnshire's Offer to Care Leavers/Care-experienced students

ARE YOU A QUALIFYING CHILD?

Qualifying Children are young people who:

- Left care on or after their 16th birthday but were looked after for less than 13 weeks after their 14th birthday.
- Have a special guardianship order or were on a special guardianship order when they reached 18 years old.
- Were classed as a Looked after child before the order was created.
- Were classed as a 'Relevant Child' (lived back at home for six months or longer)

Children's Services MUST support you by:

- Providing advice and support.
- Providing or paying for your accommodation while you are on college or university holidays. This is only available if you are a full-time student away from home up to the age of 25.
- Keeping in touch.

Children's Services MIGHT support you by:

- Giving you a grant that helps you pay for any costs linked to your education, training and work needs up to the age of 25.
- Helping with some living costs if linked to your education and training, up to the age of 25.
- Buying items you need if your welfare and education requires it.
- Helping you find somewhere to live (only in exceptional circumstances).

BARNADO'S LEAVING CARE SERVICE

This service is commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council to support any young person leaving care provision who is the responsibility of Lincolnshire County Council. They are there to support care leavers to achieve their full potential as they transition to adulthood and ensure they are well prepared for independent living.

Barnado's can provide:

- Personal advisers to provide you with information and support
- Pathway planning and reviews
- Planning and arranging Education opportunities
- Financial and life skill advice.

CONTACT DETAILS:

**Barnardo's Lincolnshire
Lincoln Leaving Care Office
01522 575955**

www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-young-people/leaving-care

TOP TIP

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

Tick the care-experienced box on your UCAS application.

Get in touch with the named contact at the university/college you attend.

Talk to your local authority contact and discuss the support that they can provide you.

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 linchigher.co.uk/resources/

➤ **LINCOLNSHIRE**
www.lincolnshire.fsd.org.uk

➤ **BECOME – The charity for children in care and young care leavers**
www.becomecharity.org.uk

Also, look at our partner websites and resource guides below to see the type of support on offer when studying Higher Education.

➤ **University of Lincoln website -**
studentservices.lincoln.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/general-wellbeing-advice/care-leavers/

➤ **Bishop Grosseteste University website -**
www.bishopg.ac.uk/student/student-advice/students-from-care

➤ **Bishop Grosseteste have also signed up to the Care Leavers Covenant -**
mycovenant.org.uk/signatories/bishop-grosseteste-university/

➤ **Boston college website -** www.boston.ac.uk/for-parents/student-support/

➤ **Grantham college website -**
www.grantham.ac.uk/student-life/advice-services/student-finance/

➤ **Lincoln college student guide -**
www.lincolncollege.ac.uk/assets/downloads/Supporting.pdf

➤ **Grimsby institute student guide -**
grimsby.ac.uk/documents/highereducation/HE-Care-Leaver-Scholarship-Application.pdf

➤ **Risholme college website -**
www.risholme.ac.uk/degree

➤ **Stamford college website -**
www.stamford.ac.uk/college-life/support-services



Higher Education Terminology explained



ALUMNI – a university/college past students.

CAMPUS – the grounds and building of the university.

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

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

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.

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

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

HALLS OF RESIDENCE – student accommodation.

LECTURES, SEMINARS AND TUTORIALS – lessons.

LECTURERS, TUTORS AND ACADEMICS – teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

UNDERGRADUATE – a student studying their first degree.

GRADUATE – someone who has completed an undergraduate degree.

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

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

APPLY – the name of UCASs online application system.

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

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

CLEARING – a process through which students who did not achieve their firm or insurance choice can look for alternative courses, or for anyone making a first-time application after 30 June.

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

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

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

FIRM CHOICE – your first choice of course.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



LINCH↑**HIGHER**

