



 UniTasterDays.com

Students' Guide to University 2023

The key higher education facts for students
thinking about university

Produced in collaboration with HELQA

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Welcome to the UniTasterDays.com Students' Guide to University

This guide has been produced to support you to make brilliant future university decisions. This may be the initial decision: *Is university right for you?* Or the choices that might come next: *where to go, and what to study?*

We've split this into sections which are designed to support you with various stages of your higher education decision-making journey. These include, why you may wish to consider university, advice when you're making your university choices, fees and finance support, application help, what to expect after you apply and when (/if) you start your course.

Experts on your side

University decisions should not be taken lightly. You need great advice from your school or college, friends and family and websites like UniTasterDays.com to ensure you find the right path and have fun along the way.

To support you further, this guide features contributions from experts in higher education with fantastic advice and support to share. It has been produced in collaboration with HELOA - and we are very grateful for their support and the contributions made throughout the guide by HELOA members. Also, many thanks to our Guest Editor, Erin Wilson, a Broadcast Journalism student at the University of Central Lancashire.

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

The information has been produced based on the higher education system in England, and the guide was released in February 2023.

Good luck with your future university choices - I hope you find this information useful in your lead up to them.

Jon Cheek
Director, UniTasterDays.com



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Reasons to consider university - from someone who went, and then went again!

By Erin Wilson, Broadcast Journalism Student at the University of Central Lancashire

University is a big decision and one that you may well have been re-evaluating during and since the pandemic. The deadlines, the time commitments, the money – is it all worth it?!

I've been on both sides of the university process - as a student and as a staff member working in student recruitment, aiming to help students answer this question.

Whilst there are alternatives to higher education such as apprenticeships, employment or travelling, which may seem more appealing to you right now, I would always advocate the benefits of going to university; benefits that I believe, massively outweigh the costs. For me, without sounding biased, university was the making of me in ways that I never expected.

It is very easy to think linearly when it comes to higher education, for example:

Go to university = studying = graduating = job

Whereas, in reality, university looks much more like the below:

Go to university = studying = learning what interests you = facing failure = questioning the future = learning new hobbies = building connections = feeling lonely = personal development = learning to be independent = graduating = ???

There are many reasons to go to university. You do not have to start a degree with a job in mind; some sort of goal is good, but the end goal doesn't have to be employment, that may not suit you.

Some other questions you may wish to consider are:

- Do you want to learn more about a subject you love and gain a new appreciation for it?
- Do you want to network and build connections with like-minded people?
- Do you want to grow and develop, both academically and personally?
- Do you want to explore the options a degree can give you and go from there?

All of these are good reasons to consider university and can all be goals to work towards. A degree does not have to have a job and a salary attached to it.

As you would expect, a massive slice of the university experience is taken up by studying. You might be aiming to study something you have loved for years and are inspired or intrigued by. Or you might want to study a new subject that has not been available to you until now. University can open paths in terms of what you can learn and what you expect from a subject and alter your path afterwards as a result. Or it may allow you to develop your interest in a chosen subject.

Another benefit of higher education may be the student life and university experience itself. I don't mean drinking, clubbing, or staying out until 4am. I mean that if you want to try underwater hockey without ever having played it before, you can, or just exploring a new town or city you've never visited before with new friends, and so much more; you can do all of this.

“**University means uncertainty and learning and unlearning what you expected from yourself, your life and from the university experience. So, to answer the question, why should I consider university? Easy: Possibility.**”

The benefits of university - independence, jobs, life skills and more

By Nia Stokes, Undergraduate Recruitment Manager at Swansea University

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

Moving away from university is a key life event and can seem daunting if you haven't left home before, so it is important to understand the potential benefits of this decision.

How does university education differ from school?

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

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

University can help improve job prospects

Higher education degrees can improve your career prospects, and universities present graduate prospect data in their prospectuses and marketing materials. Looking at these figures will help you to compare which degree

will provide you with the most job security in the future, but this is merely one of several factors to consider when choosing a university.

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

University develops independence and life skills

Although daunting, studying in a new place and living away from home will contribute to your independence. You will be responsible for managing your own finances, organising domestic activities like cooking and cleaning and making friends in an unfamiliar environment. University is a great way to practice these life skills, especially with the help of support teams, such as student finance and the students' union. Friends for life are usually made at university, as socialising in halls, lectures, clubs and societies often connects like-minded people.

As well as domestic skills, university develops your key skills. Time management is essential to organising independent study and you will need to use your initiative to join extracurricular activities. Communication skills will also be developed in everything from group tasks to written assignments.

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

“ University allows you to pursue a passion, focusing on one or two core subjects. This can be an extremely motivating concept after studying multiple subjects at school or college. ”

Student voice – reasons to consider university

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

I chose to go to university because it would be a good opportunity to broaden my horizons and enrich my knowledge. I had enjoyed my A Level subjects, albeit finding them rather challenging, so I felt continuing to university was the right choice for me.

Here, I will provide a student's guide to how I settled in – and the things to be aware of if you start your own university journey.

What additional information would have been helpful?

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

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

Tips when you start your course

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

When I started university, I found speaking to students who have been at the university longer than me to be incredibly helpful. There are lots

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

You may also consider additional responsibilities outside of your course. For example, I have had the opportunity to take part in mentoring schemes and sat on youth advisory boards. This has required a high level of organisation to meet coursework deadlines and juggle projects. These opportunities provided excellent clarity on my next steps after university, but if you take on additional responsibilities, it is important to ensure you don't overload yourself and you stay in tune with your mental health.

Organisation is important

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

The Disabled Student Allowance

One thing I would really recommend that you do before going to university is to check if you are eligible for the DSA (Disabled Student Allowance). You can read more about the DSA on page 34. This enables equipment and specific software to be given to you if you have a disability, to help make your learning easier. Applications can take time, so I would advise you to start this as soon as possible.

Depending on your situation, if you have been eligible for extra time in exams at sixth form or college, this should be the case at university. If applicable, and writing based on my experience, students are usually allocated a disability advisor who can provide help and support with study adjustments.

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

Making school and college option choices with university in mind - avoiding the road blocks

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

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

Teachers and careers advisors will signpost you to potential futures and help to guide you through the process, making sure you have an ambitious but also a realistic vision for the future. But you can also conduct your own research, to make sure you have the correct qualifications to study a course you love.

GCSE pre-requisites

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

For some courses GCSE Science will also be very important, particularly if you are thinking

of studying science courses (including Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Psychology and Veterinary Science).

Level 3 course selection

When you are investigating Level 3 courses, I would recommend that you always have one eye on your next steps, to make sure the courses you are selecting are going to enable you to progress to it.

You may have ideas that are potentially going to prove challenging in terms of your academic abilities and you may need guidance towards appropriate opportunities. For example, whilst you may not be able to progress towards a Medicine degree, there may be other opportunities within the NHS or healthcare sector that you could explore.

Entry requirements

It is important that throughout the process you review entry requirements for both your Level 3 and higher education options.

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

“ I would recommend that you always have one eye on your next steps, and to make sure that the courses you are selecting will enable you to progress to them. ”



What to expect at university? A guide to student life and tips for the university transition

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

Transitioning to student life at university from a sixth-form or college can be intimidating for some students. This is your opportunity to live and study autonomously, encountering new aspects of independence which you may not have tackled before.

Here are some useful hints and tips to help you on your journey into higher education.

Student finance and budgeting

Each of you will have an individual financial situation, depending on your student loan, accommodation choice and lifestyle. Making the most of your money is very important!

One way to work out the value of your loan is to break down your cost of living. Once your rent and other expenses have been deducted from your total, divide the rest of the money into a monthly or daily allowance. This may surprise some of you, as you may never have considered the cost of living. However, there are simple yet effective ways to stretch out your loan, such as buying and cooking in bulk - a larger weighted item of food may cost more, but may work out less per pound and will last longer. Another way would be to use shop brand products, rather than big brand items.

Student accommodation

Living away from home for the first time can be a daunting prospect. However, it is a chance for you to get a taste of your independence. You will be living with individuals who have come from unique walks of life and will provide different perspectives. Moreover, you will be

able to learn new life skills such as cooking new meals, cleaning and keeping yourself healthy.

It is important to consider that if you do not feel you have all the knowledge you need, it is easily accessible. Universities often provide advice on independent living, you can ask friends and family, or simply search online. Crucially, you must remember that it is always possible to visit family or stay in touch with them online - staying connected is imperative for positive wellbeing.

Making friends

University provides a wealth of opportunities for you to make new friends. A good way to find friends with similar interests would be to join a society, this will allow you to continue your passion or hobby whilst making friends who appreciate the same topics. Another way to meet new people is attending Freshers events, as well as joining online freshers' groups on social media.

Three top tips for students from a recent graduate

1. Buy a wall calendar to keep track of your assignments - it is useful to know when to start each one and when the deadlines are!
2. Bring sweet treats on your moving in day to break the ice with new flatmates.
3. Buy a student railcard to save money when visiting friends and family.

“ Students must remember that it is always possible to visit family or stay in touch with them online - staying connected is imperative for positive wellbeing. ”

Attending a university open day? What to expect when you arrive

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

It can feel daunting when you start the search for a university. From the travel, exploring different institutions, researching courses, right through to the stress about this upcoming new life change.

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

Preparation

Make sure you feel prepared for the day by having everything you need. Take a notebook and any documents you may require - this might include sign-up emails and information, sometimes including a registration ticket or QR code.

Travel

It is important for you to experience the journey length from home, the potential costs associated with it and reflect on it. Is it a comfortable distance from home? If you are commuting, is it realistic for everyday travel?

Ask lots of questions!

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

University talk

Most universities will have talks about their institution, their facilities, campuses and general information and ethos. These are particularly handy if this is your first visit to the institution. Typically, an open day will include a welcome talk at the start of the day, which is

useful for getting your bearings and signposting you to certain talks, events and locations you may want to visit.

Subject talk

Universities will offer subject workshops or talks aimed at students. These are usually attended by parents and supporters as well, so if you are visiting with someone else, they may wish to join you. These talks are great for providing general information about the course with a question and answer session at the end. This is a good opportunity to gather more information and explore subject options.

Meet subject experts

There might be an opportunity to meet lecturers on an individual basis to ask further questions that you may not have had answered in the subject talk.

Support services

Support services are likely to host drop-in events during the day. This may include advice and support related to disabilities, housing, careers and mental health. Depending on your needs, there may be support services that you need further information on. There are usually an array of guides and booklets with extra advice for you, so be sure to ask staff and student ambassadors throughout the day.

Accommodation tour

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

Visit the facilities!

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

“ You're likely to meet a student ambassador early in the day. These current students provide a wonderful opportunity for you to ask questions about their experience. ”

Tips when preparing for UCAS fairs and university exhibitions

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

Preparing in advance about what to expect at a UCAS fair or exhibition is key to avoiding the grab and run or “errmm...I don’t know what to say” conversations that we sometimes experience as the person on the other side of the conversation during university events.

As universities, we recognise fairs can be intimidating. A hall or exhibition venue full of students, teachers, and unfamiliar faces. If you do not know what to expect on the day, you are bound to feel even more unsettled. I would recommend doing some preparation beforehand - and following the steps below so you can help prepare in advance.

It is all about options

Spend some time thinking about your next steps before the event and be reassured that you do not need to go with an exact picture of what you want to study or where to study it. It might be handy to produce a shortlist of individual universities that you’re keen to speak to though.

No question is too big or small

The chances are, we have been asked the same questions hundreds of times before. It is important that you do not just lean on friends to be the designated university interviewer, as the event is a fantastic way to help build

independence and ask questions that are important to you. You may wish to prepare a few conversation starters about courses, entry requirements, accommodation, facilities, location, extra opportunities, open days and whatever else that interests you and your friends!

What to expect

Find a map of the event beforehand or ask a teacher if they have resources they can share to help gather familiarity and allow you to prepare your trail and plan for any scheduled talks. Some universities may provide physical or digital prospectuses, either way, it is best to be prepared with a strong bag and wear comfortable shoes.

You will be asked by universities if you would like to have your individual QR code scanned to keep up to date with university updates. You’ll be provided with your own individual QR code closer to the event, so please don’t worry if you don’t know what this means...yet! On the day, some find it beneficial to temporarily set this as their phone lock screen or have it easily accessible.

Most importantly, remember that these events are also meant to be enjoyable, this is one step closer to your future and a key part of your research.

And after the fair - my top tip

After you step back on the transport home, you will likely feel worn-out from the day, but it can be good to make a quick note on which universities stood out to you. Revisit the day at your next available opportunity and continue the conversation with your friends, family and teachers if you have more questions.



Fair access and widening participation at university - what does it mean and what is on offer?

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

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

With that in mind, many institutions will support key groups of students, which will usually include students who are the most underrepresented at their institutions, or students who are generally underrepresented within higher education institutions in the UK.

What does underrepresented within higher education actually mean?

This means students who are statistically less likely to progress to higher education are the key target audience for widening access programmes. Often institutions will break this down using eligibility criteria. Many of the criteria points focus on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or underrepresented communities.

Who is eligible to receive support?

The most common thread is that you usually need to have attended a state school or college for your secondary and post-16 education. Aside from this, students eligible for support may include:

- First-generation students (students who are the first generation in their immediate family to attend higher education)
- Care experienced and estranged students (students who have spent time in local authority care or are estranged from their family)
- Young carers (students who have caring responsibilities)
- Ethnic minority students (for example Black, Asian, Arab, or mixed-race backgrounds)
- Mature students (students aged 21 or above at the start of their undergraduate studies)
- Refugee and asylum seekers
- Students from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities
- Students with a disability or long-term health condition (including mental health conditions)
- Students from military or service families



- Students living in areas with a low progression rate (you can [check your postcode](#) online)
- Students with a household income below £42,875
- Students eligible for free school meals, pupil premium or other discretionary payments
- Students who attended a school or college that achieved below the national average (based on [Government statistics](#)).
- Ongoing support (regular contact relating to key milestones, for example making post-18 decisions, completing personal statements, applying for student finance, and much more).

Accessing support - two key tips

- 💡 Look at institutions' websites to check their eligibility criteria.
- 💡 Develop your understanding of widening participation programmes by researching institutions. It can be helpful to receive updates from institutions directly, or through general communications, such as [UniTasterDays](#).

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

What support do students meeting this criteria quality for?

This can vary between institutions, but may include:

- Reduced offer schemes (where students can receive an offer lower than the standard entry requirements - for example, AAA could become AAB or even ABB)
- Access to scholarships or bursaries (money provided by the institution to support students with study or accommodation costs, which does not need to be repaid)
- Mentoring (often with current students at the institution)
- The opportunity to attend tailored events and activities with the institution (such as campus tours, residential events, or online skills sessions)

“Institutions are eager to support fair access and widening participation initiatives to ensure our learning communities are inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for all students, no matter their background.”





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Support for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

By Natalie Freislich-Mills, Head of Make Happen (Uni Connect Programme)

Although special educational needs and disabilities is a term used widely in schools and colleges, at higher education this is usually replaced with the term disabilities. Some students reading this may not identify with the term disabled; however, it is crucial that you are aware of your rights and the support available to you during your studies. I will provide a guide to this here.

The first step for you is to declare your disability on your UCAS application. Universities use this to begin conversations with you early, to ensure support is in place from the start. Declaring your disability will not affect your offers, universities have a legal obligation to ensure they are not discriminating against students during admission and throughout your education (Equality Act 2010). In addition, any student who declares a disability is legally entitled to reasonable adjustments. Universities want you to succeed, and will be keen to provide the information and support you need.

Disabled Students' Allowance

Disabled students can apply for specific funding in the form of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). The DSA helps to cover additional costs incurred whilst accessing your course and is usually applied for through the relevant nation's body for student finance. It is a non-repayable grant and is dependent on your individual needs. If you are yet to receive an official diagnosis, it is not too late. Some universities offer full or partial financial support for assessments once enrolled.

The types of support on offer for students will vary depending on the university, so it is essential that you research carefully.

Generally, the focus is on developing independent learning skills, so often support is less than in schools and colleges. Disability support is usually provided by student services teams, so be sure to get in touch or visit their page within the university website to find out what is available.

Some examples of what may be on offer for you include:

- Specialists or experts in specific disabilities
- Supported induction programmes
- DSA application support
- Exam or timetabling adjustments
- Flexible teaching methods
- Study skills support and tutoring
- Mentoring
- Extended library loans
- Handouts in alternative formats
- British Sign Language interpreters
- Exam adjustments, including readers and scribes
- Specialist accommodation, including for carers
- Scholarships, grants and bursaries (in addition to DSA).

How to find out more

University open days allow students to meet staff as well as existing students to find out what support is available. Student unions often have a disability officer who will represent disabled students within university decision making and ensure your interests are represented as well.

Once you begin your course, some universities will proactively keep in touch, while others will expect students to take the initiative. It is also important to consider how the university supports you with your career transition, so make sure you speak to the career teams as well.

In addition to the above, your local Uni Connect hub may be able to support you too. Uni Connect provides impartial information and guidance on college and university and is funded by the Office for Students. Speak to your teacher or careers adviser, or visit the [Uni Connect website](#) to find contact details for your local hub.

A higher education jargon buster – the terms you may run into when researching universities

Provided by the University of Salford Student Recruitment Team, UK Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Leicester, Steven Joesbury and UniTasterDays Director Jon Cheek.

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

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

About the courses...

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

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

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

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

- **BA** – Bachelor of Arts
- **BEng** – Bachelor of Engineering
- **BSc** – Bachelor of Science
- **LLB** – Bachelor of Law

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

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

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

Sandwich degree – A degree where a student will complete a work placement during the course. Usually between the second and third year.

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

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

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

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

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

PGCert – Postgraduate Certificate

PGDip – Postgraduate Diploma

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

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

- **MChem** – Master of Chemistry
- **MEng** – Master of Engineering
- **MPhys** – Master of Physics

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

About the learning...

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

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

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

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

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

PBL: Problem Based Learning – A method of study whereby students are given a real problem, and usually work in a group to solve it.

This is very popular in medical and health care courses.

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

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

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

Application terminology...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UCAS Extra – If students are without an offer, UCAS Extra offers an additional choice.

Firm choice – The preferred or first choice university on a UCAS application.

Insurance choice – The second choice university on a UCAS application to act as a reserve if a student doesn't meet the entry requirements of their firm choice.

About the 'other stuff'...

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

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

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

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

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

Open Days – An opportunity for students and families to look around a university (although virtual online open days may also be offered). They provide an opportunity to see university facilities and speak to staff and students to get a feel for what studying there might be like.

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

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

Need help with any others?

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

Note from  UniTasterDays

Check out our online and interactive jargon buster - with new terms added all the time:

www.unitasterdays.com/jargonbuster

Foundation, bachelor, sandwiches and more. A guide to the different types of higher education courses

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

Whilst it is important for you to research different universities, choosing the right course should also be a crucial first step. There are over 50,000 courses to choose from in the UK alone, and it can be difficult to pick a course when the language used is unfamiliar. We have created this guide to outline the types of courses available.

Foundation year

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

Bachelor's degree

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

“Whilst it is important for you to research different universities, choosing the right course should be your crucial first step.”

Joint honours

Joint honours degrees combine two or more areas of interest at degree level and can cross disciplines and faculties – this may be a great option if you have interests spanning multiple subject areas.

Sandwich programmes

Sandwich programmes provide you with the ability to incorporate a study abroad or placement year within your time at university. Typically extending the course length by one year, this option can provide a once in a lifetime opportunity to live and study overseas and develop your work experience to boost employability.

Degree Apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity as an alternative route into higher education with the support of an existing employer to further your career, enabling you to study towards a degree while working and earning.

Higher National Certificate and Diploma

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

Integrated Masters

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

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

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

Making university choices - three steps to success

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

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

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

Step one: Researching courses

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

Step two: Prioritising universities

Once you have an idea of what course you want to study, the next step is to narrow down university choices. A good starting point is to make a list of priorities, covering what is important to you. Priorities might include:

- Do you want to live at home or move away?

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

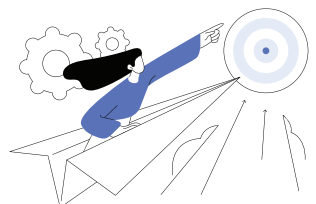
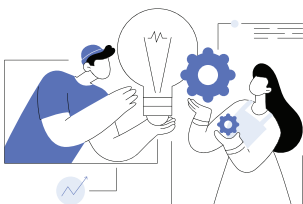
Step three: Explore avenues to ask questions

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

Note from [UniTasterDays](#)
You can search events offered by universities UK-wide using UniTasterDays.com

You may also want to consider exploring services such as Unibuddy which allows prospective students to interact with current students. As well as booking taster lectures and watching webinars on various university courses, like those on the UniTasterDays webinar platform.

Once you have narrowed down your options and have a realistic feel for the entry requirements, you'll need to apply on UCAS. Your school or college are likely to offer support with this to supplement the wealth of information available online.



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

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

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

When it comes to choosing what and where to study, the 'what' always comes first. What course do you want to study? Once you know that, you might have the difficult but exciting prospect of deciding where to study it. A primary consideration is what the course is like at each institution, i.e., the content of the course – does the History programme cover the topics you are most interested in?

It is also important to note that different higher education providers might teach the courses in different ways. Some institutions might focus on the more theoretical aspects of the course, whilst others embed more modes of application and research.

Understanding the different types of universities will enable you to make the best decision.

What type of educational setting are you looking for?

A good way to answer this question is to think about what is most important for you as an individual and marry this with the type of setting most suitable to you.

Some questions for you to consider include:

? Do you have any preferences on location?

This may be influenced by family or work commitments. It is important to note that if you would prefer to study online, there are some institutions that provide a 100% online model. This could allow you to remain at home but still study your course of choice.

? Are you looking for a traditional academic university or a more vocational/professional one?

Everyone has a preferred style of learning, and different types of universities will accommodate these. Going to a university that better suits your style of learning will enable you to better achieve your goals. For example, if you prefer project work as a mode of learning, you can attend a university that does not place significant weight on end of year exams.



? Do you like the idea of learning as part of a large cohort of students or as part of a smaller one?

Attending a larger university will provide the conventional 'university' experience of being in large groups. Meanwhile, going to a smaller, more specialist institution will mean smaller class sizes where you may receive more individualised attention.

? Do you want a traditional residential student experience or a more work-like experience?

If you are looking to study Make Up Artistry, you could study at a specialist institution like the Arts University Bournemouth, or a traditional

university like Solent University, or at a further education college like Bury College. This variety is not just for more applied courses, for instance the academic subject of Law can be studied at a traditional university, but also a specialist professional university like The University of Law.

The best way to approach choosing where to study your chosen course is to keep your mind open to all types of institution, to find out more about them (by reading prospectuses and social media posts, attending open days and talking to current students), and then decide which suits you the best.

“Different higher education providers might teach the courses in different ways. Some institutions might focus on the more theoretical aspects of the course, whilst others embed more modes of application and research.”

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

Figure 1: Example UniTasterDays Course and Criteria Checklist

The future needs creatives - reasons to consider a creative course

By Jasminne Gwalter, Senior Student Recruitment Officer at Arts University Plymouth

It is no secret that creative learning subjects in our schools and colleges have sharply declined in recent years. However, the creative industries in the UK are booming, estimated to be worth around £115.9 billion and accounting for 5.9% of the UK economy. In fact, Oxford Economics predict that with the right investment, the UK's creative industries will recover from the pandemic faster than the UK economy as a whole, growing by over 26% by 2025 and creating 300,000 new jobs.

Reasons to engage in creative thinking and making

Not everyone reading this will favour art over PE, but the transferable skills that you pick up from your creative subjects will set you up to succeed in a variety of different career paths and support your professional development and general wellbeing in many ways.

Art, design and media are a motor for economic growth and job creation, but just as importantly, creativity drives innovation and makes communities in all parts of the UK happier, healthier places for us to live in. The British Journal of Clinical Psychology published a study which demonstrates when people are involved in arts-oriented activities, they see a boost in positive emotions and a reduction in negative emotions - bringing about greater overall happiness.

The ability to think critically, some would say, is as important as Maths and English. Having the ability to ask 'why?' as well as 'how?' and to analyse the subject matter in order to form a clear judgement and continue to make informed decisions as well as demonstrate problem-solving capabilities. These skills can give you the confidence to approach education, work and live independently and with resilience.

Hands-on subjects are a way of learning by doing, allowing those who thrive in these environments to feel more comfortable in their abilities. Practical subjects allow you to explore, developing your skills and practice and take this confidence forward to apply to your core subjects, as well as improving your concentration. This provides a platform for you to feel prepared when taking part in GCSE qualifications, A-Levels, or any other more vocational type of subject.

Universities offer creative workshops

Often schools and colleges have their hands tied when it comes to providing a way for all students to access creative subjects for their GCSEs or A-Levels. However, many universities offer a variety of free masterclasses or practical workshops to help you engage in creative study whilst also exploring higher education. This can be a wonderful way to allow you to get a feel for what it might be like to study a creative subject at university, whilst giving you the opportunity to engage in a new activity and skill, build your confidence and professional and personal relationships with your peers and beyond.

Through creativity, you can develop an ability as a natural problem solver, preparing you for further study and employment, and equipping you with the skills that will be needed to tackle the problems of the future.





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Alternative careers in healthcare: introducing the allied health professions

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

Each year there are thousands of students applying to courses like medicine and pharmacy. These programmes are fantastic for those interested in becoming doctors or pharmacologists, among others. But competition can be very high. Quite often, you might not have considered the wide variety of alternative routes you can pursue, or you may be unaware that they even exist. I will provide a guide to some of these here.

What are the allied health professions?

The allied health professions (AHP) are comprised of fourteen different areas of practice, making up the third largest workforce in the NHS. From operating department practitioners and speech and language therapists to therapeutic radiographers and dieticians, the skill sets required are often very similar to those required for medicine and pharmacy degrees.

These types of degree programmes are regulated by either the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or General Osteopathic Council (GOC). This offers you the opportunity to spend time on an industrial placement within your three years of study.

You will become familiar with various medical environments and experience life as a professionally autonomous healthcare practitioner. Due to the collaborative nature of

the healthcare sector, many of the AHPs find themselves working closely with doctors and surgeons daily.

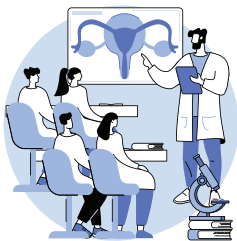
Financial support for health programmes

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

You can find out more about the NHS Learning Support Fund on Page 33.

It is key to emphasise the importance of the role these professions play within the healthcare sector. The work that has been done to bring attention to these pivotal roles has resulted in a welcome increase to study these degrees at university. Health Education England's campaigns have included raising the profile of the AHPs in the military, including roles as a Radiographer and Operating Department Practitioner.

“ If you are interested in a career in health and medicine, it may well be worth considering research into the allied health professions to see if these are a good fit for you. ”



Where to live? A guide to university accommodation

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

There is a range of accommodation available at university to suit a variety of budgets. To explore this further, I would recommend you to research institutions' different options online and to see the accommodation in person during open, applicant or clearing days.

Accommodation options

What are university halls?

Most universities have their own university halls. There can be a range of options available, from shared bathrooms to en-suites and even self-contained flats! Most are self-catered but some universities do offer catered options. These flats are usually fully furnished with kettles, toasters, beds, wardrobes etc. Ensure you check what is provided on university websites, no-one wants ten kettles in one flat!

Universities will stipulate who can live in halls: some, for example, may say first year students who make them their first choice will be offered a place in halls, while others will offer places to any student who wishes to reside in them.

A lot of contracts will cover September to June for when students are studying. However, if you are an estranged student (separated from your parents) or you are in care, you can ask for additional support and some universities will have 52-week provision available. Longer contracts can also apply for education, health/medicine and international students.

What is university managed accommodation?

This accommodation is privately owned, external to the university and off campus, but the university manage it. This means payments of rent and requests for maintenance will be organised through the university.

What are private student halls?

Private halls are much like university halls but are privately owned and are not associated with a university. If studying in a big city where there are different universities, students from all these different institutions may be living there and be at different levels of study.

What are private student houses?

Like the above, these are privately owned houses to rent. After your first year, you may move into a room in these shared houses and perhaps share with friends you have made through societies or on your course.

Accommodation costs

Rents for student accommodation are calculated as a weekly rate (for example, £132 p/w) but can be paid termly (for example, £1,386) when student maintenance loans and grants are paid. Rents in halls tend to cover rent, maintenance and security, utilities, Wi-Fi etc. Privately owned accommodation can differ, so I would recommend you to check each one carefully.

Student support departments are equipped to support you when reading contracts to make sure you feel comfortable before signing them. Deposits are paid before moving in. If you are struggling financially, make sure you contact your university for support.

My tips when looking for university accommodation:

- Research your institution's student support or accommodation services if you are concerned about finances, moving, contracts etc.
- Do not rush into signing contracts and check them with a parent/teacher or a colleague from student services before you do sign.
- Deposits are refundable unless you have breached your contract. But they'll need to be paid beforehand.
- Colour code – it is easy to lose white plates, so bring something a little jazzy so they are not lost. If money is an issue, second-hand alternatives will be available.

How important are university league tables?

By Meg Griessel, UK Schools & Colleges Recruitment Manager at St Mary's University, Twickenham

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

Which university league tables are available?

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

What will university league tables tell you?

League tables tell you more than simply which university is the best at teaching. When you look at league tables it is important to understand the methodology that the publication uses. Each source will state which criteria they've prioritised or considered - this will include, but

is not limited to: teaching excellence, research and student experience. This will explain why an institution might rank differently between university league tables.

It will also help you understand how the strengths of different institutions are displayed. If you and a friend are interested in the same subject, you may be more concerned about the quality of teaching and student experience, while your friend may be more attracted by the quality of research. The significance of each league table really comes down to you as an individual student and your specific needs.

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

Don't forget university subject league tables too!

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



The student guide to studying in Scotland

By Helena Ziegler, Manager, UK Student Recruitment Team at the University of Aberdeen

Have you ever considered studying at a Scottish university? But perhaps don't know much about Scottish universities or studying in Scotland. Want to find out more? This is the article for you!

History of excellence

First, Scotland has the same long history and great reputation for excellent higher education as the rest of the UK. Amongst the 19 Scottish universities are four of the six oldest UK universities, as well as some of the most modern institutions. Scottish universities include those that offer a full range of broad-based degree programmes from A-Z, as well as a highly specialist Conservatoire, art school and agriculture college.

Second, Scotland has a very high standard of education, reflected in the fact that 86% of research at Scottish universities has been judged to be of "outstanding impact" to society. Scottish researchers are responsible for many world-changing discoveries and innovations, including for example, the MRI scanner, penicillin, and keyhole surgery.

They are now also home to ground-breaking research for our 21st century world, in areas including artificial intelligence and robotics, ethical hacking, environmental studies & sustainability, and coping with the challenges of an aging society. Studying in Scotland gives students direct access to world-class researchers, facilities, and centres of excellence.

Third, a Scottish university education provides great employment prospects. Employers are known to value Scottish graduates highly, with nine out of ten graduates in employment or further study within six months of graduating. A Scottish university degree fully prepares students to move into the workplace.

What about tuition and student loans?

Good news - tuition at a Scottish university for an applicant from England, Wales or Northern Ireland is no different than if they were to study at a university elsewhere in the UK. Applications for tuition and living loans are made in the same way, and the payment mechanisms are also the same.

But what's with the longer, four-year degree?

Most standard Scottish undergraduate degrees are four years in length. This degree structure follows a long-established European tradition which has also been copied in many countries worldwide, including the US and Canada.

What are the advantages of the four-year undergraduate degree?

- It provides enhanced flexibility in subject choice, especially in the first two years, which allows you to experience new subjects without committing to them longer term. This opportunity to explore contributes to academic development and is very attractive to employers.
- The opportunity for you to mature academically, improving your intellectual skills in the pre-honours years before committing to your specialism in the last two years.
- The opportunity for you to mature into adulthood, with extra time to adjust to university life and independent living, and enhanced chances to explore new opportunities and interests.

What else is there to say? Scotland is very proud to welcome over 50,000 students from over 180 different countries to study with us every year. Our students enjoy vibrant and exciting cities, whilst being able to appreciate nature on their doorsteps, and Scotland is home to exciting events all year round, which all make it an ideal place to be a student!

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[ABDN.AC.UK/STUDYHERE](https://abdn.ac.uk/studyhere)

The student guide to studying in Wales

By Rebecca Breen, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of South Wales

If you live outside Wales, you may have already had the opportunity to visit for a summer holiday or weekend break. But you may not be familiar with the differences and advantages of studying your degree at one of the seven universities situated here.

Below are some of the reasons students choose to study in Wales each year - which you may decide is a good enough reason to study here yourself.

Making the most of university life

With the sheer variety of things to do, see, and experience across our university locations, there is something for everyone in Wales. You can try your hand at surfing, swimming or relaxing on one of Wales's sandy beaches. Or even cycling, horse riding, hiking in the mountains, experiencing some live music, or exploring the 600 castles dotted around the country. There are certainly plenty of activities for students to take part in, and fun things to do during your spare time whilst studying at a Welsh university.

Wales is also home to many attractions such as Cardiff International White Water, Newport's Velodrome or Zip World, all easily accessible to you through excellent rail and road links.

Whether you are looking for a vibrant city centre location, or a more tranquil, slower-paced, countryside environment to immerse yourself in whilst studying your undergraduate degree,

Wales is full of inspiring contrasts. From the buzz of the cities, the beauty of the coast, and the calm of the countryside, students in Wales can experience it all!

Low cost of living

With the average cost of living in Wales being lower than the UK average, you will certainly have more money in your pockets to enjoy your time here.

Welsh NHS Bursary

I would encourage you to extensively research any additional funding which may be available, to help you make those all-important and informed university decisions. For example, if you are successful in securing a place at a Welsh university to study an allied health care profession such as nursing, medicine, dentistry, paramedic science or operating department practice among others, you would be eligible to apply for the Welsh NHS bursary, to cover university fees and maintenance costs. This could mean that those studying an NHS-funded course at a Welsh university could leave university after their three-year degree, with little or no student debt (terms and conditions apply). More information relating to this bursary can be found on the [Welsh NHS Bursary webpage](#).

“Wales is full of inspiring contrasts. From the buzz of the cities, the beauty of the coast, and the calm of the countryside, students in Wales can experience it all!”

Your opportunity to learn a new language

When talking to prospective students at careers fairs, we are often asked if students must speak Welsh when studying at a Welsh university. The answer to this question is no. But you may enjoy picking up a few basic and useful phrases during your studies. Many of our universities will offer opportunities for you to learn Welsh if you wish to do so as well.

Everything you need to know about degree apprenticeships

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

Choosing a course and university can be a daunting task, and even more so with so many study options available for you to consider. Here, I will help you with degree apprenticeships, making them as easy as possible to navigate and understand.

What is a degree apprenticeship?

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

What are the benefits of degree apprenticeships?

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

Are there any disadvantages to degree apprenticeships?

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

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

How can I find out more?

There are over thirty degree apprenticeship courses on offer in England, with thousands of employers to choose from. There are useful resources available on the National Apprenticeship Services website, where you can also explore current vacancies and openings. UCAS and the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education also host some handy guides and list vacancies. I would recommend starting your research early as there can be several resources to go through.

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

Note from [UniTasterDays](https://www.unitasterdays.com)
You can search events offered by universities UK-wide using UniTasterDays.com

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



Student finance update. The key changes for 2023 starters

By Jon Cheek, Founder, UniTasterDays.com

In February 2022, The Department for Education announced some changes to student finance and repayment policies for new university students in England, who will be starting higher education courses from September 2023. So, if you are reading this, it means it is very likely to impact you!

This was, and is, big news. Student finance is the biggest barrier to university, pretty much everywhere you look, including in our own [National Review of University Guidance](#). Any change to student finance will have a significant impact on those hoping to start university.

I won't cover everything here, but you can read the [full government announcement introducing the changes](#). I will instead provide guidance on three updates included in the changes which I think you should be aware of when considering university.

Please note that that these changes do not affect current students in receipt of student finance, those who are now in repayment, or students from Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

The repayment threshold will be set at £25,000. And will remain that way until 2026-27

For new students starting courses from September 2023, you will start repaying

student loans when you earn over £25,000, at 9% of earnings above that amount. This is a change from £27,295 for students who started university in September 2022.

Let me give you a quick example:

- Molly starts university in 2023
- And finishes her course in 2026
- Then, in the April after her graduation, she is earning £30,000.

Her monthly repayment will be around £37.50. It might actually be a little less if the repayment threshold increases in the future, but I don't want to make things unnecessarily complicated here!

The loan repayment period will be extended from 30 years to 40 years

This will add ten years to the current repayment term, for those starting university in September 2023, providing more time to pay off more of your full student loans. Of course, if you are in a position where you (a) repay the balance within the 40 years or (b) decide to clear it within the 40 years, the repayments would stop earlier than that.

A reduction in interest rates

Interest rates will be set at RPI+0% for new borrowers from September 2023, meaning students will no longer repay more than they borrowed in real terms.

Note from  UniTasterDays

For full guidance regarding student finance, please always refer to the [student loans company website](#).



There is more money out there. Introducing university bursaries and scholarships

By **Max Harvey, Student Support Officer at Cardiff University**

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

Although student loans and grants through the Student Loan Company are the main source of funding for most students, there are other funding sources like bursaries and scholarships which are important for you to know about as well.

What are bursaries and scholarships?

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

Scholarships are usually grants paid to students who do very well academically or in other areas. This could be a grant paid if you receive three A grades at A Level for example, or if you are a talented musician or sports person.

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

Further information on bursaries and scholarships

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

Most students will want to prioritise the course and the university when making decisions, but bursaries and scholarships can sometimes make the difference between two similar offers and, if not, they can certainly be a very welcome extra to help make life a little easier when you start your course.

! One last comment is a word of warning – when you are dealing with anything financial, be it loans, banking or bursaries, it is important to be aware of scams. If you are unsure about an email or a text, don't click on links within them, or offer any personal details if you do. If in doubt, contact a university through the official channels and check what you've been sent is genuine.

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



Additional funding for Health courses - introducing the NHS Learning Support Fund

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

I know that the financial aspects of higher education can be daunting. It is therefore key that you are aware of any available funding that will support you with your studies. One example of this is the NHS Learning Support Fund (NHS LSF) - I will tell you more about that here.

What is the NHS Learning Support Fund?

The NHS LSF is additional funding you may be eligible for if you study a Health course. The payments are grants, so they don't need to be paid back. As it is an additional pot of free money, it also has no impact on your eligibility for student finance. The below financial support is available:

Training grant

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

Parental support

A £2,000 grant per year if you have parental responsibility for a child who is either aged under 15, or under 17 and registered with special educational needs. If you study part-time, you will receive a pro-rata amount. This does not impact your access to child support or other funding.

Travel and dual accommodation expenses

Reimbursement of additional travel and accommodation costs you might have whilst on placement (above your regular commute).

One of the Podiatry students at the University of Salford shared that this allowed them to 'apply for the exact placement opportunities needed, without worry about the extra commuting costs.'

However, it is important for you to budget and keep a log of your expenses to claim them back.

Exceptional support fund

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

Are you eligible for the NHS Learning Support Fund?

At a basic level, to be eligible for the NHS LSF you need to be...

- Actively studying an eligible course at an English university
- Eligible for maintenance and tuition fee support from the Student Loans Company

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

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

* If you study on these courses, you can get an extra £1,000 per academic year

Just one more note: Social work has different funding, find out more here:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students>

How do I apply?

Applications open in spring, and you will need to create an account and apply online. Like with student finance, you will also need to re-apply each academic year:

<https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhslsf/>

A guide to the Disabled Students Allowance

By Sarah Hanson, Strategic Outreach Lead at Shaping Futures (Uni Connect Programme)

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

The Disabled Students Allowance is provided to help with extra costs you might incur as a direct result of a disability. All the support provided by the DSA is based solely on your needs, so it's not dependent on household income and you don't need to pay back any funding or return any equipment you receive.

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

- Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or ADHD
- Mental health conditions, such as anxiety or anorexia
- Physical disability impacting mobility or dexterity
- Sensory impairments, such as sight or hearing loss
- Social or communication impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorders
- Long term health conditions, such as cancer or chronic fatigue syndrome.

This may help you with a range of support measures, including:

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

Applying for the DSA

You can apply for DSA online as part of your student finance application. You're required to upload medical evidence, such as a diagnostic report, after which you'll be invited to book a needs assessment. During this appointment you'll work with an Independent Needs Assessor to agree the support you'll need from DSA, and after the appointment you'll receive an Entitlement Decision Letter (DSA2), confirming the support you'll receive with instructions on how to move forward.

Many students are put off applying for DSA because of worries about being treated differently, or wanting a fresh start at university. But this support can be vital to you succeeding and achieving your potential. You should start the process as soon as possible, to ensure support will be in place for the start of the term.

Alongside support from the DSA, universities and colleges will also offer a package of support, such as specialised transition days, disability coordinators to support you directly, or peer mentors. You can find out more about this support via university websites, or by attending open days and speaking with their student support teams.

“The Disabled Students Allowance is provided to help with extra costs you might incur as a direct result of a disability.”

Can you get in? A guide to the qualifications universities will accept

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

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

I will outline some of the key areas to consider here – and answer some questions you may be thinking about as a prospective university student as I do so.

? Do GCSE grades matter?

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

? What qualifications are acceptable?

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

To calculate the potential UCAS Tariff points for each qualification there is a tariff calculator on the UCAS website. This helps you to understand what you need to achieve in your specific qualifications.

? Do you need to study the subject before applying to university?

This question is often asked by students, but there is no one size fits all answer. It

will depend on the course and university. Some degrees will have very specific subject requirements, others will be open to students from a background of subject areas. There are thousands of degrees and far fewer subject choices at post-16 level, so universities expect that students may not have a qualification in the subject they want to study at university. Universities will use all studied qualifications to make a judgement about your suitability and interest in the course.

? How to research entry requirements

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

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

It is not all about qualifications

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

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

What to write in a personal statement - tips from the experts

By Erin Tungate, UK & Europe Student Recruitment Officer at King's College London and Kat Knight, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Manager at City, University of London

What is the personal statement?

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

- Why do you want to study the course?
- How have you engaged with the subject in your own time?
- What experiences have you had in preparation for university?
- What makes you unique?

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

- Mind-mapping is a great way for you to think of key points to include, without the pressure of putting them into sentences or paragraphs. Universities often provide resources to support with this as well.
- Are you still unsure? Look at university websites to find out more about the courses you're interested in. Many universities explicitly list qualities that they like to see in students which may be a great place to start.
- Are you using lots of quotes? Whilst we encourage you to write about your extra reading, universities want to hear from you directly. Instead of writing a quote word

for word, think about what a particular quote means to you using your own words and ideas.

- A little thesaurus-heavy? You should prioritise writing clearly and cohesively, rather than using extravagant language. Try reading the statement out loud to hear what does and doesn't flow well.
- Over the character count? The personal statement has a 4,000 character limit. Use the 'ABC method' to think about keeping content relevant. When giving an example or discussing an experience, you should succinctly (A) summarise the activity, (B) be able to discuss the benefits and (C) link these to the course you are applying for. If this can't be done, it might not be relevant!

The A,B,C approach in practice.

If you are considering applying for English courses at university you could (A) discuss an assessment you wrote on the role of women in Shakespeare's plays (B) as an example of developing your research and essay writing skills and (C) this shows good preparation for planning and writing coursework in an English Literature degree.

Deadlines

It is important for you to stick to deadlines given by your school or college – this will allow you enough time to receive written feedback and submit your application before the UCAS deadline.

“**Mind-mapping is a great way for you to think of key points to include, without the pressure of putting them into sentences or paragraphs.**”

Top Tip

Use the ABC method to think about keeping content relevant.

A - Summarise the **activity** **B** - Discuss the **benefits** **C** - Link these to the **course**



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Application + Offer = Place. Tips to make your university application stand out

By Izzy Kelly, Aimhigher Project Officer at Aimhigher West Midlands (Uni Connect Network)

Whether you are going to university, applying for an apprenticeship, or looking for a job, there's a variety of things you can do to help make your application stand out from the crowd. I will provide a few suggestions here.

Work experience

Work experience looks great on personal statements, job applications and CVs, but you must be able to reflect upon what you have learnt and how it is relevant to your future. By taking the time to consider what you have gained from the experience, you will be able to use this knowledge to effectively demonstrate your skills and discuss what you enjoyed, what you found challenging and how you overcame these challenges.

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

Part-time work

You can demonstrate potential to universities and employers by taking on an evening or weekend job. By working for just a few hours per week, you can gain employability skills such as problem solving, money handling, communication and many more. These are useful to talk about in applications and

interviews. However, it is important to ensure that any part-time work doesn't affect your school or college work.

Volunteering

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

Clubs and hobbies

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

Other opportunities

Taking up opportunities that link to the career or course you want to pursue can really support an application. This could include attending a taster lecture at a university, trips, or extracurricular clubs like STEM. You may also consider performing arts clubs or completing free online courses from places like Future Learn and others.

“ Whether you are going to university, applying for an apprenticeship or looking for a job, there's a variety of things that you can do to help you stand out from the crowd. ”





Applying for a creative course? Five tips when preparing portfolios and interviews


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

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


Five tips to help you during the creative course application process:


 **Research the course** – It is really important that you look into the course you're applying for. Universities won't expect you to be able to recite every module, but courses can differ vastly between universities. In your portfolio/interview, you'll need to show an understanding of the course and subject area. So, look into attending an open day, read the portfolio guidance carefully and explore current events, to stay ahead of the game.

 **Help us learn about you** – At the same time as showing you understand the course, universities will also want to see what inspires you! Everyone is unique and we want to see you amongst the pages. Include a range of things that describe you as a person and as a creative individual – what makes you tick? As creatives, we put a lot of ourselves into our work, so ensure that comes across.

 **Show us the creative process** – Within the portfolio, you can shine by demonstrating

your creative journey through initial research, developmental work and then the final piece. You should also demonstrate that you can critically review and analyse your work. Would you do the same again, what would you change? This balance of creativity and reflection will help you sail through your studies.

 **Keep it succinct** – While we love to see a variety of work within a portfolio, we do want to see your ability to edit. It is all about establishing a balance. You shouldn't bring everything you've ever done, but don't pare it back to nothing at all. You should also try to tailor this to the course you're applying for.

 **Choose a suitable format** – You should opt for what best suits the creative area you're working in – just because a portfolio is digital, it doesn't mean all the work has to be digital too. Consider practicality as well – is a bulky folder going to hinder you in transit? Would a digital portfolio be easier to share? Tailor the format of the portfolio to suit the situation.

If you're attending a Zoom interview – firstly make sure the tech works. Does the microphone and camera work, has screen sharing been set-up? In addition to this, does your digital portfolio read in the same way as a physical portfolio would?

Remember, applying for a creative course can be daunting, but universities will always be there to support you through the application process. If you have links with universities, make the most of opportunities to attend workshops, taster days and more, so that you are fully engaged and prepared for your application journey.

“**Applying for a creative course requires more than just grades.**”

Contextual university admissions - what they are, and how they might affect you

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

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

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

What are contextualised university admissions?

Contextualised admissions recognise a student's circumstances when considering their application for study in higher education. This may therefore enable you to automatically receive entry requirements that are lower than those advertised or better reflect the circumstances in which your grades were achieved.

Course providers will set out the terms of their contextualised admissions policy on their website in addition to course literature, and it is always recommended to enquire with admissions advisors and/or tutors with regards to your eligibility before you submit your application.

Contextualised offer schemes

Where reduced entry requirements are not automatically applied, you may be able to

participate on a contextualised offer scheme. The key difference is that the scheme will include conditions, in addition to eligibility criteria, which you must meet to qualify for a contextual offer. For example, these schemes may require the completion of an assignment, portfolio, or to simply commit to the respective course provider as your firm UCAS choice.

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

Additional benefits for contextualised admissions and offer schemes

Contextualised admissions and offer schemes may also carry additional benefits, such as academic or financial support. When enquiring about entry requirements, always ask whether bursaries or scholarships are included, along with any transitional support during your first year of study. Transitional support may include academic workshops, peer support or mentoring, in addition to signposting to appropriate services alongside the course.

So, when you are researching your choices and options, keep contextualised admissions within your thinking. They offer a reduced entry requirement, but their benefits can extend beyond your admission onto their course.

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

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

WHAT COULD IN2SURREY OFFER ME?

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

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



Decisions, offers and then decisions again – a guide to your university application

By Carrie Williams, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of South Wales

Applying to university is one of the biggest decisions that you will make and that might seem really daunting right now. This short guide will provide you with an overview of the admissions process and highlight some of the important aspects and key dates to be aware of.

Application deadlines

Once you have researched your options and made your final university and course choices, you will need to submit your application through UCAS. Applications are open from September and for those applying to Oxbridge or for medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses, applications must be submitted in October.

For most students applications will need to be submitted to UCAS by the end of January, the equal consideration deadline. Exact dates can vary by a few days every year, so make sure you check the UCAS website for the most up-to-date information.

What happens next?

Once your application has been submitted, it will be reviewed by admissions staff at each university you have applied to. The academic entry criteria, your predicted or actual grades, personal statement and reference will be considered before a decision is made.

Some universities may require further information and invite you to attend an interview, audition, or request a portfolio of work (for art and design courses). You should keep an eye on your UCAS Hub and email for this information. It is important that you use an email address you can access whilst still at school or college and after you leave.

Navigating Offers

From January, many students will begin to receive offers. Offers are displayed on your UCAS Hub accounts and emailed to you directly.

Waiting for offers can be nerve-wracking and you may begin to worry if you don't hear back immediately or if your friends receive offers before you. Universities respond at different times due to varying admissions procedures and you should not be concerned if your offers take slightly longer than your friends.

If an offer has been made, it will be either unconditional or conditional. An unconditional offer means that you have a place on your chosen course. A conditional offer means that the university has accepted you subject to meeting certain conditions – which is usually related to exam results. The full conditions of the offer are shown through your UCAS Hub.

It is also through the UCAS Hub that you can respond to your offers, accepting your firm and insurance choices and declining your remaining offers.

Unsuccessful outcomes

If the university has decided not to offer a place, you will receive an unsuccessful decision. Sometimes the reason for this decision will appear on your UCAS Hub, if not, you can contact the university and ask for feedback.

A withdrawn application means that the application has been withdrawn by you or the university. If the university has withdrawn the application, the reason will be displayed through your UCAS Hub.

For those that have not been offered a place, it is easy to panic and make a rushed decision. However, there are still options available to you. You can either add a choice through UCAS Extra if eligible, or look for course availability later on and apply through Clearing.

Universities will display their remaining course places on their websites and will advertise via UCAS. However, it is best to ring the universities that you are interested in directly, and you can do so from early July onwards.

Exams done. Tips for preparing for results day and Clearing

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

There's no getting away from it, applying to university is complicated. As a prospective student, it can be stressful and overwhelming, particularly on results day and if that is followed by entering Clearing. Results day is a key date for applicants to university and your nerves are likely to be riding high. Here are some practical ideas to help the day go smoothly.

Knowledge is power

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

Make sure to research your options

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

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

What happens if you don't quite get the grades you are expecting?

First of all, it is always worth checking with your first-choice or insurance offer university, even if you haven't achieved the required grades. The university may still be able to make you an unconditional offer. If they can't, there are always other options. This is what Clearing is all about.

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

“With the right preparation, you have options on results day, no matter what results you achieve.”

CHALLENGE



MISSION



ACCEPTED



SKILL



GOAL



SUPPORT



PREPARATION



MOTIVATION



SUCCESS

Going to university? What happens after results day

**By Jen Barton, Student Recruitment
Manager at Durham University**

After results day, when you should (hopefully) have a place confirmed at the university you want, you may be wondering what happens next. I will provide a guide to this here.

Firstly, be aware that university processes can differ. For example, at Durham University, you will have to complete an offer acceptance form within seven days of receiving your confirmed decision. You should receive clear instructions from your confirmed institution about what to do next.

Also consider that if you sit certain qualifications, you may need to send these to UCAS. A list of results that UCAS don't receive from the exam board can be found on the UCAS website.

Here are some of the key things that you will need to do before arriving at university:

- **Contact:** You should ensure your contact details are correct – by this point you should not be using a school email address.
- **Accommodation:** You will need to ensure your accommodation arrangements are made.
- **Support:** You should discuss any support that you might need, for example, additional support if you have a disability.
- **Enrol:** There will be a process of enrolment that you will need to follow, this will ensure that you have things like a university IT account, an email address etc. After this you should then be able to register for the university course modules you want to take.
- **Organise your finances:** First, you should make sure you set up a bank account if you have not already. You can often get great student bank accounts which offer incentives such as a young person's railcard, this will save you a lot of money when you are travelling to and from university.
- **Budget:** You should, by this point, have a good idea of your expected income when you are at university. You should learn the costs of everyday items, thinking about essential items like food and utilities, and then luxuries like evenings out and clothes.
- **Buy a Railcard:** A 16-25 student railcard is a worthwhile investment if it is not something you have already. A railcard can save you a third off your train travel. Once you have made two or three journeys, you may have saved what you would have spent on buying the card.
- **Join social media groups:** You can also start making connections with your fellow students on social media. Most universities will have social media groups in place which they will invite incoming students to. This is a great way to make friends before you arrive, and it should make the whole process less daunting.
- **Start reading:** Most institutions will have a pre-reading list available before you arrive. You will not be expected to read everything, but you should get your brain cells going again and prepare for the workload that you can expect when you start university.
- **Learn to be self-sufficient:** You should prepare for certain life-skills that are required when living away from home. You may have never cooked, cleaned or done your laundry before! The summer break is a great opportunity to learn some of these skills. You should at least know how to cook two or three basic meals to help you stay fit and healthy at university.

“ **You should ensure your contact details are correct. By this point you should not be using a school email address.** ”



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How universities support you through university

By Gideon Woldelessie, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Manager (Science and Engineering) at Queen Mary University of London

Universities work hard to ensure that support for students is as accessible as possible, particularly to those most in need. This article will provide examples of the support which is likely be available, to ensure you're aware of it, should need arise.

What support is available at university?

A range of free, confidential and professional support services are typically available to you if you start university. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- **Mental health and wellbeing services** – These are wide ranging and are usually designed to be as flexible and accessible as possible. This can include the provision of a 1:1 appointment, both in-person and on the phone; online support and resources; and round-the-clock crisis support.
- **Academic support** – At Queen Mary, as at other universities, you would be assigned an academic adviser who you can seek academic support from on an individual basis, in addition to other forms of academic support that is available.
- **Financial support** – As well as your tuition fee and maintenance loan funding, you may be eligible for additional financial support in the form of grants, bursaries and scholarships. Alongside being automatically assessed for some of this support when you apply, you can check university webpages and websites like The Scholarship Hub to see what else you can apply for.
- **Disability and dyslexia services** – These services can help you obtain needs

assessments, apply for funding and facilitate the provision of course materials in alternative formats.

- **Careers services** – You can get help to find part-time work, internships and work placements, and can receive support with associated application processes.
- **Specialised services** – These can include tailored support services for care experienced and estranged students, refugees and asylum seekers, residential services and 'Report and Support' Services.
- **The students' union** – Run for students, by students, a students' union provides you with support and opportunities to develop in a range of different ways.

Research is key

Support services at universities differ from each other in precisely what they offer and how they are structured. As such, it is particularly important that if you expect to access support services at university more frequently, you do your research to understand what support is available, and how to obtain it.

As well as specific university resources, it is also helpful for you to be aware of more generalised support that is available through organisations and initiatives such as Student Minds, Togetherall and Jumpstart University.

Supporting students before starting university

You can often get access to many support services before arriving at university, as well as during vacation periods and after you graduate.

These can include:

- Transition support programmes.
- Access to mental health and wellbeing services prior to enrolling at your chosen university.
- Student engagement platforms like UniBuddy, which provide a useful tool for you to connect with current university students studying your subject of interest.

How you can make the most of university

By Sophie Threlfall, Student Recruitment Manager at the University of Law

Move away from home and explore

By the time you are 18 years old, you may have outgrown your home town and perhaps you would like to study somewhere new. If that is the case, there are hundreds of universities to choose from in the UK alone, so you will have a lot of opportunities available to you – both close to home and those further away.

“ **University is about so much more than simply studying for a degree – it is also about you developing and growing holistically through new challenges and experiences you will encounter.** ”

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

You may also wish to explore places and travel as much as you can; you may discover some hidden gems in different parts of the country you have never heard of along the way!

Try something new – student societies

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

It is important that you strike the right balance between studying and recreational activities, your mental, physical and social wellbeing are all important, so scheduling downtime alongside studying is an absolute must.

You don't need to go directly to university

Of course, some students don't choose to go directly to university. Anyone can have a change of direction in the future and return to study as a mature student, so you may wish to have a break between studies now, and potential studies in the future.

Relish opportunities

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

You should try to take advantage of suitable opportunities that come your way – you're only young once! It is a really good idea for new students to attend university events such as welcome week, fresher's fairs and comedy and live music nights.

Whether it be field trips or a year in industry or abroad that might come your way, you should make the most of these opportunities while you can. New experiences outside of your comfort zone, including volunteering or finding part-time work will support your resilience and employability skills.

Once you're studying, if you feel you would be able to speak confidently about your course and university experience to prospective students, you could enquire about becoming a course representative or being part of the student ambassador scheme to support with university open events and more.

Be mindful

If you start university, you should not put too much pressure on yourself. University can be a fantastic experience, but you shouldn't try and do everything at once, you should pace yourself and set specific time aside for relaxation as well as study.

At university there are different support networks to support you, both personally and professionally. If you find yourself struggling, you should not suffer in silence, so please ask for any help if you ever need it. As universities, we want to ensure students make the most of their time at university, so please seek out any support you may need.

Be frugal

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

You might want to consider investing in a student union card and use this for discounts on local leisure activities, shopping and restaurants as well. If you're going to be using the train, it is well worth investing in a 16-25 rail card to save 1/3 off rail travel. Remember students are also exempt from paying council tax.

One final tip on this subject, if you are in self-catered university accommodation, cooking skills would also be very handy before you move in!

What does the future hold as a graduate?

Although none of us can predict the future, we can be as savvy as possible when making informed choices of where and what to study. Lots of graduates secure employment near to where they studied or perhaps where they have undertaken a year in industry. So both of these opportunities can lead to many positive connections.

You may also wish to look at labour market information to predict growing graduate job market opportunities as well.

“ You should not put too much pressure on yourself. University can be a fantastic experience, but you shouldn't try and do everything at once. You should pace yourself and set specific time aside for relaxation as well as study. ”



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Preparing for university - what are student societies?

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

University societies are a great way for you to meet new people with a common interest, much like after-school clubs. They cover a variety of topics: academic, sporting and general interest. If it exists, there is probably a society for it!

General interest societies

General interest societies or clubs cover a range of topics: from wellbeing to drama societies, you can get involved in activities that you are interested in, such as creating fundraisers, going on trips and weekly games, activities and quizzes.

Academic societies

Academic societies support you in specific subject areas, creating a community by bringing together students who are on the same course but may not be in the same classes. These societies can help you form study groups and informal seminars, as well as providing a brilliant way to swap reading lists and books.

Sport societies

Sports societies can be for both competitive and casual players, and you can pick and choose which elements you want to be involved in. Some sports societies, like football and basketball, take part in the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) league. Different societies can also take part in varsity competitions between universities too.

Things to be aware of when considering societies:

- They are associated with a students' union (SU), which is independent from the university. You will automatically become a member of your SU unless you ask not to be. They are led by students for students.
- Most sports and societies will have a membership fee – these vary from society to society. To pay these, you can pay online or in person at your SU. The payment is not associated with the tuition loan and is separate from your studies, even if you are joining an academic society.
- For trips, societies may ask for additional payment, which may be discounted. Trips could include travelling abroad, going to the theatre etc.
- Societies are run by students who are likely to have been members themselves previously. They are voted in for different roles and volunteer to run the society under the supervision of the SU.
- During the first few weeks of university (commonly known as Freshers' Week, but many universities now call it Welcome Week or Welcome Fest), you can attend fairs where you can meet the students who run the clubs and societies and can often try them out!
- If you would like to join a society that does not yet exist, you can group together and create one!

“ I always encourage students and applicants to get involved with sports, clubs and societies as it made my student experience the full, exciting and interesting one that it was, and it helped me flourish as an individual. ”

Opportunities and inclusion - celebrating diversity in university communities

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

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

The university student community is undoubtedly more diverse than you will be accustomed to. This is an opportunity not afforded in many social groups or workspaces and is one for you to benefit from. Interacting with people different to ourselves is important to support our own personal growth through a wider understanding of the world. This helps us relate to the communities in which we expect to work.

Feeling a little daunted?

Misunderstandings about groups of people who are different to us can lead to unnecessary hostility and anxiety. By exploring why you might feel nervous, uncomfortable, or safe around certain people can tell us a lot about how these biases have formed.

At university, you can expect to meet, study, and socialise with people of many different characteristics. These include different

disabilities, ethnicities, religions, sexual orientations, and gender identities. This offers fantastic potential for your learning, not only in the diversity of thought from your peers, but also in your own understanding of society, privilege, and inequality.

The more interactions that occur will help to change pre-conceptions and stereotypes. You can also use this learning to challenge negative associations and see others as individuals and potential friends.

Expanding your network

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

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

This is also a chance for you to showcase aspects of your own personality and celebrate yourself in a more authentic way than you may have been supported to do previously. By realising the lived experiences of others, we can help create a culture of inclusion and support each other to succeed.



Think employability - a guide to careers support at university

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

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

Careers service support is available throughout university courses

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

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

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

Career fairs and events

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

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

Ongoing careers support

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

“ Once you start a course, my best advice is to find out where the careers team are located at the university, what support is on offer and get involved with it! You should also look out for Skills Awards which lots of universities offer - these are programmes which students can follow to develop and record their experiences and skills. ”

Advice from  UniTasterDays

There is huge support to develop outside of your studies at university. Everything from support launching a business, to learning a language. We would encourage you to take advantage of it.

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