



**Featuring expert contributions from over 40 higher education practitioners.**

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# **A Parents' Guide to University 2023**

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

Produced in collaboration with 

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“The Career Development Institute is delighted to support the UniTasterDays Parents' Guide to University brochure. High quality careers information, advice and guidance is more important than ever to help young people navigate their way through the many options and into their next stage of learning. This is one of the many great resources provided by UniTasterDays, to support parents in their discussions with young people on their university choices. ”



# Welcome to the Parents' Guide to University 2023

This guide has been produced by UniTasterDays.com to help you support your young person with their higher education decisions.

It covers many aspects of university - including: information on the application process; the types of courses available; student finance and key funding information; student life; how your young person can access additional support at university and much more.

But ultimately, it is about providing you, as a parent or guardian, with the right information so that you can support your young person with their thoughts and decisions about the future. It may even encourage you to consider university yourself!

## Experts on your side

This guide features contributions from experts in higher education and has been produced in collaboration with HELOA (the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association). I am very grateful for their support and the contributions made throughout the guide by HELOA members.

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

I hope you find this to be a helpful overview and you'll share it with others who may find this useful as well.

Jon Cheek  
Founder, UniTasterDays.com

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

HELOA

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 UniTasterDays.com

# There are other options, so what are the benefits of university?

**By Tasha Bodger, Senior Marketing Officer at Harper Adams University**

As parents, it is natural to feel a mix of emotions as your young person prepares for university. Excitement, pride and joy are often accompanied by a sense of anticipation and curiosity about what might lie ahead. Whilst higher education is a significant commitment, both financially and emotionally, the benefits of your young person attending university can be equally as valuable – and potentially life-changing!

## University vs employment

Settling on a future career is often a decision influenced by every experience, lesson and passion a person has absorbed through their years of education – and your young person is no different. University provides students with additional opportunities to uncover their future, delve deeper into subjects they touched on at secondary level and identify a well-researched career path, all within a safe environment.

This extra learning time then enhances their career prospects following graduation, with university graduates typically earning higher salaries once they're in the working world.

In some instances, students won't even have to choose between university and employment – with a large proportion of universities now offering a compulsory year in industry. This additional year not only provides a first-hand glimpse into a future career, but develops day-one competencies, critical thinking skills and independence, as well as the basis of your young person's professional network!

## University is great for personal development

University education is not just about career prospects. It also provides the perfect opportunity for students to hone crucial life skills. Whether it's managing their finances, adapting to solo living, respecting the diversity of a university campus or handling a range of domestic activities, there are plenty of non-educational lessons your young person will learn whilst studying.

However, these skills aren't learnt in isolation. Not only do students have their course and housemates to lean on, but there is also a whole university support network ready and waiting. From financial advisors, the Students' Union, careers services, wardens, and mental health professionals; university has all the benefits of independent living, with the added security of a safe and supportive environment in which to develop.

## Creating a network of friends and colleagues

Of course, personal development also goes hand in hand with building lifelong friendships – as well as having fun too! Most, if not all, universities have a whole host of societies and clubs that will introduce students to like-minded people, as well as diverse cultures, backgrounds, and pastimes. Extra-curriculars can range from sports teams to art and culture appreciation groups – or even social action clubs. Whatever their area of interest, societies provide a fantastic way for students to build a sense of community, friendship and belonging.

Note from  UniTasterDays

You can read more about university societies on page 54.

The community your young person builds has the potential to help them navigate their career path – be it through job referrals, introductions to potential employers or access to industry-specific knowledge and resources.

Ultimately, a university education is lifelong. It's both a personal and professional launchpad that could support your young person's success long after graduation!



# Foundation, bachelor, sandwich years and more - what are the different types of higher education courses?

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

While it is important for your young person 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. I've 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 prepare your young person for undergraduate study and life at university. Upon successful completion of a foundation year, they will often progress to year one of their chosen undergraduate degree.

## Bachelor's degree

A Bachelor's degree is the most common type of undergraduate degree. They 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.

## Joint honours

Joint honours degrees combine two or more areas of interest at degree level and can cross disciplines and faculties – they're a great option if your young person's interests span multiple subject areas.

## Sandwich programmes

Sandwich programmes provide your young person with the ability to incorporate a study abroad or placement year as part of their time at university. Typically extending the course length by one year, this option can provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live and study overseas, gain work experience and boost their employability.

## Degree apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity as an alternative route into higher education. With the support of an existing employer, your young person is able to further their career while studying and earning.

## Higher National Certificate and Diploma

Available in a range of disciplines, Higher National Certificates (HNC) or Higher National Diplomas (HND) are focused on industry and incorporate practical methods of learning. These courses take one to two years to complete and can enable your young person to progress onto the second or third year of a full-time Bachelor's degree.

## Integrated Master's

These courses combine undergraduate and postgraduate study to enable your young person to graduate with a Master's qualification upon completion of their course.

### Tip: don't judge a course by the title

The content, assessment methods and contact time of a course can vary significantly from one with the same title, so it's important that your young person does their research and digs beyond the surface. They may wish to study something familiar or try something they haven't heard of before – they should take the time to explore all their options.

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

# Student voice: why did I go to university?

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

I chose to go to university because I thought 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 guide to how I settled in and the things to be aware of whilst you provide support for your young person.

## What information would be helpful?

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

I could also have asked for more information on managing finances and scholarship opportunities. Some universities offer scholarships and bursaries and your young person may need to apply before starting their course.

## Tips for starting their course

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

**“The covid pandemic and online learning made studying challenging for many. Now, with lectures being in person, university feels much more of a community.”**

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

## Organisation is important

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

## The Disabled Students' Allowance

One thing I would really recommend that students do before they go to university is to check if they are eligible for the DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance). This enables equipment and specific software to be given to students who have a disability, to help make their learning easier. Applications can take time, so this should be started as soon as possible. You can read more about this on page 37.

Depending on the student's situation, if they have been eligible for extra time at sixth form or college, this should be the case at university. If applicable, and judging from my own experience, students are usually allocated a disability adviser 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, so it's really important to stay on top of that!



# How important are post-16 option choices?

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

As higher education advisers, we're often asked by students and parents how important their post-16 options are for their future education and career prospects.

If your young person knows what career they want to go into, then it's important that they choose the right options to get them on the right path. They can research their chosen occupation and find out what qualifications they need, working backwards to choose the relevant options for post-16 study. There aren't as many occupations as you might expect that require specific qualifications, other than the obvious examples such as doctors, engineers or dentists – these professions require specific qualifications which need to be considered at Level 3.

## What are the options?

There are so many options, it can feel overwhelming. Some of the most common post-16 qualifications include A Levels, Scottish Highers, T Levels and Apprenticeships.

## How do students choose?

The key is to be well-informed by undertaking research, and the good news is that there are a lot of online resources that can help. If your young person wants to go to university, it is important to note that not all degrees demand a particular set of qualifications. However, your young person needs to make sure that they don't limit their areas of interest by taking the wrong subjects for their post-16 options. They can use websites such as The Russell Group Informed Choices web page which will help them with the pathways they could take. UCAS and UniTasterDays.com are also great sources of information.

**“The key is to be well-informed by undertaking research, and the good news is that there are a lot of online resources that can help.”**

If your young person wants to take a science pathway, then they will almost certainly need to take at least one science subject at Level 3, whereas social sciences and arts and humanities subjects tend to have fewer prerequisites. If your young person still doesn't know the path they want to follow for post-18 study, then it's good advice to take a mix of subjects for their post-16 qualifications. Most importantly, they should study subjects they'll enjoy.

## There's no wrong choice!

Reassure your young person that they don't need to have everything figured out right now; many students, even when they reach Year 13, still don't know what they want to do. All you can do as a parent or supporter is be there to help them as they make their choices. It's also important that they don't feel any pressure about making the 'wrong' choice. Remind them that if they change their mind part way through their studies, or even during their career, it's never too late to take their future in another direction.



# What are university league tables?

By Chris Hakes, Higher Education Adviser at the University of East Anglia

Common questions parents ask me when it comes to university league tables are 'which ones should I look at' and 'how important are they for informing decision-making?' All parents want their young person to go to a university that will give them the best outcomes and where they will be the happiest. League tables are one of many tools that can be used as part of the research process.

With this in mind, it's important to understand which league tables are available, what data is used and most importantly, how they align with what the young person is looking for in a university or course. A university might rank highly, but that doesn't make it the right university for them.

## League tables and how they are calculated

When it comes to national league tables, there are three main ones to be aware of: *The Complete University Guide*, *The Times Good University Guide* and *The Guardian University Guide*. Each league table does the same thing in terms of ranking universities, however, each vary in terms of the criteria and weighting used to calculate them. For example, while all three will consider factors such as student satisfaction, graduate prospects and entry grades, the difference in weighting often means the tables look different when put side-by-side.

Understanding criteria and weighting is the first step towards knowing which league table might be most useful to your young person, or whether they need to crosscheck across several to get a better picture of a university's overall performance.

Overall ranking is useful, but there are league tables available that rank universities in terms of their subject areas too. This is important for students who want to attend a university that specialises in their chosen subject and can be especially useful if they want to study a technical subject or have a career path in mind. For example, if a student wanted to study physiotherapy, subject rankings can help determine which university has the best teaching quality, facilities and graduate outcomes. A university might sit lower on an overall league table, but it could be one of the best in the country for a particular subject.

## Points to consider

League tables don't tell the whole story and will only show a university's past performance. Most league tables also don't rank things that are likely to be just as important to a student, such as resources available, module variety or assessment methods. Nor will they consider other aspects such as student life, support or what the location has to offer.

Rather than focusing solely on league tables, encourage your young person to speak to current students, attend open days and book onto a subject taster session. A useful activity would be to determine what their priorities are for the course and their university experience, and then use a variety of ways to research these to help them make a decision that is right for them.

**“University is a big commitment in terms of time, energy and finance, so making sure your young person chooses somewhere they feel comfortable and happy is key.”**





# How to support your young person with their university and course choices

**By Joe Glover, Pre-16 Outreach Officer at the University of Leicester**

For many parents, it can be daunting as their young person decides to take the plunge into the university world. If you then add in the question of what course and where they'd like to study for the next three years, it can feel like an overwhelming decision. You may be thinking "What can I do to help?". These three pieces of advice will give you the confidence to offer that support.

## **Tip one: Explore the options**

It sounds straightforward as a starting point, but it's important that students do not rush course and university research. Being so determined to make the right choice can sometimes mean they dive into the specifics without looking to see what else is out there.

A simple UCAS search will help your young person find all the possible universities that offer their chosen course and you never know what variations they might discover. For example, did you know that students can study a combined degree of Geography

and Spanish & Latin American Studies? There are thousands of course opportunities available.

## **Tip two: Make a list of what's important**

Create a mind map, table, spreadsheet – whatever works best for your young person to visualise all the different options! Together, you can prioritise what is most important to them, which will help them to narrow their choices. Does the course offer the modules they're interested in? Is the location exciting to them? Does the university offer the facilities they need? Whatever it is, make it clear which universities tick these boxes, you could even see which are the true contenders.

## **Tip three: Take a look around**

The biggest recommendation is to visit the university if you can. It isn't always possible to do this, Open Days might not fit into calendars easily; some universities may be quite a distance away; or you just don't have the means to get there.

However, if you're able to, encourage your young person to go with you for a visit. There's something about stepping onto a campus for the first time, it can't be explained, but they'll know if it isn't the right fit or if it feels like it could be their new home for the next three or four years.

**“ Yes, your young person is about to make an important decision about their future, but there is so much support out there for students and you as parents and carers. The best thing you can do is encourage your young person every step of the way, and even step out of the way if necessary, so they can ultimately make the choice that is right for them. ”**



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# A guide to university entry qualifications

**By Ellie Campbell, Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Access Officer at Keele University**

As you help your young person make decisions about their future, it can be difficult ensuring that the qualifications they choose are accepted for entry to university. Here is some guidance on the typical qualifications (but there are others that universities may accept too).

## A Levels

A Levels are the most popular qualification to study in the UK. There are currently 85 different subject areas. A Levels follow the format of learning content in a classroom setting for two years and sitting exams at the end of Year 13. Results are expressed in grades with A\* as the highest and E as the lowest.

## BTECs

BTECs (British Technology and Education Council) are work-related qualifications which include classroom-based learning and are completed over the course of two years. Currently, there are over 2,000 different BTEC course options that span 16 sectors. There are three levels of a BTEC qualification: a BTEC Extended Diploma, equivalent to three A-Levels; a BTEC Diploma, equivalent to two A Levels; and a BTEC Subsidiary Diploma, equivalent to one A level. BTECs are graded on a scale from Distinction\* to Pass.

## T Levels

T Levels are new technical qualifications that are equivalent to three A Levels. T Levels were introduced in September 2020 and currently offer 16 different courses, with a target of 24 available to study by September 2024.

As part of a T Level qualification, students study in the classroom approximately 80% of the time and spend the remaining 20% on an industry placement, allowing them to gain insight into a career they may be interested in. Students are assessed using a variety of different methods. T Levels are graded in four tiers: Distinction\*, Distinction, Merit and Pass. 134 universities accept T Levels for entry as of 1 February 2023.

## International Baccalaureate

Students study six different subjects, three of which must be studied at 'higher level' and the other three at 'standard level'. The IB, as it is also known, is graded on a scale of one to seven, with seven being the highest. Scores are then added together and used for entry to university. It has 'Core' requirements which require students to study Theory of Knowledge, Extended Essay and Creativity, Action and Service (CAS). This core allows students to reflect on the nature of knowledge, explore an area of their choice in detail and integrate their passions outside the classroom into their diploma. They can achieve up to three additional points for these core areas.

**“If a student is unsure about whether a university will accept a qualification, they can receive tailored advice by contacting them through their enquiries or admissions service.”**



# A higher education jargon buster

**By Emily Durrant, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Essex**

Understanding the jargon of higher education can be tricky! I've created this guide to help you make sense of the common words and phrases that your young person might come across as they explore their higher education options.

## Bachelor's degree

The most common type of undergraduate degree. These are typically three-year programmes, although this can vary depending on the course and university. There are different types available, most commonly BA (Bachelor of Arts), BSc (Bachelor of Science), BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) and LLB (Bachelor of Laws).

## Joint honours

Joint honours degrees combine two or more subjects and can cross disciplines and faculties – this is a great option for those who enjoy different subjects.

## Degree apprenticeships

An alternative route into higher education; with the support of an existing employer, students can study towards a degree while working and earning.

## Foundation year

The first level of study available at university is a foundation year, designed to improve academic skills and subject-specific knowledge. These can be standalone one-year courses or integrated as part of a Bachelor's degree.

## Sandwich programmes

These provide students with the chance to incorporate a study abroad or placement year into their university course. Typically extending the course length by one year, this option can provide a unique opportunity to study overseas or gain work experience to enhance employability.

## UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is an independent charity which provides the UK's shared online undergraduate application service.

## Undergraduate

A student studying for their first degree; typically a foundation or bachelor's degree.

## Postgraduate

A student who has gained an undergraduate degree and is studying towards a higher degree, such as a Master's or PhD.

## Firm choice

If applying to university via UCAS, students can apply to up to five universities and then select their firm choice – this is the applicant's first choice of university.

## Insurance choice

Alongside their firm choice university, applicants can select an insurance university – their second choice.

## Clearing

Typically opening at the beginning of July each year, Clearing is where universities open up any remaining spaces on their courses. Students can apply directly to the university via Clearing once they have their final qualifications and may use this option if they were not accepted by their firm or insurance choices, or have simply changed their mind about their chosen university or course.

## Open Days

These events provide the opportunity for students to visit universities and often include tours, subject taster talks and the option to meet staff and students. Attending an Open Day will help your young person learn more about higher education and make informed choices.

## Personal statement

This forms part of the university application, submitted via UCAS. This is your young person's opportunity to personalise their application, demonstrating their enthusiasm and passion for their subject.

## Scholarships and bursaries

Non-repayable financial support for students who meet certain criteria or eligibility.

## Student finance

Provided by the Student Loans Company aka. Student Finance England (SFE). Full-time UK undergraduate students can apply for Tuition Fee and Maintenance Loans to contribute to the costs of university.

# An introduction to the allied health professions

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

Every year, thousands of students apply to courses such as medicine and pharmacy. These degrees are fantastic for those interested in becoming doctors or pharmacologists, among others, but competition can be very high. Quite often, students have not considered the wide variety of alternative routes they can pursue or are simply unaware that they even exist. I will provide a guide to some of these here.

## What are the allied health professions?

If your young person is considering the options available to them, it's important not to forget some of the lesser known – but no less important – careers in healthcare. 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 dietitians, the skill sets required are often very similar to those required for medicine and pharmacy degrees.

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

## Financial support for health programmes

Financial support for students studying for these degrees is also a factor worth considering. The introduction of the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) in 2020 provided students on eligible courses with a training grant of at least £5,000 in each year of study (subject to terms of the LSF). You can find out more about these on page 36.

It's important to stress the importance 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 the study of these degrees at university. Health Education England's campaigns have included raising the profile of the AHPs in the military, including roles such as radiographers and operating department practitioners.

**“The allied health professions are comprised of fourteen different areas of practice, making up the third largest workforce in the NHS.”**



# 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 your young person 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, students can choose the setting that best suits their individual preferences.


When it comes to choosing what and where to study, the 'what' should always come first. What course do they want to study? Once they know that, they 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 they're most interested in?

It's 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, while others embed more modes of application and research. Understanding the different types of universities will enable them to make the best decision.


## What is your young person looking for?

A good way to answer this question is to think about what is most important to them and to then marry this with the type of setting most suitable for them.

## Some questions to consider:

 Do they have any preferences on location?

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

 Are they looking for a traditional academic or a vocational/professional university?

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

 Do they like the idea of learning as part of a large or small cohort of students?

Attending a larger university will provide the conventional 'university' experience, while going to a smaller, more specialist institution, will mean smaller class sizes where your young person may receive more individualised attention.

 Do they want a residential student experience or a hands-on experience?

If they're looking to study Makeup Artistry, they could study at a specialist institution such as Arts University Bournemouth, a traditional university such as Solent University or at a further education college such as Bury College. This variety is not just for applied courses, for instance Law can be studied at a traditional university but also at a specialist university like The University of Law.

The best way to approach choosing where to study their chosen course is to keep your young person's mind open to all types of institutions, to find out more about them by reading prospectuses, social media posts, attending Open Days and talking to current students, before deciding which suits them most.



# What are the differences between sixth form and university?

**By Ashleigh Little, Head of Post-16 Outreach and Recruitment at the University of Sunderland**

University is an adjustment from what your young person has been used to at school or college. The key to this transition is preparation. Here are five key differences they might experience and some advice about how you can support them with the upcoming changes.

## 1. Location

Many university students will move to a new part of the country and become part of a larger institution than they're used to. Open Days are a great way to meet staff and current students, visit the university campus, check out student accommodation and explore the local area. Most universities also offer applicant or offer holder days where they can find out about courses in more detail and meet other applicants. If they can't attend on-campus events, university websites provide photos, videos and virtual tours of facilities and accommodation options.

## 2. More independence

Your young person will experience a new sense of independence at university, helping them build crucial life skills. They'll be responsible for applying for student finance to cover their course fees and living costs, managing their money, attending lectures and completing academic work. They may also get a part-time job, which they'll need to balance with their studies.

Your support and advice around finance and budgeting will be invaluable; you could prompt them to apply for student finance in good time, research university bursaries and scholarships and help them to budget effectively.

## 3. Different teaching methods

Learning at university is different to school or college – there's a greater focus on independent learning. Your young person will be expected to attend lectures and seminars, as well as conduct independent study. Time management, attendance and commitment are important skills to help students adapt to this new way of learning.

They can find out more about teaching methods by chatting with academic staff and current students at an Open Day. They could also do some research on university websites and on platforms such as The Student Room.

## 4. Managing deadlines

Students need to be organised to stay on top of deadlines. You could help your young person to prepare for this by giving them a calendar, planner or online diary to set their own reminders. It could be a haircut, dentist appointment or a friend's birthday – anything that gives them responsibility. This organisation and time management will help them to find a balance between their social life and their studies.

## 5. Course content

University courses are often structured differently from school or college courses. Your young person can find information about how a course operates, and the modules on offer, on university websites.

Many universities also offer foundation courses, which can bridge the gap between school or college and university study.

**“As a parent or supporter, you can support your young person with their research by helping them to compare and contrast options and select courses which work best for them. And once they start at university, they won't be on their own. There's a range of support available for students, including study skills, wellbeing and funding.”**



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# A guide to university events

By **Melissa Grindon, Employment Officer at Liverpool Hope University**

As a parent or guardian, it's important and reassuring to know that your young person is going to an institution where they feel comfortable, safe and confident. However, despite an endless amount of information available online, it's always key to experience a pre-application event and take advantage of what's on offer. Here are just a few events you may wish to consider!

## Higher education fairs

If you're unsure of where to begin with supporting your young person, a higher education fair is a great place to start. Fairs are great for students to speak to university ambassadors, enabling them to gain an initial perspective on student life. There are also seminars dedicated to areas such as personal statements, interviews/ auditions and international opportunities.

Exhibitors provide plenty of information and materials, so you'll have plenty of resources to reflect upon after you've left the event.

## Open Days

At the start of the application process, take note of each institution's Open Days. An enormous amount of content is covered during an Open Day – there's not only subject-based talks about course content, but sessions focusing on aspects such as student finance, student development, wellbeing and accommodation too.

## Academic meetings and campus tours

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

## Applicant days

Applicant days are similar to Open Days, but are more catered towards students who have made their UCAS application, are holding an offer with a university and getting closer to making their final decision. Universities also host subject tasters, giving your young person a chance to experience a day in the life of someone on their degree course and even meet students currently studying the programme.

## Extra guidance

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

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

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



# What is a university summer school?

**By Steven Lawrence, Head of UK Undergraduate Student Recruitment at the University of Bath**

University summer schools offer an invaluable opportunity for students considering higher education to gain insights that support their university decision-making process. They can also really help your young person to prepare for the transition from school or college to university study.

Most summer schools are aimed at students who have just finished Year 12, timed to coincide with the period when your young person will be exploring their university options and preparing to complete an application. While some summer schools charge an attendance fee, many are free to attend, especially where they are aimed at students from backgrounds that are traditionally under-represented in higher education.

A summer school offers a perfect opportunity for students to get a real taste of university life by staying in university accommodation, eating meals in university outlets, spending time with current university students and sampling university facilities.

## Introducing subject specific summer schools

Summer schools which are focused on a specific academic discipline will provide your young person with direct experience of what it's like to study their chosen subject at university. This can be a great experience, whether your young person is planning to study an entirely new subject (perhaps medicine or engineering) or looking to understand how a subject they're interested in will differ at degree level.

Your young person will meet lots of like-minded students who share a passion for their chosen subject, as well as being able to chat with and learn from university

academics and current undergraduate students. This could give a real boost to their pre-university studies, as well as provide valuable insights to strengthen their personal statement and prepare them for their chosen course. Some universities even offer reduced or alternate offers to eligible students who complete a summer school that is related to the subject they wish to study – you can check individual university websites for details.

Note from  UniTasterDays

You and the student (s) you are supporting can search a comprehensive directory of summer schools and residential events at [www.unitasterdays.com/university-residentials](http://www.unitasterdays.com/university-residentials)

## Student experience summer schools

If your young person already knows where they want to study, they could check whether the university offers more general summer schools focused on student experience. They could stay in university accommodation, use the university facilities, perhaps sample student societies and have an opportunity to explore the university and local area. They will also benefit from getting to know current students to hear their perspective on the university. Hopefully, they will even make some friends who they will meet again during freshers' week.

It's still really important for them to attend the university's Open Day to understand the specifics of the course, but a summer school focused on student experience could provide your young person with first-hand experience of what it would be like to live and study at their chosen university.

## Summer schools for specific groups

Universities also offer summer schools aimed at specific groups. For example, at the University of Bath, we run an autism summer school for Year 11 students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, an international summer school for overseas students, and a sports summer school for Year 12 students who are involved in competitive sport and from a background that is under-represented in higher education.



# What are university taster days and masterclasses?

**By Carl Griffiths, Head of Student Recruitment at Harper Adams University**

As a parent, it can seem like there's an endless stream of potential events and activities for your young person to sign up to at universities. I expect it is hard to know what's best when balancing travel time, costs and time in or out of school. However, enabling a prospective student to engage with a taster day or masterclass at a university can be hugely beneficial.

## What are they?

For many students, a taster day or masterclass (or the many other myriad names for these events) may be the first opportunity for your young person to test the water of their chosen subject.

Many subjects may sound familiar, others not so much, so it can be daunting to try and understand what to expect from a degree without getting a true sense of what it entails. On their own, a prospectus or an Open Day won't provide the depth to help your young person choose between university A or B, or course X or Y, but a taster day or masterclass may help elucidate the teaching style, the environment and the resources much more clearly.

## What are the benefits?

Taking your young person to experience these activities can reassure or reaffirm (or

even dissuade) their subject choices. They're an opportunity for them to engage with the learning that the university offers, do a mini deep dive of their subject of interest and hopefully ensure they're making the right decisions.

It may be an opportunity for your young person to understand how their subject links to other (sometimes more niche) degrees in allied course areas, opening their options to things they may not have explored but might also interest them.

This is also a chance to meet academics and students, potential future colleagues and maybe see the future career routes and opportunities available.

The experience can be beneficial during the application process too. Your young person can talk about their experience as part of their personal statement, describing what they got out of it. It will demonstrate their dedication to exploring their subject in their own time, off their own back and in greater rigour and depth. This can also give them something to talk about with genuine vim and vigour at interviews.

If travel distances, costs or time is an issue, then online events could be the way forward. These may not have quite the impact of in-person activities, but they can still provide insights that help a student to make well-informed decisions and show their commitment to learning and development.

Masterclasses and taster days are great, unique experiences, but it is important not just to collect them like Pokémon cards – identify with your young person which events match their interests and add value and knowledge to their future choices.

Note from  UnitTasterDays

You and the student (s) you are supporting can find out more and search a comprehensive directory of taster events and masterclasses at [www.unitasterdays.com/university-taster-events](http://www.unitasterdays.com/university-taster-events)



# What can parents expect at a university Open Day?

**By Selena Lockett, Student Recruitment Officer at Swansea University**

Supporting your young person whilst navigating their university options can often feel overwhelming. Amid so many decisions, Open Days are a great opportunity to gain an insight into the academic and student experience that different institutions offer. This article outlines how Open Days can help ease the transition and clarify what you can expect from attending as a parent or guardian.

## Attend subject sessions

Universities run subject-specific talks aimed to provide a taster of different courses. These sessions are usually attended by parents as well as students and are a good opportunity to gather more information about your young person's subject of interest, ask questions and meet academics. Some subject sessions may also include a tour of the academic facilities to inform attendees of the unique selling points of their university.

## Explore the campus and facilities

Open Days are a great way to get to grips with a new campus and get a 'feel' for the university. Universities offer guided campus tours, opportunities to explore the library, hospitality hot spots and the sports facilities. There is also likely to be an opportunity to meet the Students' Union and find out more about societies and the student life.

## Finding a home from home

Many universities have various accommodation options available, all with varying fees and benefits. Considering factors such as budget, shared or en suite bathrooms and the proximity to the student's faculty buildings can help narrow down their choices. Accommodation viewings

are available on the day and can help your young person visualise their prospective living situation during their studies.

## Talk support and wellbeing

Disability, mental health, finance, and employability support teams will be on hand to answer any questions and provide further information about the services your young person will have access to throughout their time at university. Meeting with central welfare teams can reassure you with the knowledge that they'll have access to consistent and accessible support.

## Top three tips for parents attending a university Open Day



### Tip one: Check your itinerary!

University Open Days are typically packed with activities throughout the day and these can sometimes overlap. Planning ahead of time ensures you and your young person get to experience the Open Day in its entirety. You can even split up activities between you to cover more ground. Make sure you have copies of the event information to hand, it'll help to streamline your day.



### Tip two: Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Parents and students often have different queries and concerns when it comes to university. Preparing some questions and highlighting your main research points is advised and welcomed. Staff, students and academics will be on hand to share their lived experiences with the university and provide insight into day-to-day student life.



### Tip three: Make an experience out of it!

Open Days also give you an opportunity to travel and explore new places. After a long drive, and an active day of research, an overnight stay and opportunity to further explore the local area is a great way to unwind and get better acquainted with the town or city your young person might live in.





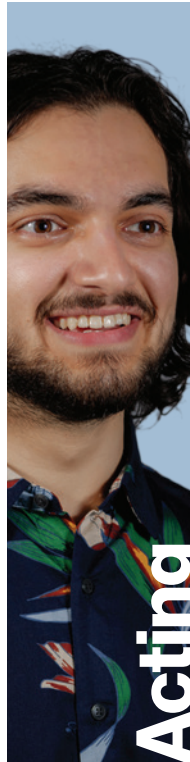
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Our Open Days are a chance for prospective students to meet academics, tour campus, view accommodation as well as speak to support staff and current students about university life. It's also a great opportunity for parents and carers to ask questions too, with our Admissions, Funding, Wellbeing and Students' Union teams all present at these upcoming Open Days.

# St Mary's University Open Days

**24th June 2023**  
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**25th November 2023**

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[stmarys.ac.uk/open-events](http://stmarys.ac.uk/open-events)



# Top tips for making the most of an online university event

**By Lily Wearden, Student Recruitment Officer at Aberystwyth University**

Since 2020, we've understandably seen a huge rise in the number of online university events. At Aberystwyth, we have organised virtual Open Days, higher education fairs, webinars, Q&As, subject tasters and much more.

While we are all thrilled to be back working with students in person, these online events certainly still have their place, even without social-distancing laws! More than anything, it increases the number of institutions students are now able to access. Your young person can find out everything they need to know from the comfort of their home without travelling hundreds of miles or worrying about clashing Open Day dates.

I always recommend that students visit a university in person before accepting an offer, if the option is available. But for initial information gathering and comparison between institutions, attending an online event can be just as valuable.

## Top tips

### 1. Research

Encourage your young person to explore the university in advance using different websites such as UCAS, the university website, UniTasterDays.com, UniFrog, The Student Room etc. They can work out what they're interested in about the institution and the course, and what they'd still like to know. Are they eligible for scholarships? What is the accommodation like? Will they be able to continue their hobbies? What are the public transport links like? The more they know in advance, the more they'll be able to make the most of the online event and the experts who will help them.

### 2. Talk to the advisers, academics and current students

Online events will not always have the same prompts to help generate conversation as in-person events, so it's important that your young person still uses the opportunity to learn as much as they can, especially things that are specifically relevant to them.

For prospective students, we understand that it can seem more daunting to message in a chat box than speak to someone face-to-face, but we are there to help ease any worries or concerns your young person may have about university.

### 3. Take advantage of what is available

It's very easy for students to scroll through the welcome page of an online fair, browse a course page they have probably already looked at and then log off. Particularly at large national fairs or online Open Day events, there's usually so much more on offer such as virtual campus tours, presentations on student life and departmental subject sessions. All of this is created specifically to help provide your young person with the same information they would be able to gather at an in-person event.

### 4. Attend subject-specific events

Another great thing about having online events so readily available is that universities are able to run academic taster sessions and webinars, which would be less feasible to deliver in person in each individual school. This means your young person will have the chance to learn about the course and experience the teaching style.

It also means that if they're not 100% sure what they want to study, they can try out different sessions and see what appeals to them the most! You'll also find that the content is available on-demand as well, so your young person can tune in at their convenience – and maybe they'll let you join in too!



# Preparing for university exhibitions

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

Preparing your young person for what they can expect at a university exhibition is key to avoiding the grab-and-run or the “erm, I don’t know what to say” conversations that we sometimes experience as higher education advisers. We recognise a hall or exhibition venue full of other students, teachers and unfamiliar faces might be intimidating, but if your young person knows what to expect from the day, they’re bound to feel more comfortable. Following the steps below will help them to prepare.

## It’s all about options

Your young person should spend some time thinking about their next steps before the event and be reassured that they don’t need to have an exact idea of what or where to study. It can be handy to create a shortlist of the universities that they’re keen to speak to though.

**“Preparing your young person is key to avoiding the grab-and-run conversations that we sometimes experience as higher education advisers.”**

## No question is too big or small

Chances are we’ve been asked the same questions plenty of times before, so your young person doesn’t have to feel anxious about asking us their big, or small, questions. It’s also important that they don’t rely on their friends to be the designated university questioner, as uni exhibitions are a fantastic way to help them build independence and confidence. You may wish to work together to boost their confidence and prepare a few conversation starters about courses, entry requirements, accommodation, facilities, location, extra opportunities, Open Days or whatever else what interests them!

## What to expect

Find a map of the event beforehand to help them get their bearings and allow your young person to prepare for any scheduled talks. Some universities may provide physical or digital prospectuses, but it’s best to wear comfortable shoes and take a strong bag.

Closer to the time, your young person may also receive an individual QR code which they can ask universities to scan to receive information updates. Some students find it useful to temporarily set this as their phone lock screen or just have it to hand.

## My top tip

They’ll probably feel worn-out on your way home, but this can be a good time for your young person to make a quick note of which universities stood out to them.

Reflect on the day together when you get chance and encourage them to continue their conversation with universities and their teachers if they have more questions. This is a good way to encourage them to book university Open Days.



# A guide to the university admissions process and offer-making

**By Susie Kilburn, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Officer at City, University of London**

Supporting your young person through the university admissions process may be a slightly daunting experience, whether you've been through it yourself or not. Here's a short summary of the admissions process to help.

## Application timelines

- UCAS applications can be submitted from the middle of September in Year 13
- The deadline for students applying to all courses at Oxford and Cambridge, or at all universities for Medicine, Veterinary Science/Medicine and Dentistry is 16 October (for 2024 entry)
- The deadline for all other courses and institutions is the last Wednesday in January. For 2024 entry, this will be 31 January 2024.

Your young person will usually be given an earlier internal deadline by their school or college, and it's important they adhere to this over the national deadlines.

## What do admission tutors receive from UCAS?

### From the student:

- key personal information (e.g., nationality, education, work experience etc.)
- their personal statement

### From their school/college:

- a reference, which may include contextual or individual circumstances
- predicted grades for any qualifications the student is currently completing and actual grades for achieved qualifications, such as GCSEs.

Depending on the course and university, your young person may be required to take an additional step in their application such as an interview or test. It should be clear on the university course pages if any of these stages are required. The student's performance at this stage will be considered by the university before they provide a response.

## Admissions tutors consider:

- does this student meet the entry requirements for the course?
- does this student show enthusiasm for the course?
- does this student have the skills and experiences needed to succeed on the course?

Admission tutors are not able to see the other universities your young person has applied to at this stage.

## Offers your young person may receive:

- **Conditional:** They have been offered a place on their chosen course, providing that they meet the grades specified by the university.
- **Unconditional:** They have been offered a place that carries no conditions.
- **Alternative course:** The university has not been able to offer your young person a place on the course they originally applied for, but have offered them a place on an alternative programme.
- **Unsuccessful:** They have not been offered a place.

Response timeframes vary from university to university, but they all have a decision deadline to meet which is usually around the third week of May.

## Your young person will typically select two offers:

- a firm choice – this should be their top choice
- an insurance choice – this is their back-up choice. Their insurance choice should have lower predicted grades in case they miss the grades for their firm choice.

If your young person does not receive any offers, or decides to decline the offers they receive, they have the option to apply to another university through UCAS Extra (until 4 July) and/or Clearing (from 5 July).



# How to write a standout personal statement

**By Kat Knight, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Manager at City, University of London**

The personal statement is usually the part of a student's university application that requires the most time and attention. It may also be the first time a student has produced a piece of writing like it. I've put together some key information and advice to help you support your young person during this process.

## What is the personal statement?

The personal statement is used by university admissions teams to understand the skills and experiences your young person has that will make them an ideal student for the course.

## Nailing the structure

The structure of a personal statement will vary slightly for every student, but we recommend the following for a clear and concise statement:

- **introduction** – a couple of sentences that let us know why your young person has chosen to study this subject
- **love of the subject** – anything that goes beyond the sixth form syllabus to show their interest in the subject. Good examples are taster days, online courses, relevant journals or articles, documentaries or podcasts
- **their studies** – in this section your young person should let us know what they study at sixth form and how that's preparing them for their course and university study

- **additional experience** – this is typically work experience. Even part-time jobs that don't seem relevant to the subject still provide skills such as teamwork and communication which are transferable for all degrees
- **hobbies** – a few sentences about what they do in their spare time. If these give them skills including teamwork and leadership, even better!
- **conclusion** – a sentence or two summarising how university will support their next steps, or future career plans.

## Backing up their statements

Instead of providing a list of things they've done, it's important your young person reflects on their experiences and why they've been useful. They are likely to have gained transferable skills from their experiences which will have prepared them well for university study.

We recommend checking each point your young person makes to ensure they're ticking the following boxes:

**A – Activity** – a brief description of what they've done (work experience, online courses etc)

**B – Benefit** – what skills or experience did they gain from the activity?

**C – Course** – how does this activity or benefit relate to the course they have applied for?

## An example of the ABC method:

'Outside of my studies, I work in busy fast-food chain, where I have recently taken on more responsibility as a team supervisor. On shift I manage a team of four staff whose tasks range from taking and fulfilling orders to cooking food. As the manager, I also handle complaints from customers and manage our order flow. This is not unlike being on shift in a ward, and I feel well prepared to work with other teams to balance demanding priorities in the hospital.'

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# Five tips for preparing portfolios and interviews for creative courses

**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 young person's application. It allows them to showcase their style and creative ability, discuss their influences and demonstrate their passion for their creative subject.

## Five tips to help your young person during the application process.

### 1. Research the course

It's really important that they look into the course they're applying for. Universities won't expect them to be able to recite every module, but courses can differ vastly between universities. In their portfolio or interview, they'll need to show an understanding of the course and subject area. To stay ahead of the game, your young person should look into attending an Open Day, read the portfolio guidance carefully and explore current events.

### 2. Help us learn about them

At the same time as demonstrating that they understand the course, universities will also want to see what inspires your young person! Everyone is unique and we want to see them amongst the pages. They should include a range of things that describe them as a person and as a creative individual – what makes them tick? As creatives, we put a lot of ourselves into our work, so they should ensure that comes across.

### 3. Show us the creative process

Within the portfolio, your young person can shine by demonstrating their creative journey through initial research, developmental work and then the final piece. They should also demonstrate that they can critically review and analyse their work. Would they do the same again, what would they change? This balance of creativity and reflection will help them sail through their studies too.

### 4. Keep it succinct

While we love to see a variety of work within a portfolio, we do want to see your young person's ability to edit. It's all about establishing a balance. They shouldn't bring everything they've ever done, but they shouldn't pare it back so far that they're left with little to show either! They should also try to tailor their portfolio to the course they're applying for.

### 5. Choose a suitable format

They should opt for what best suits the creative area they're working in – just because a portfolio is digital doesn't mean all their work has to be digital too.

They should consider practicality too – is a bulky folder going to hinder them in transit? Would a digital portfolio be easier to share? Your young person should tailor the format of their portfolio to suit the situation as much as possible.

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

Remember, universities will always be there to support your young person through the application process. Encourage them to make the most of their opportunities by attending workshops, taster days and more, so that they're fully engaged and prepared for their application journey.

Note from  UniTasterDays

Remember, you can search events advertised for parents and students through [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com).

# A guide to degree apprenticeships

**By Carol Rogers, Degree Apprenticeships Manager at Harper Adams University**

Following the completion of their A levels (or equivalent), there are various options available for your young person to gain a start in their chosen career. For some professions, the only route to them previously was through a university degree. But now, degree apprenticeships might be an option as well.

There are currently 123 Level 6 undergraduate apprenticeships available at higher or degree level, including occupations such as a Chartered Surveyor, Youth Worker, Building Control Surveyor, Food Industry Technical Professional and many more.

## What is a degree apprenticeship and what are the benefits of completing one?

A degree apprenticeship offers an alternative route to gaining a higher-level qualification and opens possibilities for many more students where university is not the right choice.

Benefits include funding; the apprenticeship is funded by the apprenticeship levy, so students do not need to apply for a student loan.

Apprenticeship standards are set by employers within industry and outline key knowledge, skills and behaviours for a particular role. These standards are mapped to apprenticeship programmes, with the intention that apprentices work towards gaining relevant work experience through a structured programme.

Degree apprenticeships offer students the opportunity to gain work experience while completing their degree. Many of the Harper Adams current Chartered Surveyor apprentices say they benefit from building networks and work experience early in their careers – where going to university would not give them the same opportunity.

## The structure

Apprenticeships follow a similar structure regardless of level:

- an application process that includes assessments to make sure the chosen course is appropriate and at the right level

- a structured programme of learning while working and earning a wage, supported by the employer and the training provider
- an independent assessment at the end of the programme to confirm competence of knowledge, skills and behaviours within the apprenticeship standard.

It can be difficult for a student to balance work, study and life but the apprenticeship regulations require that an apprentice has protected time within their contracted hours for study and training – currently six hours per week. This includes attending university tutorials, work shadowing and other learning activities relevant to the apprenticeship standards.

The structure of training will differ for each apprenticeship. At Harper Adams University, we have block weeks of teaching throughout the year, where apprentices join us on campus for their lectures and tutorials. Other universities or training providers will have day release programmes and some may be remote.

## Entry requirements

Entry requirements are typically the same as universities, although relevant work experience is also considered.

The application process itself differs from university and isn't operated through UCAS. The employer contacts the university to confirm they've employed an apprentice and we then go through the application process.

An apprenticeship is a job first – the employer chooses a university to work with for the degree element of the programme, so the first step is to find an employer that is willing to support the apprenticeship programme. The Find an apprenticeship website is useful for finding vacancies across England. Students can see what's available in their area for a particular career. We also encourage students to approach companies as well, to see if they would support an apprenticeship – this is something that many current apprentices have done.



# Flying the nest: a guide to university accommodation

**By Emma Churchill, School and College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter**

For many young people, choosing to go to university will result in them living away from home for the first time. This is an exciting but also daunting time for your young person, especially as they start to navigate the various accommodation options. Setting aside time to do research early on will help your young person feel more confident, making their transition much easier.

To get started, we recommend searching university websites to find their dedicated accommodation webpages. Here, you will find information about the accommodation on offer, as well as the support provided. You will find that accommodation comes in many forms, some of which will suit your young person more than others. Some options include:

## University owned or managed accommodation

This is a popular choice for first-year undergraduate students. Often located close to the university itself and tends to be set up specifically for students at that institution. There's normally a wide range of options available to suit all needs and budgets. Typically, applications are made directly to the institution.

## Private halls

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

## Private student housing

This is a popular option for students after their first year. Private housing provides the opportunity to live with friends and experience the next step to independence.

## Living at home

Going to university does not necessarily mean that your young person must leave home, particularly if you live within a commutable distance from their chosen university.

## Research time

After researching what's available, ask your young person to reflect on the following questions to help them find their perfect home from home:

- ?** What's important to them? Consider cooking, distance from university/ town, size of room, the facilities (e.g., ensuite room, kitchen etc.) and how many people they are happy to share these with.
- ?** How much can they afford to spend?
- ?** Is the accommodation accredited by a regulator?
- ?** How many weeks do they need a contract? Some universities offer year-long or academic year contracts. You may also see term-time-only contracts where students are required to move their belongings out over Christmas and Easter holidays.
- ?** What do students have to say about it? If a university has a platform like UniBuddy, make use of this to ask questions directly to current students.

Finally, I would recommend students visit the accommodation in person or attend virtual events. This offers the chance to ask any questions, however small, to help you both feel confident about accommodation decisions. And remember, it won't be long before they are back home again, asking for their favourite home cooked meal!

**“For many young people, choosing to go to university will result in them living away from home for the first time. This is an exciting but also a daunting time - for the student as well as you as their parent or guardian. ”**

# When, why and how will universities get in touch post-application?

**By Lucy Holehan, Access and Success Project Manager at The Brilliant Club (and previously Plus Programme Officer at the University of Leeds)**

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

## Communication with UCAS and universities

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

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

Key times a university may communicate with an applicant are to:

- offer the student an interview after they have submitted their application (only some courses require an interview)
- provide further details of any conditions surrounding their offer
- ask applicants to apply for accommodation (the deadline is usually around June of the year they expect to start)
- tell students about scholarships and bursaries that they may wish to apply for.

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

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

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

- if a parent or guardian wishes to speak to the university admissions team about their young person's application, the applicant must officially nominate them via their UCAS application.
- always provide the applicant's UCAS ID number if asking a specific question, otherwise the staff member replying may struggle to locate the required information.
- once a student is enrolled on a course, the university will not communicate with any parents, guardians or other family members who enquire about them unless specifically requested and agreed in advance (in very limited circumstances). This is for data protection and privacy reasons.

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

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

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

# Let's get clear about Clearing

**By Andy Long, Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Access Manager (UK) at Keele University**

Clearing has changed in recent years. If you were to look back ten years, it may have been seen by some as a last chance saloon for students who didn't get the grades they needed. But fast forward to recent years, and it has become one of the best options for finding their place at university.

## When does Clearing start?

Clearing is seen to start on A Level results day, but it actually starts much earlier, typically on 5 July. From this point, any new applications to UCAS are considered by universities through Clearing, as well as any students who decline their firm choice through UCAS. This is both for students who are waiting for their results and those who have already achieved them. It should also be considered that students don't need to have applied during the UCAS cycle to make use of Clearing.

For some students, Clearing is now the sixth choice when it comes to getting into university. They'll typically start to decide during their first year of Level 3 study, apply through UCAS by the January deadline and hopefully receive all their offers. Whilst all of this happens, they may have a change in circumstances, or change of heart about what they want to study, and this is where

Clearing really comes into its own. It is a buyer's market for students, as they have more options at their disposal and will have their grades to hand, allowing them to pick and choose.

## Research is key

Not all universities and all courses go into Clearing, so your young person must make sure they research the institutions that accept applications. UCAS and university websites are the best places to see what is available and will also help them find out where they need to apply. Although supported by UCAS, a lot of the conversations and applications will go to the university directly as at this point, a student can apply to and hold as many offers – from as many universities – as they like!

Universities will consider changing their entry requirements around Clearing as well. This means that if your young person wasn't sure if they'd get an offer from a university because of their grades, they may now be eligible to apply.

## How can I help?

Your young person will never know what is going to happen during the results period, and hopefully everything will go to plan for them. But they should always prepare for their next steps just in case things don't turn out as they hope.

If they decide to use Clearing, you can support their decision-making by going with them to Clearing Open Days or interviews if applicable. They will also have lots of support from their school or college, universities and UCAS during this period, so although it might feel intense, there's always someone they can speak to for advice.





# THIS IS WHERE IT STARTS.

Join us for an Open Day in 2023

23 June  
24 June  
19 August  
14 October  
15 October  
18 November

Explore our beautiful 600-acre campus, tour our state-of-the-art teaching facilities, view our accommodation, and meet our academics and current students to learn more about what it's like to be a student at Keele.

[keele.ac.uk/visit](https://keele.ac.uk/visit)





# 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 university students in England who will be starting higher education courses from September 2023. So, if you are reading this, it means it's very likely to impact the young person you're supporting!

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.

*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, remaining that way until 2026-27

New students starting courses from September 2023 will start repaying student

loans when they 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
- she 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

For those starting university in September 2023, this will add ten years to the current repayment term, providing more time to pay off more of their full student loans. Of course, if students are in a position where they (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](#).



# What's involved in a student finance application?

**By Dr Ann-Marie Tupciauskas-Richardson, Outreach Project Lead (Regional) at the University of Greenwich**

In the current climate, financial worries are a concern to us all. This is especially true for those planning a big change, including students about to begin their university life.

Here are some jargon-busting answers to frequently asked questions about undergraduate loan applications to help you support the young person in your life.

## Jargon Busting: What is...

### 'SFE'?

Teachers or careers advisers tend to use this abbreviation. They are referring to **Student Finance England**, a partnership between the Department for Education (DfE) and Student Loans Company (SLC) that provides financial support. Your young person can apply for tuition fees, maintenance loans and some grants and bursaries through their website.

### A 'Tuition Fee Loan'?

Students applying for Student Finance receive a Tuition Fee Loan from the government (SFE) each year to cover the cost of their studies:

- these are paid directly to the university
- are not means-tested
- for the majority of full-time, three-year undergraduate courses, this equates to £9,250 per year.

### A 'Maintenance Loan'?

These funds are available to cover living expenses such as accommodation. The loan is paid each term, directly into the student's bank account. The amount that can be borrowed depends on three factors.

1. Location of study: A student studying in London will be entitled to a higher loan amount.
2. Where the student lives during their studies: Loan amounts differ depending on whether a student lives at home or in accommodation.
3. Household income.

**Household income** is the prospective student's taxable income (such as wages/salary) plus the income of:

- you, their parent or guardian (if they are under 25 and live with their parents or depend on them financially)
- one of their parents and their parent's partner (if they are under 25 and live with them or depend on them financially).

You will be asked to provide evidence of your income if you have a student under 25 who lives with you or is financially dependent on you.

## What evidence do you need to provide?

- Evidence of your income such as payslips
- Your National Insurance number and personal income for the previous tax year – P60 or Self-Assessment tax return
- Any taxable state benefits, pensions or income from UK and foreign investments
- Your marital status, if you are separated or divorced
- If you live with a partner – they will request their details separately.

## How do I send evidence?

You can register for a separate account from the young person you're supporting on the Student Loans Company website. This allows you to keep track of what is needed for the application and contact SFE if you have any queries.

As long as they are readable, clearly scanned digital copies of evidence are accepted.



# A guide to university bursaries and scholarships

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

Student finance can be complicated but universities can help. They employ staff to guide students and their families through the process, 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 such as bursaries and scholarships which are important to know about.

## What are bursaries and scholarships?

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

Scholarships are usually grants paid to students who do very well academically or in other areas.

Note from  UniTasterDays

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

For example, if a student receives three As at A Level, or is a talented musician or sports person.

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

## Further information on bursaries and scholarships

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

Most students will want to prioritise the course and the university they go to when making decisions, but bursaries and scholarships can sometimes make the difference between two similar offers. Alternatively, they can certainly be a very welcome extra to make life a little easier when they start their course.

One final piece of advice for your young person – when they are dealing with anything financial, be it loans, or banking or bursaries - is to be aware of scams. If the person you are supporting is unsure about an email or a text, don't click on links within them, or offer any personal details if they do. If in doubt, contact a university through their official channels to check if what they've been sent is genuine.



# An introduction to 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's therefore key that your young person is aware of any available funding that will support them with their studies. One example of this is the NHS Learning Support Fund (NHS LSF).

## What is the NHS Learning Support Fund?

The NHS LSF is additional funding that your young person may be eligible for if they study a health course. The payments are grants, so they don't need to be paid back. As it's an additional pot of free money, it also has no impact on their 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.

### Travel and dual accommodation expenses

Reimbursement of additional travel and accommodation costs your young person might have while they're on placement (in addition to their regular commute). A Podiatry student at the University of Salford shared that their expenses allowed them to 'apply for the exact placement opportunities needed, without worry about the extra commuting costs.' However, it's important that your young person budgets and keeps a log of their expenses for reimbursement purposes.

### Exceptional support fund

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

## Is your young person eligible for the NHS Learning Support Fund?

At a basic level, to be eligible for the NHS LSF your young person needs to be:

- actively studying an eligible course in England
- eligible for maintenance and tuition fee support from the Student Loans Company (SLC).

## 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 practice (level 5 and 6 courses)
- orthoptics\*
- orthotics and prosthetics\*
- paramedicine
- physiotherapy
- podiatry\* or chiropody
- radiography (diagnostic and therapeutic)\*
- speech and language therapy.

\*If your young person studies on these courses, they can receive an extra £1,000 per academic year. However, Social Work courses have different funding, find out more at: [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/social-work-students)

## How can they apply?

Applications open in spring and your young person will need to create an account and apply online. As with student finance, they'll also need to reapply every academic year: [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-learning-support-fund-lsf](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-learning-support-fund-lsf)

“ It is key that your young person is aware of any available funding that will support them with their studies. ”



# A guide to the Disabled Students' Allowance

**By Sarah Hanson, Strategic Outreach Lead at Shaping Futures (part of the Uni Connect Programme)**

Starting a higher education journey can be really exciting, but your young person may have concerns about how they'll manage and the support they'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 or college through their Education and Health Care Plan (also known as EHCP). It's 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 your young person might incur as a direct result of a disability. All the support provided by the DSA is based solely on an individual's needs, so it's not dependent on household income and none of the funding or equipment needs to be returned.

**The DSA can support students 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.

**The DSA helps students 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

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

Many students are put off applying for DSA because they've worried about being treated differently, or because they want a fresh start at university, but this support can be vital for your person to succeed and achieve their potential. They should start the process as soon as possible, to ensure support will be in place for the start of the term.

As well as support from the DSA, universities and colleges will also offer a package of support, such as specialised transition days, peer mentors or disability coordinators to support them directly. As a parent or carer, you can find out more about this support through university websites or by attending Open Days and speaking with their student support teams.



# A guide to university fair access and widening participation

**By Claire Churchill, Deputy Head of Outreach at the University of Birmingham**

Understanding higher education can be challenging – there are acronyms to learn, dates to remember, forms to complete and events to attend. This can be especially difficult for students, and their parents or carers, who come from under-represented groups within higher education.

## This includes students who:

- are in the first generation of their family to go to university
- have low household incomes
- live in areas where fewer young people progress to university
- attend schools that perform below the national average
- have experienced time in care
- are young carers
- have a disability.

The Office for Students (OFS) – which regulates the work of universities – states an aim to ensure that *‘...all students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education’*. Therefore, many universities put support in place to help students from these backgrounds overcome any barriers they face. As parents or carers, if you feel that your young person might be eligible for additional support, you can signpost them to the following opportunities:

## Pre-entry support

- Widening participation programmes such as summer schools and other intensive outreach events. These support fair access by giving students an insight into university life and study.

Students will need to meet eligibility criteria in order to take part, so look carefully at these before applying. Participants may also receive additional benefits such as mentoring, support with the transition to higher education or access to reduced or alternate offers.

Note from  UniTasterDays

To find out more about university fair access and widening participation, check out the UniTasterDays Uni Guide podcast at: [www.unitasterdays.com/theuniGuide](http://www.unitasterdays.com/theuniGuide)

## Contextual offers

- Most universities will take a student’s personal circumstances into account when they consider an application and will review how these circumstances may impact their achievement. Contextual offers are often a grade reduction below the typical entry requirements for a course. They may be offered automatically to students meeting specific criteria or may need to be applied for separately – students can find out more on university websites.

## Post-entry support

- Enhanced funding: Your young person may be eligible to receive enhanced funding to support them at university. Again, it is worth checking university websites for what might be on offer and the eligibility criteria.
- Academic support: Students from under-represented backgrounds may be entitled to additional support at university, such as peer mentoring, 1:1 guidance or enhanced careers programmes. What is available to students will vary from university to university, so it is worth researching what would be most beneficial for your young person.

**“Overall, universities want to ensure that there is fair access to their programmes, and parents and carers play an important role in helping students access this support. We don’t expect you to know all the answers, so do reach out to universities for specific guidance. ”**

# Who is eligible for access and widening participation programmes?

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

Higher education institutions are eager 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 those who are the most under-represented at their institutions, or students who are generally under-represented within higher education institutions in the UK.

## What does 'under-represented within higher education' actually mean?

When we say 'under-represented in higher education' we are referring to students who are statistically less likely to progress to higher education. Often, institutions will use eligibility criteria to make it clear who their target audience is, in order to receive additional support through widening participation programmes. Many of the criteria will focus on students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or under-represented communities.

**“Higher education institutions are eager to ensure learning communities are inclusive, safe and welcoming spaces for all students, no matter their background. ”**

## So, who is eligible to receive support?

The most common thread in eligibility criteria is that students need to have attended a state school or college for 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 e.g. Black, Asian, Arab or mixed-race backgrounds
- mature students – students aged 21 or above at the start of their undergraduate degree
- 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).

It is worth noting that different institutions will 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 criteria in the bullet points above and on the previous page.


### If students meet this criteria, what support do they qualify for?


This can vary between institutions, but may include:


- reduced offer schemes e.g. 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 (non-repayable)

- mentoring, often with current students at the institution
- the opportunity to attend tailored events and activities at the institution such as campus tours, residential events or online skills sessions
- ongoing support such as regular contact relating to key milestones e.g. making post-18 decisions, completing personal statements and applying for student finance.

### How can you help your young person to access the support?

 Look at university websites to check their eligibility criteria. Remember that not all institutions will have the same criteria, so it might be helpful to keep a list to refer back to.

 Research widening participation programmes at various institutions – are there any particular universities your young person is interested in? What support are they hoping for? Helping them to apply for these programmes can be beneficial, and in fact, many of them will ask for a parent, carer or guardian consent form.

 You might wish to attend events with your young person, either in person or online, to help them with any questions they may have. Remember, you don't need to be an expert, you can ask questions too! A good way to have your questions answered and find out about upcoming events can be to sign up for updates from [UniTasterDays](#).

**“When we say ‘under-represented in higher education’ we are referring to students who are statistically less likely to progress to higher education. ”**





# Supporting care-experienced students at university

**By Wendy Price OBE, Head of Widening Access and Participation at the University of Sunderland, and National Strategy Group Co-Chair for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers**

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

Here are my five top tips when supporting a young person to explore their options and help ensure that their transition to higher education is as smooth as possible.

## 1. Find the right higher education provider

Look for providers who have made a public commitment to supporting care-experienced students. Have they signed the Care Leaver Covenant? Are they members of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)? Engagement with these organisations is a clear message that support is available and these institutions have committed to developing their offer for these students.

## 2. Consider alternative routes into higher education

Not all students feel confident about their ability to progress directly to higher education. Would they prefer to study an Integrated Foundation Year to prepare them for undergraduate study? Perhaps an apprenticeship or foundation degree would help to build confidence? There are a range of options available to suit all students. Contact each university to find out more.

## 3. Encourage them to inform universities about their circumstances

When universities know that a student is care-experienced, we can support them through the entire application process and work with their teachers and carers to guide and reassure them.

Also, encourage the young person to find out what support is available to them. At the University of Sunderland, we provide bespoke support for all care-experienced students. This includes a named contact, a bursary of £2,000 each year, regular check-in meetings, help finding part-time work and so much more. The Propel website, developed by national charity Become, provides full access to information about the support offered at each institution and is a useful starting point.

## 4. Help with planning ahead

A to-do list which clearly shows key actions in the lead-up to starting university will be very helpful for all prospective higher education students. Applying for accommodation, bursaries and student finance may have deadlines, so these need to be included too. Care-experienced students may be eligible to receive additional financial assistance, personalised support and priority places to attend summer schools so it is important to plan ahead.

## 5. Be the difference!

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

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

# How do universities support student wellbeing?

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

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

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

## What support is available for your young person?

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

### Mental health advisers

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

### Counselling

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

### Wellbeing events

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

## How do students access wellbeing support?

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

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

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

“Universities have a duty of care to their students. Their wellbeing is at the core of what we do. Remember that your young person will be independent at university, but they will never be on their own.”



# How do universities provide additional support for students in need?

**By Lucy Yarde and Emma Churchill, School and College Engagement Officers at the University of Exeter**

Starting university can be an exciting but challenging time for any young person, but for those who need extra support, or who come from under-represented backgrounds, it can be even more daunting.

Ahead of starting university, some students may want to know the advice, information and support available to them particularly if they experience any of the following:

- specific learning difficulties
- mental health difficulties
- physical disabilities
- sensory impairments
- long-term medical conditions

Universities want to ensure that all students can access higher education regardless of background, and there are many support services available to ensure that individual student needs are met. We will provide an outline of these services here.

## Wellbeing services

Typically, a free and confidential service available for all students who may be finding things difficult – personally or academically. These services offer counselling or other 1:1 support, highlight online support packages and work with wider support services where relevant.

## Health services

Most universities will have a health centre on-site or links to one nearby. Students are encouraged to register once they join the university.

## Students' unions

The SU, as it is also known, can provide advice on many issues, such as housing and funding. As students' unions are independent bodies, the support they offer is in addition to what's already provided by a university.

## Academic support

Your young person is likely to be assigned a personal academic tutor who can talk to them about their academic and professional

development. Universities also have specialist academic advisers who help with areas including academic writing or mathematical skills, such as statistics.

## Disability support

Students with additional needs, such as physical disabilities or additional learning needs are supported in various ways. For example, through the Government's Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), they may be entitled to funding that enables them to purchase specialist equipment or help cover the costs of a non-medical helper.

Applications for the DSA are made through the Student Finance England portal. Universities also provide additional support in the form of accommodation modifications, or putting together an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). This can help your young person with certain adjustments depending on their needs, such as additional time in exams.

## Accommodation

Most universities offer first-year students a place in university accommodation. Although your young person will be living independently, residences are monitored by security and usually have additional support teams in place, such as Residence Life Advisers who offer drop-in sessions for students who require additional help.

## Career support

Universities want their students to succeed and their specialist careers teams help them with their next steps. For example, many will offer CV and interview workshops, as well as advise students on work opportunities – from part-time student jobs to internships and graduate schemes.

## Financial support

Universities often have many bursaries and scholarships available. Your young person could be eligible to receive this additional financial support and university websites are the best place to find that information. Many universities will also have a fund to support students facing unexpected financial hardship which may impact their ability to study.

It is important that prospective students and their parents or carers are aware of the support offered at the universities they're interested in. We recommend that you contact them directly and start these conversations as early as possible. They can then make the appropriate adjustments to support your young person's transition to university.



# Discover University for parents and supporters

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

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

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



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

Sign up for our free webinars aimed at parents/supporters: [exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/applying/accessexeter/parents](https://exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/applying/accessexeter/parents)



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# Supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities

**By Natalie Freislich-Mills, Editorial provided whilst Head of Make Happen (part of the Uni Connect Programme for Essex)**

Although special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is a term widely used in schools and colleges, this is usually replaced with the term 'disabilities' in higher education. Your young person may not identify with the term disabled, however, it's crucial that they are aware of their rights and the support available to them during their studies. I will provide a guide to this here.

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

## Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

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 studying on their course and is typically applied for through the relevant nation's body for student finance. It is a non-repayable grant and is dependent on your young person's individual needs. If they are yet to receive an official diagnosis, it's not too late, some universities offer full or partial financial support for assessments once they've enrolled.

The types of support on offer for students will vary depending on the university, so it's essential that your young person researches this carefully.

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

## Some examples of what may be on offer 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 your young person to meet staff as well as existing students to find out what support is available. Student unions often have a disability officer who represents disabled students to ensure their interests are represented.

Your young person's local Uni Connect hub may be able to support them too. Uni Connect provides impartial information and guidance on college and university and is funded by the Office for Students. Students can find out about Uni Connect by speaking to their teacher or careers adviser, or by visiting the Uni Connect website to find contact details for their local hub.

**“ University Open Days allow your young person 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 to ensure their interests are represented. ”**

# 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 your young person will be accustomed to. This is an opportunity not afforded in many social groups or workspaces and is one they can benefit from. Interacting with different people is important for our personal growth and wider understanding of the world.

## Are they feeling a little daunted?

Misunderstandings about groups of people who are different to us can lead to unnecessary hostility and anxiety. Explore why your young person might feel nervous, uncomfortable or unsafe around certain people and help them recognise how these negative associations have formed.

At university, they 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 their learning, not only in the diversity of thought from their peers, but also in their understanding of society, privilege and inequality.

The more interactions that occur will help to change pre-conceptions and stereotypes. Your young person 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 your young person to expand their social and professional network to include a broader range of people. This exposure to diverse thinking, cultural awareness and equality will directly benefit them by enhancing social and structural inclusion, whatever their future career aspirations. Through this personal growth, students can have a positive impact on the world.

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

This is also a chance for them to showcase aspects of their personality and celebrate themselves in a more authentic way than they may have been done previously. By realising the lived experiences of others, we can help create a culture of inclusion and support each other to succeed.



# How can your young person make the most of their university experience?

**By Kate Nelson, Marketing Coordinator at Teesside University**

We know university is about gaining that all-important degree, but it's so much more than that. Your young person will gain experiences and skills that they wouldn't get anywhere else. Here's a guide to some of the new things they can expect.

## Academic workshops

It's a big leap from further to higher education; your young person has to learn how to think critically, use references, structure assignments and manage their time. It can be difficult knowing where to start, but academic workshops offer useful information, tips and practical exercises to help your young person develop the skills they need to get the most out of their studies. Workshops are typically delivered by academic support teams and they're a great way for your young person to feel supported during their time at university.

## Clubs and societies

Your young person will have spare time during their studies, so joining a club or society is a great way to meet like-minded people, expand their friendship group, try something new and/or keep active. Clubs and societies usually have a stall during their first week at university, so that's a perfect time for them to see what's available and to sign up. If there isn't anything they like, they can look to set up their own society.

## Placements and internships

When your young person graduates, they will be one amongst thousands. How do they make their job application stand out from the crowd? Completing a work placement or internship is a fantastic way of getting some on-the-job learning that they can include in a job application and discuss at an interview. It also gives them a real insight into what it's like to work in the industry and, more importantly,

helps them build networks and links that are vital for job hunting.

## Student ambassador scheme

If you've been to an Open Day with your young person, it's likely the person giving directions or delivering campus tours was a student ambassador. At Teesside University, our ambassadors apply and are interviewed for the role – excellent prep for future job applications by the way – and are paid for their time too, so it's a good way to top-up their funds. The role is really varied and includes working on Open Days, attending careers fairs throughout the country or delivering presentations in schools and colleges. Students gain many transferable skills that future employers value such as teamwork, presentation and time management skills. Ambassador schemes operate differently at every university, so encourage your young person to check out what's available at the unis they're interested in.

## Volunteering

Volunteering is a great opportunity for your young person to get away from the academic demands of university and do something they feel passionate about. Taking time away from their work while doing something meaningful can reduce stress and encourage them to be socially minded. Some universities even offer volunteering opportunities overseas – perfect for discovering new places, learning about other cultures and meeting new people.

**“ We know university is about gaining that all-important degree, but it's so much more than that. Your young person will gain experiences and skills that they wouldn't get anywhere else! ”**





University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO **BECOME UNSTOPPABLE**

## Advice for Parents, Carers and Supporters

We understand that, as a parent, carer or supporter of a student, you'll want to play an active role in helping them make decisions about studying at university. To help you understand the process, we have a dedicated page on our [website](#) with lots of useful information on key topics such as:

- / How to make an application
- / How fees work
- / Student accommodation
- / Attending open days
- / Student support

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We are the only campus-based university in Greater Manchester with our **Peel Park** and **Frederick Road** campuses just 2km from Manchester city centre and the only university to have a campus in the heart of **Media City**.

Visit us on our next **Open Day** to see for yourself!

**Scan to book your place:**





# Studying and working at university

By Andrew Cooper, Hybrid Delivery Coordinator at the University of Liverpool

Having a student job while studying is not a new thing and can be an important way for your young person to supplement their income and support themselves throughout their studies. As a parent you might be concerned that your young person will become distracted by work, but there are many benefits – and not just of the financial kind – from working alongside their studies.

## Can they transfer from a current position?

If your young person already has a part-time job at a national company, it's worth them asking about a transfer to their new study location. Many companies have stores in university towns and transferring means that your young person can continue working in a role that is familiar to them when they start somewhere new.

## Check out university employment opportunities

I encourage students to sign up to university job banks. Universities have a variety of roles available, from working in catering, supporting university events and running campus tours. Often the university will have restrictions on how many hours a student can work to ensure that they are not working too much and still have time for their studies.

For example, in student recruitment, I employ students to support school events and some weeks can be very busy! If I allocate a shift, but then a student tells me that they have a looming deadline that they're struggling with, I would find a replacement so that they can prioritise their studies.

## Jobs in the local area

Alternatively, many students will find jobs in the local area. There are lots of temporary jobs available, but I would advise them to think about the time of their shifts as evening work may affect their studies. If your young person is applying for a job in their local area, encourage them to ask their prospective employer if they would be flexible and consider their study priorities.

## Employment opportunities have career benefits

From a career perspective, employers are looking for graduates with multiple skills. Those students who graduate with a high grade alongside part-time employment must know how to prioritise tasks and have good time management, as well as a wealth of other soft skills.

It can also open up future careers that your young person may have never considered. For example, during my studies, I benefited from working as an usher at my university theatre. The year I graduated, the university opened a new public theatre and created a graduate role to manage it. My student job gave me the skills to successfully secure the role. After the year-long contract finished, I moved to a different department and that eventually led to the career I have now.

## Speak to the university's careers team

The final thing you can encourage your young person to do is engage with the university careers department. They can help them prepare for interviews, sharpen their CV and also support them with finding work experience and internships in an area related to their degree.

“ There are many employment opportunities available to students which will give them a variety of skills, potential contacts for when they graduate and a source of income. I would encourage your young person to explore these options as soon as they can. ”



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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21

# Making the most of university: an academic perspective

**By Marie Clifford, Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience at the University of South Wales**

Students turn up to lectures or seminars, do some extra reading, submit their assessments, pass them with flying colours and get their degrees. There might also be some socialising thrown in too.

That is one way of viewing university, but by preparing your young person for what to expect and what they need to put in to get the most out of it, it can be more than a transactional arrangement with some cheap drinks on the side.

## Relationships are key

Encourage your young person to get to know their lecturers, peer group and other key players. The vast majority of lecturers welcome contact from students, want to hear their thoughts and be asked for clarification. This provides great support for students both academically and socially.

Peer group support is invaluable; someone to vent with over a coffee or ask questions over WhatsApp provide the human contact we all need. With more hybrid or remote learning in action, attendance for on-campus lectures and seminars really help to build these relationships.

**“ It’s never too early to think about careers. What experience does your young person already have? How can they get more? ”**

## Students should engage fully

There is no point turning up if your young person isn't fully present. They should take notes to ensure active learning is taking place and limit distractions (there are apps to disable social media during teaching time). They should also expand learning outside of the formally arranged sessions by reading around their subject, finding links across subjects and, where applicable, in their day-to-day life.

## Take charge of their own learning

One of the key aspects of higher education study is becoming an independent thinker and an autonomous learner. There are huge advantages to this in that your young person will have more choices and options than they may have experienced from compulsory education. But with great power comes great responsibility! Attendance may not be monitored as closely and additional reading and research will need to be done outside of the classroom. Organisation and time management are skills that need to be honed and your young person will need to take charge of any feedback received. How can they improve? Are there common areas they are falling down on? How could this help them with future assessments in that subject, but also in different subjects?

## Planning ahead

It's never too early to think about careers. What experience does your young person already have? How can they get more? All universities have a careers service that will be able to find volunteering and paid positions that can help to broaden their CV when the time comes to think about their next steps.

University is not all about study either, so factoring in socialising, hobbies and 'me time' is essential for recharging and gaining valuable transferable skills. By embracing all that university can bring, your young person will have a successful, enjoyable and unforgettable experience.



# Student life: it's not what you might think!

**By Natalie Johnston, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Salford**

The perception of student life for parents and supporters may be based on experience, stereotypes in the media or influenced by the experience of others. In any case, I hope it is reassuring to know that the term 'student life' is more than just a series of assignments, social events and life lessons. It's a student's opportunity to explore their subject and discover their passion for a future career.

Students experiment with new hobbies and eclectic tastes and most form meaningful friendships that last a lifetime. The hazy memories of their student life will form the basis of anecdotes they share with the future generation (who will inevitably roll their eyes at the second-hand embarrassment).

## What will they do for the next three years?

**Full time study doesn't necessarily mean full time**

Study time is not just calculated based on how many hours of teaching takes place per week – known as 'contact time'. This can vary greatly and is in no way a reflection of quality. It may be surprising to learn that contact hours are rarely full time, unlike school or college. Contact hours are influenced by a range of factors and your young person can learn more about this by attending an Open Day.

## What happens outside of class?

Self-directed or independent study is a process where a student is given the time to reflect on what they've learned and to read around the subject using a recommended reading list.

For others, participating in practical study is a big part of their learning. For instance, a placement in a school can help a psychology student understand how theories around child development have influenced teaching resources used in their class. For those on degrees leading to qualifying status, such as midwifery, students sometimes spend as much as 50% of their total study time on compulsory placements in a range of clinical settings.

Assessments aren't all exams and coursework either. Groupwork is commonplace, as is public speaking, when presenting their findings to peers and professionals. Industry professionals may issue fashion students a live brief and those students are expected to pitch their concept with the hope of their idea being selected.

## Part-time work

Students often find the time to work alongside their studies and the extra income goes a long way to sustaining a safe and happy student life. Many universities support students to find quality part-time work that flexes around study demands. They will often employ students as ambassadors too.

## The transition

Whether home or away, starting university takes some getting used to. Students are thrown into a class of people they've never met, from all different walks of life. It can be a shock to realise that mainstream education, with registration and tutor time, is replaced with accountability for timekeeping and deadlines.



# Supporting your young person with their transition to university

**By Ruth Boyce, Schools and Colleges Senior Development Officer at the University of Winchester**

Starting university can be an exciting time, but it does bring changes, some expected and others which might come as a surprise for your young person. They're bound to be excited about their new life and independence at university, but this can also be mixed with concerns in terms of leaving friends, the cost of living and maybe a feeling of anxiousness about all the newness!

## Pre-arrival

After completing their applications, confirming their firm and insurance offers and applying for student finance, your young person should have a clear plan of what's ahead in a few months' time. As a parent or carer, you can be a great help to your young person, helping them to read the small print, check that they understand their offers and the terms and conditions of accommodation agreements.

## Orientation

Even before students start, universities will spend time supporting them, particularly as it gets closer to term and their place is confirmed on results day. Enrolment for many universities is online; some have online learning modules so that the basics of using the library, connecting their devices to the WiFi

and setting up their student email are all sorted before they get there. Encourage your young person to check their emails – they will receive information from the university's Student Union about welcome week and the activities that will help them to settle in.

## Settling in

The first few weeks can be exciting but it might be worth having a chat with your young person before they go about how you'll communicate – will it be a message every day or a phone call once a week? They might need you more in the first few weeks, as they get used to their new surroundings. For some students, their first few weeks can feel more like a holiday, and not that they've left home, so it might not be until several weeks have passed that they start to feel homesick, for those who may find the university transition more challenging.

Students who have a positive experience in one area are much more likely to have a positive experience in others. This is strongly linked to factors such as emotional resilience, positive mental wellbeing and social integration, so encourage your young person to try something new. Although they are there to study, the opportunities at university are vast and they can be key to them enjoying their time there.

## Extra support

Sometimes students need help with managing their finances, especially if they haven't lived independently before. There will be new chores such as cleaning their bathroom, washing and cooking, so it can be helpful to give your young person some practice before they leave home – and it'll help you out too! But if they have any money worries, universities have support services and experienced advisers they can turn to.



# Student insight: what do students get up to at university?

**By Erin Wilson, Broadcast Journalism Masters' student at the University of Central Lancashire and previously a Student Recruitment Assistant at Lancaster University**

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

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

## Independent study

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

## Placements

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

## Part-time work

Working part-time can also be something worth considering whilst at university. Both inside and outside of universities are opportunities for students to engage with the working life of the university and community.

For example, your young person could work as a student ambassador or in a local coffee shop or restaurant.

## Clubs and societies

University certainly isn't just all work and no play. The other big part of your young person's experience is making friends and meeting people from all over the world. Every university will have a myriad of activities for students to get involved in – some rather quirky ones, such as Octopush, a limited-contact sport in which two teams compete to manoeuvre a puck across the bottom of a swimming pool into the opposing team's goal.

## Socialising

Last and certainly not least, your young person's time will also be spent socialising with friends and flatmates. The main assumption of socialising within a university culture is drinking and clubbing, but this is not for everyone and there are plenty of alternatives. There are even societies and activities dedicated to sobriety. When I worked at Lancaster University, for example, students had museums, Williamson Park, Lancaster Canal, and the Lake District right on their doorstep.



# What are university societies?

**By Megan James and Ruby Turner,  
Student Recruitment Assistants at the  
University of Sheffield**

As parents and carers, it's important you feel your young person will be around people they get on with at university – especially during the first few weeks when everyone is finding their feet. By doing a bit of research into what's offered at universities, such as societies, you may have a better idea about how to advise them, what to do when they arrive and how to support them to make well-informed choices.

## What is a society?

Societies are a really key part of many students' experience at university and a great thing to sign up for in their first few weeks. Similar to a club, a university society simply refers to a group of people with a shared interest.

Societies can range from sports clubs, such as dance and judo, to more niche groups such as beekeeping or wine tasting! Whoever you're supporting during their transition to university, there will be a society that suits their interests. As societies are run by students for students, they can involve anything that your young person is passionate about. If they're unable to find one that meets their interests, they can create their own with a group of like-minded individuals.

## How do students find out about university societies?

During the first week of university, students will usually attend the Freshers' Fair. The fair gives

students the opportunity to speak to members of different societies and decide if there are any they would like to join. There's usually a small joining fee which can vary between societies – it's usually a little bit more for clubs that require kit. Most universities have financial support schemes in place for students who may need help with their society fees.

Societies hold a range of social events for students to get involved with, from nights out to volunteering sessions in the local community. They're an opportunity for students to really get the most out of their experience, outside of the lecture theatre.

## What are the benefits for your young person?

University is an inclusive environment and societies ensure that student views, interests and identities are represented. They create a fun, welcoming space with social events and campaigns to make university life as diverse as possible. As well as the social benefits, societies will help your young person to develop skills that are valued by employers.

Societies are run by committee members including a president, treasurer, inclusion officer and social secretaries. Your young person can find out more information on university websites, and they can speak to committee members and students at Open Days about the opportunities available.

“ **Societies hold a range of social events for students to get involved with, from nights out to volunteering sessions in the local community. They are an opportunity for students to really get the most out of their university experience outside of the lecture theatre.** ”



# A parent case study: meet Jackie

**Jackie lives in Cheltenham with her husband and two sons, William and Elliot, who are both at university. By sharing the journey they took to get there and her thoughts and experience as a parent, Jackie hopes to reassure other parents and supporters that it'll all be fine!**

## Introducing William

William attended a grammar school in Gloucestershire and studied A Levels in Geography, French and Economics. He completed a BA in Geography at the University of Exeter in 2022 and is currently studying a Master's Degree in Town Planning at the University of Birmingham, closer to home.

## Introducing Elliot

Elliot studied A Levels in History, Business and Economics at a comprehensive school in Cheltenham before going on to study History and Politics at the University of Nottingham. After taking a year out to travel around South America and start some part-time work, Elliot is currently studying a Master's programme in International Security and Terrorism back at his alma mater (this is the term used for a student's original university) in the hope of progressing his career in this area once he's graduated.

### 1. What did William and Elliot want to be when they were young and has that changed over time?

Neither expressed a particular interest in what they wanted to be, they both selected subjects at school and university that they enjoyed and were good at. In the second and third year of their undergraduate degrees, both had a better idea of a potential profession.

### 2. Did they always want to go to university?

Both William and Elliot knew they wanted the experience of studying at university and didn't really show an interest in entering the world of work after leaving school.

### 3. Did you attend any school events, talks, UCAS fairs or Open Days?

Yes, lots! Open Days were essential in finding out what they did, or didn't want, from a university. It was also helpful for them to think about what they'd compromise on too – whether that was the location of the university, the halls of residence or degree type. We attended lots of Open Days together as a family, which was a great way to see what the university was like and also have a look around the town or city. It helped both my sons, and us as parents, to get a feel for the university and experience what the city had to offer. It also helped to cement their desire to study at a Russell Group university.

### 4. How did you decide which Open Days to attend?

My sons took different approaches to picking Open Days and researching universities. Elliot did his homework and did lots of research online before choosing which universities to attend. He read lots of online forums, blogs and reviews to help him get a feel for the university, understand its reputation and get a gauge of what student life might be like.

William, however, had a more relaxed approach to selecting which Open Days to attend. They both decided they would like to be around a two-hour train journey from home, so that helped to narrow the selection too. Every university was so different from the next, so Open Days really were a vital research tool that helped with their final decisions.

### 5. What was the biggest factor that influenced their decision to study at the University of Nottingham and the University of Exeter?

As mentioned, both wanted to be approximately two hours on a main trainline from home. This turned out to be a great decision as it meant they could pop home for the weekend without it taking too much time and costing the earth!

Both William and Elliot were led by the subjects they wanted to study, but the campus and student life also had an impact on their decisions.

**“ They've loved every minute and have really thrown themselves into student life. They've taken on lots of different experiences, joined various clubs like surfing, rugby and a debating society - and had lots of different opportunities which they've thoroughly enjoyed. ”**

## 6. How did you feel about your sons going to university and moving away from home?

Both my husband and I were very excited about our children going to university, we knew that it would be a great experience for them and would help them to progress with their chosen careers.

We were nervous about the pressures of big nights out without their network of school friends being with them, but they soon made close friends and had a great time socialising together.

## 7. How did you help your sons prepare for university?

As a family we often cook together, so this put them in great stead for cooking for themselves. They've always done jobs around the house – cleaning their rooms, helping with chores etc, so that turned out to be useful when it came to looking after themselves! Both had part-time jobs when they were in sixth form too, which I think really helped them to budget and understand the value of money from a fairly young age.

## 8. Do you have any advice to other parents who are about to go on the same journey?



Remember that it won't always be easy for your young person, but knowing they can always call, Facetime or even come home if they need to will really help.



We decided to treat both to a gym membership in their first year, which encouraged them to keep fit and in turn, they both made great friends through sports clubs.



We found that it's important not to ask too many questions when they do come home, as they often like to just take it easy, away from the pressures of their studies.



Consider catered accommodation during their first year. Elliot had a catered hall-of-residence which we think really helped him to socialise and make friends, especially with students who weren't on his course. It's worth the extra spend, plus it's good to know they had the option of a warm meal everyday!



Be prepared to drop everything to go and see them if they need you.

## 9. As a parent, is there anything you wish you had known about?

Not really, we felt well-researched. If anything, I would say that catered accommodation is worth the extra money. It helps with socialising as they can always find someone on their corridor to go along to dinner with.

## 10. Overall, how have your sons found university and the experience of living away from home?

They've loved every minute and have really thrown themselves into student life. They've taken on lots of different experiences, joined various clubs like surfing, rugby and a debating society – and had lots of different opportunities which they've thoroughly enjoyed. Luckily, it wasn't just the social side of university that they liked; they both really enjoyed their studies too.

## 11. Thinking about the practicalities of university life, do you have any advice about must-take items?

A doorstep is a must! Being able to wedge your door open so people can see you and pop in for a chat is great, so it's a definite item to take to university. Also, lots of coat hangers, vitamins and things to help personalise a room. We also put together a snack box so that they could both help themselves to a familiar treat during the first few weeks of university life. We still put together these boxes for them to take back to university when they come home – nice shower gel, chocolate treats, a good book, magazine, shaving gel etc. I actually asked my son this question too and he said his advice would be “speak to anybody and everyone in your first few weeks” as it really helped him to make friends.

**“ As long as they can throw themselves into new activities and experiences and chat to people, they'll have a great time and you'll love to spoil them when they come home for the weekend! ”**



## Credits

A special thanks to all our guest contributors:

Marc Alner, Birmingham City University  
Jen Barton, Durham University  
Emma Berwick, student at the University of Birmingham  
Tasha Bodger, Harper Adams University  
Ruth Boyce, University of Winchester  
Ellie Campbell, Keele University  
Claire Churchill, University of Birmingham  
Emma Churchill, University of Exeter  
Marie Clifford, University of South Wales  
Andrew Cooper, University of Liverpool  
Dr Morag Duffin, University of Law  
Emily Durrant, University of Essex  
Natalie Freislich-Mills, Make Happen (Part of the Uni Connect Programme)  
Joe Glover, University of Leicester  
Carl Griffiths, Harper Adams University  
Melissa Grindon, Liverpool Hope University  
Chris Hakes, University of East Anglia  
Sarah Hanson, Shaping Futures (Part of the Uni Connect Programme)  
Max Harvey, Cardiff University  
Sarah Hewitson, University of Portsmouth  
Lucy Holehan, The Brilliant Club  
Rowan Hoper, University of Salford  
Megan James, University of Sheffield  
Natalie Johnston, University of Salford  
Susie Kilburn, City, University of London  
Kat Knight, City, University of London  
Steven Lawrence, University of Bath  
Ashleigh Little, University of Sunderland  
Selena Lockett, Swansea University  
Andy Long, Keele University  
Kate Nelson, Teesside University  
Carly Outerbridge, Keele University  
Wendy Price OBE, University of Sunderland  
Dr Sarah Mohammad-Qureshi, University of Law  
Carol Rogers, Harper Adams University  
Ella Sancassani, University of Essex  
Jonathan Stebbing, University of Kent  
Dr Ann-Marie Tupciauskas-Richardson, University of Greenwich  
Ruby Turner, University of Sheffield  
Lily Wearden, Aberystwyth University  
Laura Whitelock, University of York  
Erin Wilson, student at the University of Central Lancashire  
Lucy Yarde, University of Exeter

### Guest edited by:

Lydia Greenhalgh



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