



Higher
Horizons+



Parents' Guide to University



National Collaborative
Outreach Programme



Higher Horizons+ is a group of universities working together to offer information, advice and guidance about university and higher education to young people in Year 9 to Year 13.

This booklet is designed to break down some of the myths about university and how everything works, including student finance, how to choose a university and how to apply for a place. We hope this will help you and your child make the best decision for their future and know what to expect when they start to think about applying for university.



Routes to Higher Education

Higher Education refers to a variety of different study options after sixth form or college. As well as traditional university degrees, some courses let you stay on at college to complete qualifications equivalent to a university degree, or young people can choose to do a Degree-level Apprenticeship and study while they work. Here we've broken down the main differences to help your child decide what's best for them:

Bachelor's Degree

- The "traditional" university degree
- Usually 3 years studying at a university but some courses include a fourth year where you can study abroad or spend a year working at a company related to your subject to gain experience
- Usually study one subject in detail, but some universities let you choose two subjects to study. This is called a 'Dual Honours' degree
- Some degrees qualify you to work in a specific field when you graduate e.g. Medicine

Degree level Apprenticeships

- New courses offered by some universities in specific subject areas e.g. aerospace engineering or digital
- Gives you the chance to earn a degree while you're working
- Not currently offered in all subject areas – but new ones are being developed all the time
- You should get in touch with the university offering the degree apprenticeship to find out more about how to apply and what is required
- Unlike traditional degrees, you get paid while you study, so you don't have to take out a student loan

Study for a Higher Education Qualification at College

- These qualifications are called a Higher National Diploma (HND) or Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- HNDs usually take two years to complete while HNCs usually take one year to complete, and can sometimes be 'topped' up to a Degree by further study at a later date
- Usually related to a specific job or job type e.g. accounting, business management, construction or graphic design
- HNDs and HNCs are vocationally focussed and can often lead straight on to a career
- Check out your local Colleges to see what they offer
- HNDs and HNCs require you to pay tuition fees and may still require you to take out a student loan, but they are often cheaper than a university degree



Choosing a University

Choosing which university to go to may seem confusing, but there are some simple questions that will help your young person narrow it down.

Local or further afield?

You may be lucky enough to have a number of local universities, or your child may have their heart set on moving away. Remember this is their choice to make, and there isn't a wrong choice. They may feel more comfortable staying close to home, or want to experience somewhere different from where they grew up.

Campus-based or city-based?

A campus university is one where everything is on one site including accommodation, and often feels like a small town. A city university is one with buildings spread out in a city and may require you to get on a bus or tram to travel between lectures. They can often be very different environments so it's important that you visit them to see which one 'feels' right for your child.

Do they do the course your young person is interested in?

Searching for the course your child is interested in on UCAS is a great way to narrow down choices. Not all universities offer all courses, especially in the case of specialised subjects like Medicine or Pharmacy.

Will my young person have the opportunity to do work experience?

Some courses give young people the chance to do work experience as part of the degree, often in the form of a 'placement' or 'sandwich' year. These opportunities vary by subject and university so if this is something your young person is interested in make sure you work out who offers what.

Entry Requirements

Entry requirements are the grades universities ask for before they will offer you a place. These vary depending on the course and the university so it is important to make sure your child matches their choices to their predicted grades. Most universities accept A Levels and BTECs, but the requirements for each may be different so check out each university to see what your child needs.

"University league tables allow you to see which universities rate highly for which courses, student satisfaction, and graduate employment and can sometimes help narrow down choices between similar courses and universities."



Open Days

Every university holds Open Days throughout the year where you can go and look around, and talk to members of staff and current students. These usually run through the summer and into the autumn and take place at weekends. There's no substitute for actually checking out the place your child will be living and studying for the next three or four years, and it can help your child make a final decision on where they want to go.

Open Days give you the chance to view university buildings, including lecture theatres, seminar rooms, study spaces like the library, social spaces like the Students Union, and accommodation.

You will also have the chance to visit the department they will be studying in and talk to the lecturers and professors. They can tell you and your child all about the course and what your child will be studying during their time at university.

You may also see Student Ambassadors – students who work to promote the university

and talk about their experiences. Make sure you ask them what it's like to live and study at university.

Once your child has a few universities they're interested in applying to, visit their websites to see when their Open Days are and book your place.



UCAS stands for Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and is the website potential students use to search for universities and to apply to university. Universities make offers through UCAS, and your child can accept these offers using their UCAS Track account.

UCAS: How to Apply

The application

The application will consist of: your child's personal details, chosen courses and institutions, education history and predicted grades, employment history, and a personal statement. The personal statement is a chance to show the university why your child wants to study with them and why they are passionate about the subject(s) they have chosen.

Your child's teachers might be able to give them advice on what to include in the personal statement. Your child can apply for up to 5 different universities or courses through UCAS.

University Offers

Your child will receive offers from universities through UCAS. These may be conditional (your child must get certain grades) or unconditional (the offer has no conditions your child has to meet).

Once all the offers are in, your child can accept two of them. One as a firm (or first) choice and one as an insurance (second) choice.

If the place is unconditional then congratulations! Your child is going to university. If it is conditional, they'll need to work hard in their exams and coursework and wait for Results Day to find out if they have the place.

Results Day

If your child has an unconditional offer or has got the grades needed, they will automatically be accepted on to their first choice course.

If your child didn't get the grades you were expecting don't panic!

If your child hasn't met the conditions of their offer, they will have the option of entering Clearing. This means they might still be able to get a place at a university. Your child's teachers will be able to advise you on what to do on the day if this happens. You can also call the university to see if they will accept your child with their final grades – some might if they are close to the grades they needed.

Application Timeline

If your child is interesting in going to university, here is how their final year at sixth form or college might look:

1 **Choosing a University and course.** Go with your son or daughter to Open Days, talk to staff and current students, look at accommodation. These usually run through the summer and autumn.

2 **Apply for your chosen university through UCAS.** UCAS deadline for most courses is January 15th. Applications must be made to Universities by this date.

3 **Apply for Student Finance from January.** As a parent or guardian, you will be asked to support an application. You do not need a confirmed place at university to get your finance sorted, so no excuses for putting this off! Deadline is end of May.

4 Conditional or Unconditional offers from Universities will also be coming in during this time. **Your son or daughter will need to accept their place by early May.**

5 **Find and apply for accommodation.** This could be on campus in university halls of residence or even with a private landlord off campus. Nearly time to do the 'Big shop'!

6 **Results day! Middle of August.** If they have achieved their expected grades, they will get an automatic confirmation from University. If not, there may still be a chance their University will accept them through Clearing. **For more information visit www.ucas.com**



Student Finance

Student loans get a lot of negative press, but they're not as scary as they seem. Here we've given you all the facts so you and your child know what to expect.

Tuition Fees

To cover the cost of tuition fees, young people are entitled to a tuition fee loan. This is a flat-rate loan that covers all of the tuition fees during your child's time at university. It is paid directly to the university so they can't accidentally spend it!

Maintenance Loans

Maintenance loans provide your child with money to cover their living costs while they're away at university. The amount they are entitled to depends on your household income and where they study, so you will be asked to provide some supporting information when your child applies. The money is paid directly into your child's bank account and helps them pay for food, rent, and any materials they might need while studying.

Find out more **at studentfinance.campaign.gov.uk**



Repaying a Student Loan

Your child only has to **start** to pay back their loans when they earn **over £21,000 a year**. At this point, they pay 9% of their income over this threshold. So if they earn **£22,000 a year**, they have to pay back 9% of £1,000, or **£90 a year**. This will be taken out of their salary along with their tax on a monthly basis. In this example, they would be paying **£7.50 a month**.

If their income ever drops below £21,000 a year, repayment stops until they earn over the threshold again. Even better? After 30 years, any outstanding debt is written off, and the debt can never be passed on to a family member.



How to work out the monthly repayment amount

annual salary before tax — **£21,000**

then **9%** of the remainder work out

÷ **12** Round down to the nearest **£1**

Here's an example...

$25,000 - 21,000 = 4,000$
 $9\% \text{ of } 4,000 = 360$
 $360 / 12 = 30$

So your monthly student loan repayment would be £30.





Useful Websites

These websites can give you more information, and are a great place to start exploring higher education with your young person.

www.ucas.com

Lists all higher education courses available across the UK, and allows you to apply for them.

www.studentfinance.campaign.gov.uk

All the facts about student loans, what's available and how to apply for them.

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

Advice and guidance designed to help you make decisions on learning, training and work.

www.unistats.ac.uk

Allows you to compare lots of different data on all the courses and universities in the UK, including course satisfaction and graduate employment prospects.

www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships

More information on Higher and Degree level Apprenticeships, including how to apply for them.





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