

The background is a complex, abstract geometric pattern composed of numerous overlapping triangles in various shades of gray, creating a starburst or crystalline effect. A large, solid red triangle is positioned in the center, serving as a focal point. Overlaid on this red triangle is the text "Your Guide to Higher Education" in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. Several dashed lines in different colors (blue, green, yellow, orange) intersect the scene, adding a sense of movement and connectivity.

**Your
Guide to
Higher
Education**



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.

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What is Higher Education?

You can study for a Higher Education qualification at a university with some courses available at Further Education colleges. Higher Education allows you to have access to teaching and research facilities allowing you to develop your knowledge even further. Most people will start Higher Education after they finish their A levels or equivalent qualification.

Students often describe these years as some of the best of their lives, storing fantastic memories which stay with them long after they have finished their studies.

You will have the opportunity to study subjects you enjoy, have the chance to study abroad and gain valuable work experience. It is also a time where students build confidence and develop vital life-skills.

“ Higher Education is ‘a chance to develop skills which you will need in life, both in work and every day.’ JAMES

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

Higher Education (HE): is the level of education that involves undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

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

What is it like to study at university?

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

I studied Economics at A level, as well as completing an economics based Extended Project, and was fascinated by the breadth and relevance of the subject. I really wanted to develop my knowledge further and I decided I would like to study Economics at university in order to build on topics explored at A level such as international trade, and explore new areas including behavioural economics and financial markets. My decision was also greatly based on the opportunity I would have to undertake a year-long work placement as part of my degree, and develop my professional skills alongside my academic studies.



“ ” JOSHUA WESTON
BSc Economics

My course is very flexible and I can choose to do things I want to; I 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)

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.

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 As well as taking out a loan to cover your tuition fees, you may need money to help with living costs. The Government offers maintenance loans to help with the cost of living through university in addition to any scholarships or bursaries available from your chosen university.

5 If you are a full-time student with children or adult dependants you may qualify for extra financial support.

4 You apply for your tuition fee loan through Student Finance England (SFE) at the same time as you apply for a maintenance 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.

What you should do and when

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.

UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. This is the organisation that handles nearly all university applications. The application process (including choices and personal statements) is all done online via www.ucas.com

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:



Submitting your application

1

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.

4

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.

Firm choice: your firm choice is your first choice university – this is your preferred choice out of all the offers you have received.

2

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.

5

Applications are generally assessed on the following:

- Academic achievements
- Predicted grades
- Personal statement
- Teacher/Adviser reference

3

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

6

The deadlines for applying to UCAS are 15 October for Oxbridge, medicine, dental and veterinary programmes and 15 January for all other programmes.

Insurance Choice: your insurance choice acts as a back-up, so if you don't meet the conditions of your firm choice you will be committed to attend your insurance choice university. This relies on you meeting the conditions of the insurance offer unless you choose to reject your insurance choice and enter clearing.



Personal statement

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

The reasons 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. Make sure you show 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(s) 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, 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.

Clearing: a way for universities to fill any spaces they have left for the new academic year. Clearing opens on A level results day in August and it gives applicants who do not hold an offer a chance to find a university place.

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.

4 You will then decide whether to accept or reject their offer.

3 The university will decide on whether or not to make you an offer.

Student life

Every university has an organisation that aims to support and represent the students and provide the best university experience possible. Normally called a Students' Union, it is a democratic organisation, which means that whenever any important changes are made the final decision comes down to the students and their elected representatives.

What's on offer?

This is a short list providing a sample of what may be on offer, every university will be different.

Societies:

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

Sports

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

Campus university:
a university situated on one dedicated site, with student accommodation, teaching and research facilities, and leisure activities all together.

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

City university:
a university situated within a city with facilities, accommodation and leisure activities spread across the local area.



"I joined the rock climbing society as I always enjoyed the outdoors. I made so many great friends who I subsequently spent a lot of time with over my three years at university."

AMY RALSTON, LLB Law

"I was a member of the University of Exeter Sailing Club. They organised a variety of trips to a nearby reservoir for all skill levels, from running nationally recognised RYA courses for beginners, to offering experienced sailors the chance to compete internationally."

LUKE TESTER,
Medical Student

"I am a member of a few societies and at the end of my first year I'm already involved in running Hip Hop Society. I used to love my dance lessons at home and this allows me to continue doing something I love whilst also using it as a break from my studies."

SASHA PINTO,
BSc Evolutionary Biology

Where will I live?

If you choose to go to university and decide to move away from 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.

Bachelor degree: a degree awarded by a college or university to a person who has completed undergraduate studies.

Fresher: an informal name for a first year student.

LIVING IN HALLS

Pre-university jitters and worries are natural, and believe it or not, everyone has them. Before I left to attend university I was nervous and apprehensive about living with new people away from my family. Going to a university miles away from home, in a totally different area, is naturally nerve-racking but also somewhat exciting. I had the best first year possible; my flatmates became my best friends from the word "hello", and we did everything together like attending many Freshers' taster sessions, going on nights out and exploring the campus. I even taught some of the boys how to use the washing machine! Exeter was great for me also because the train station was a very short walk away, making it a lot easier when I wanted to visit friends or go and see my family.



TASNEEM RAHMAN
MSCi Maths, Business and Finance

"The amount of confidence I have developed since living at university for the last three years has been unbelievable. Throughout my time at university, the support offered to me from my friends, housemates and the university itself provided me with the best three years of my life."

"I moved to Exeter from a very different part of the country and was worried about moving to somewhere a long way away from my family. However, the friends that I made living in halls of residence made it a really special time, creating memories that will stay with me forever."

"Living at university has given me some of the best experiences but also provided me with opportunities to develop independence and skills I need for later life."



Deciding where to study

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.

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
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	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲

“ Higher Education is 'all about being independent and making your own decisions'. HARRY

Graduate: a person who has successfully completed a Higher Education course.

YEAR ABROAD



My course, like most language courses, included a Year Abroad allowing me to get hands-on experience speaking the language as much as possible for a whole year. I chose to experience university life in France first-hand and I loved it! I was able to live in the middle of Paris and studied at one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in France. Studying in France also gave me the chance to spend some time in my favourite place, the Alps. This taste of living abroad has led to me to accepting a job offer in Japan after I finish at university!



“ OLI HOGG
BA English and French

EMPLOYABILITY



As part of my degree, I had the opportunity to undertake a year working in an internationally recognised research laboratory. Working in a fast-paced research laboratory allowed me to sharpen my passion for neuroscience and medical research, which are both areas in which I aim to develop a career. The contacts made, and the skills developed, during this year led to my successful applications for postgraduate research opportunities and work placements. Ultimately these experiences will be crucial to me when I begin to apply for jobs.



“ OLI STEELE
BSc (Hons) Medical Sciences

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.sfgengland.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

Open days: are days when the university is open to students who are considering applying. They often include activities such as campus tours, subject talks, accommodation tours and finance talks.



www.exeter.ac.uk

Student Recruitment Office, University of Exeter,
The Queen's Drive, Exeter, EX4 4QJ

Information is correct at time of going to print.



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