Your Guide to Higher Education
Higher Education is ‘a chance to develop skills which you will need in life, both in work and everyday’. JAMES

Higher Education is ‘a chance to study what I love, where I enjoy it most!’ DANIELLE

Benefits of going to university:
- Graduates on average earn more than non-graduates
- Access to jobs which require you to have studied at degree level
- Opportunities to study something new or expand your knowledge in a subject you are already passionate about
- Meet new people and have the chance to try new things
- Develop key skills such as time management, budgeting and independence

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Jargon Buster: We realise that lots of new terms will be used within this booklet. In order to help you each page will explain a term and its meaning.

Higher Education (HE): is the level of education that involves undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.
What is it like to study at university?

I chose my course as I have always found learning languages to be extremely rewarding. I believe that doing a degree will provide employers with evidence demonstrating that I am a capable individual who will be a valuable part of their organisation. As well as learning a great range of language skills, my degree has provided me with the opportunity to take on modules in history, literature, film and politics. I hope to be able to use my knowledge and skills to develop links with businesses in other countries particularly South America. I love university life and how I am responsible for my own decisions and lifestyle.

SAM DOWSETT
BA Spanish and German

My course is a great balance of the theoretical and practical. The large choice of modules available means that I can choose to study topics that I find most interesting and relevant for the area where I would like to find employment. Part of my studies are about learning how best to communicate what I have learnt; this I feel is essential and will be looked for by employers. I feel really lucky as I am learning about what I really care about from some fascinating and inspiring people. Through my studies I am exposed constantly to the issues, difficulties and potential solutions of conserving nature and am challenged on what I think daily.

KATHY TROKE-THOMAS
BSc Conservation Biology and Ecology

Lecture: a method of teaching at university. Large classes in a room with tiered seating and a lecturer talking at the front while you take notes.

My course is very flexible and I can choose to do things I want to do, focus on politics rather than religion, for example. I chose to do Anthropology and Middle East Studies because I wanted to try something completely new and learn about other cultures. My course will help me to develop skills that graduate employers are looking for. My favourite part of university life is being able to meet lots of different people and learning a lot about something I really enjoy.

EMILY HOUSEAGO
BA Anthropology and Middle East Studies (Flexible Combined Honours)

How much will it cost?

1 Universities charge tuition fees to cover the costs of delivering your degree programme.
2 You will be able to apply for a loan to cover your tuition fees in each year of your degree.
3 Apart from taking out a loan to cover tuition fees, you may also need financial support to help with your living costs. Maintenance loans and grants to cover your living costs are available from the Government in addition to any scholarships or bursaries you may receive from your chosen university. Maintenance grants, scholarships and bursaries don’t have to be paid back, but your loans do.

4 If you are a full-time student with children or adult dependants you may qualify for extra financial support.
5 You apply for your tuition fee loan through Student Finance England (SFE) at the same time as you apply for a maintenance grant and/or loan. SFE pay the tuition fees direct to the university on your behalf. If you are eligible for the tuition fee loan you will receive it regardless of your household income.
6 You only start to pay back your tuition fee and maintenance loans once you are earning over £21,000. When you are earning over this amount, you will make repayments in small instalments.

Bursary: extra financial help provided by a university or college for students from households on lower incomes. It does not have to be paid back.
From the start of Year 12 you will have lots of decisions to make about university. You will need to attend open days, write your personal statement, complete your UCAS form, apply for student finance and make your university choices. Here is a timeline of key dates:

**YEAR 12**

1. Spring: UCAS conventions
2. May: exam period
3. Summer: university open days
4. Summer: opportunity for work experience
5. September: UCAS application system opens

**YEAR 13**

6. Autumn: write your personal statement
7. October: deadline for Oxbridge, medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine/science
8. Winter: apply for student finance online
9. January: UCAS application system closes
10. April: deadline to apply for student finance
11. May: universities and colleges need to send you their decisions on your application
12. May: exam period – good luck!
13. June: you need to confirm your firm and insurance choices
14. August: exam results received
15. August: clearing, confirmation and adjustment
16. Autumn: start university
17. October: receive your student loan

**YEAR 14**

18. November: start your degree
19. December: revision and Christmas break
20. January: back to term
21. April: mid-term break
22. May: exam period – good luck!
23. June: exam results received
24. July: summer
25. August: start your final year
26. September: back to term
27. October: revision week
28. November: exam period – good luck!
29. December: Christmas break
30. January: back to term
31. February: dissertation or project
32. March: mid-term break
33. April: exam period – good luck!
34. May: exam results received
35. June: graduation
Submitting your application

There are thousands of courses on offer at hundreds of different Higher Education providers across the UK. Most providers will either have websites or printed guides called prospectuses which will provide details of each course.

The UCAS tariff system is the process for allocating points to qualifications used for entry to Higher Education. Most students enter universities with A levels but other qualifications are often also accepted. Check the individual university’s requirements before you apply. The universities or colleges you apply to will decide if your predicted grades meet their entry requirements when they consider your application. Remember that a university’s or college’s decision is likely to be based on your overall suitability for the course as well as whether you meet the minimum entry requirements.

Applications are generally assessed on the following:
- Academic achievements
- Predicted grades
- Personal statement
- Teacher/Adviser reference

All programmes have specific entry requirements which you can find out about either directly from a provider or by visiting www.ucas.com. Some programmes may require prior study of a specific subject and may also have minimum grade requirements. You should make sure you have checked what the entry requirements are for a course before you decide to apply.

All applications for full-time study must be made through UCAS. You can do this through your school, college or independently.

The deadlines for applying to UCAS are 15 October for Oxbridge, medicine, dental and veterinary programmes and 15 January for all other programmes.
What do we want to see on your application?
The personal statement is your opportunity to tell universities and colleges about your suitability for the course(s) that you hope to study. You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and above all, ensure that you stand out from the crowd.

1. Why you have applied for a particular programme and how this relates to your current and previous studies and experiences. If you have a career goal it is helpful if you explain how the programme would enable you to fulfil that ambition.

2. Evidence of a willingness and desire to learn at a higher level: universities are looking for students who have the potential and the drive to succeed.

3. Your reasons for the choice of subjects taken at A level or equivalent and, where appropriate, the relevance of those subjects to your chosen degree programme.

4. Details of any work experience, paid or unpaid, and any other positions of responsibility that you’ve had. Universities are particularly interested in the skills gained from these experiences and how they relate to your own personal development and how they may help you in your studies and life at university.

5. Information regarding volunteering and other extra-curricular activities and what you have gained in terms of experience and skills from these interests.

Remember to:

- Ensure your statement is directly relevant to the subject you’re applying for
- Check university entry profiles to find out what they’re looking for in applicants
- Relate your current studies to your application
- Demonstrate your interest and knowledge in your chosen subject
- Write about relevant skills and experience
- Write what comes naturally
- Be focused and convey motivation and enthusiasm
- Check your form for spelling mistakes and perhaps get someone else to read it through for you
- Write in full sentences and don’t use bullet points or lists

What happens after you have applied:

1. You may be invited to attend an interview or visit day
2. Alternatively you may be asked to submit a portfolio or attend an audition
3. The university will decide on whether or not to make you an offer
4. You will then decide whether to accept or reject their offer
Combined or Joint Honours: a type of degree where you study two subjects and these are split equally (50/50) to make up your degree.

Higher Education is ‘the opportunity to follow your interests whatever they may be’. DEBORAH

When I came to university, I knew I wanted sport to be a large part of my life. The Boat Club gives a sense of belonging, but also a real collective purpose. The chance to train and socialise in a mixed club gives you close friends from many different areas of university. I have rowed in the senior squad for two years, racing at British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and major British rowing events in both Lightweight and Open weight events. After rowing for two years I joined the High Performance Programme at Exeter.

The long winter months training take a lot of grit and determination and it’s really important to keep your eyes on the long term goal. This long term outlook is really valuable in a world of instant gratification. In addition, the organisational skills of balancing work, training and social life provides a solid grounding in time management. Finally, I think rowing gives you a really strong mindset and commitment which is valuable in any field of life.

WILL RUSHWORTH
BA Politics, Philosophy and Economics

Before university I had not had many chances to get involved with extra-curricular activities; however at my university there were over 200 that you could participate in outside of your degree, with everything from Doctor Who and the Baking societies, to skiing, skydiving and music societies. I got involved as it was a fantastic way to have fun, try something new and meet a lot of new people and make great friends. Through joining societies I have really developed leadership, communication and teamwork skills that have been a great addition to my CV, while having loads of fun.

I have also been given so many fantastic opportunities; such as organising big events such as the National Student Television Awards, live broadcast of BBC Children In Need from Exeter, Freshers’ Week and shows, to going abroad, running campaigns and volunteering on local community projects.

JAK CURTIS-RENDALL
BSc Geography

If you can’t find a society or sports club that interests you, you can always set up a new one.

Sports:
- Boxing
- Volleyball
- Water Polo
- Fencing
- Triathlon
- Climbing
- Cheerleading
- Archery
- Speleology
- Football
- Tae Kwon Do
- Basketball
- Karate
- Hockey
- Lacrosse
- Rugby
- Snow Sports
- Netball

Societies:
- Circus Soc
- Raising and Giving
- Hide and Seek Society
- Film Soc
- Fashion Soc
- Erasmus
- UNICEF on Campus
- Chocolate Soc
- Flute Soc
- Italian Soc
- Beach Soc
- Islamic Soc
- Doctor Who Soc
- Debating Soc
- Disney Soc
- A Cappella
- Motor Soc
- Community Action

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BA:
Bachelor of Arts.
The qualification most commonly associated with undergraduate arts, humanities and some social science degrees.

“Going to university was probably the best decision I ever made. My confidence has grown enormously and I really enjoy every aspect of university life. The main aspect of student support I receive is through dyslexia support. It wasn’t until I got to university that it was fully recognised and I was encouraged to be assessed.

Since finding that I am dyslexic, I am now entitled to the Disability Support Allowance which enables me to claim back some printing costs and book costs, and I also receive help from a tutor who can check my work for spelling and grammar mistakes, as well as helping me with structure and planning. There is the opportunity of also receiving a free laptop if you are dyslexic. Overall the help I received has mainly given me my confidence back. It is comforting to know there is recognition of this at the university.”

BETH PARTRIDGE
BA History

“Where will I live?

Although it was a challenge leaving home for the first time, I was really excited to see who I’d be living with. Even though I was nervous, all of my flatmates were in the same boat and we got to know each other by getting involved in freshers’ week. We made the most of all the freshers’ week events, and everyone was so friendly because we were all in it together. After a few days it felt like I’d known them for ages! It was strange at first having so much time to myself, but I loved being together with everyone in the flat. We had so much fun cooking what we wanted, when we wanted. We became like a proper family having birthday teas and dinners together, but it took a while to get used to not burning everything and setting the fire alarms off! Once I had found my feet it was fun making my own choices exactly when I wanted to. I love having my own space away from home because I’ve become so much more independent, but it’s also great knowing it’s only a three hour train ride away for a weekend break if I need it!”

RACHEL GEE
BA French and Spanish

If you choose to go to university and don’t want to continue to live at home then you will need to know what accommodation options are available to you. Most universities provide accommodation for their first year students, known as halls of residence. Living in halls of residence is a great experience as you will have the opportunity to gain independence, meet new people and perhaps even learn to cook! Universities will offer a variety of accommodation for first year students, usually self-catered or fully catered and either on or off campus. Typically you will then arrange private accommodation in the local town for the remainder of your studies and support will be available to help you do this.

“Where will I live?”

“Living in halls”

“Fresher: an informal name for a first year student.”

“Moving away from home”

“I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience at university. It has easily been the best decision I have made so far in my life. Initially the idea of moving away from home was daunting. However as soon as I moved into halls, I very quickly revelled in the independence university gave me and forgot about missing home within a couple of hours moving in. I just made friends so quickly and got caught up in the fun and opportunities put in front of me that actually home is the last place I wanted to be.

Everyone had an open door policy so you made friends so quickly, playing football together, watching TV, eating in the dining hall as a group, socialising in the common room. It was so much fun and the memories I have from living in halls will stay with me for ages.”

ANDY MORTON
BA Geography

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“Student Support

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Deciding where to study

Once you have decided that you want to go on to Higher Education then the next decision you need to make is where to study – and it’s an important one. There will be many factors which will be central to your decision. When you make your choices ensure it is what you want and that it is for the right reasons. Here is a list of some potential factors; you may also want to think of your own.

Factors:

- Level of importance: 1 2 3 4 5
- Factors: Accommodation available
- Cost of living
- Course
- Distance from home
- Employability
- Entry requirements
- League table rankings
- Location
- Module options
- Sports clubs and societies
- Teaching facilities
- Teaching styles
- Transport links
- University or College
- Year abroad/in industry

Module: a unit of study that explores a specific area within a subject. Each module has a set number of credits which will vary from course to course.

Higher Education is ‘all about being independent and making your own decisions’. HARRY

For my year abroad I went to Seville in the south of Spain. During my time there I was working as a language assistant in a primary school, helping the children and staff with their English. I really felt like I became part of the school; eating authentic Spanish meals with the teachers, going on day trips with the children and even being part of the ‘Feria de Abril’ which is a huge festival where everyone dresses up in flamenco dresses and traditional suits.

Although daunting at first, my year abroad was incredible and I cannot imagine not having gone. My Spanish improved so much without even really thinking about it, and I have friends there who I go back and visit nearly every holiday. A year abroad truly is the best way to learn a language by immersing yourself in the culture and this was my main reason for going, but I never thought I would have achieved as much as I did. I fully encourage other people to get out of Britain for a year – escape the rain and do a year abroad.

CHARLOTTE SIDWELL
BA English and Spanish

YEAR ABROAD

Throughout university I’ve done so much which has enhanced my employability skills. I got involved with Community Action, the students’ volunteering body, and from being a volunteer in my first year I managed to become a project leader in my second year. One of the two projects I led was an international project to Ghana.

Within my studies I managed to focus extensively on my interests and I received significant support from my professors. With their assistance I was able to interview a contemporary francophone author. While working as a student ambassador I interacted with students from different local schools and together we set up a French Drama Club. All these activities have given me a useful set of skills that I will be able to use in my future employment.

SANDRA DARCOZI
BA Politics and French

EMPLOYABILITY

Masters: a higher level taught degree typically taken after completing an undergraduate degree.

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Some advice before you go

Studying multiple subjects
At university you can study more than one subject. Many universities will offer programmes, such as Flexible Combined Honours, which allow you to combine several subjects within a degree.

Entry requirements
There are many routes into Higher Education. Most universities will accept many different entry qualifications. Check their website or contact their admissions office for more information.

Worried about moving?
Moving away from home can be daunting but try not to worry; everyone will be in the same situation as you and most universities have a wide range of support services that will help you with the transition.

Accessibility
Most universities will provide a range of support for all types of disabilities. Make sure you get in touch with them before you start your course.

Choosing where to study
Don’t forget you will be spending at least three years studying at your chosen university. Make sure you visit the university and surrounding areas and find out about the place before you make your choice.

Thinking about taking a gap year?
Most universities will consider applications from those wishing to take a gap year. Your plans for how you will spend a gap year and what you will gain from these experiences should be included in your personal statement.

Worried about the costs?
Don’t forget you don’t have to pay any fees upfront. Many students will get a part-time job whilst at university to help with the costs.

Useful links

www.nus.org.uk – The National Union of Students
www.sfengland.slc.co.uk – Student Finance England
www.ucas.com – University and Colleges Admissions Service

Higher Education is ‘a great experience giving endless opportunities and experiences I otherwise would not have had – it’s about so much more than just studying for a degree’. KATE