



Parents and Carers Guide to higher education

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Introduction

This guide aims to help parents and carers to understand more about university and higher education options and the processes involved in applying to study at HE.

What is higher education?



Higher education (HE) is studied after college or sixth form and offers a wide range of courses and qualifications available at a variety of different places. You can study HE at a university, college, the workplace, other training provider, or even online through distance learning.

In addition to the variety of places you can study, there are also different types of courses and qualifications to choose from.

Courses available at HE include; degrees, higher national diplomas and certificates, foundation degrees, higher and degree apprenticeships and professional courses.

The type of course you choose will depend on the subject you want to study, where you want to study and the grades you achieve at GCSE level and at college or sixth form. Higher education can be split into undergraduate (before graduating) and postgraduate (after graduating). From school or college, you would usually start with undergraduate studies



What are the benefits of studying a higher education course?

Higher education might not be for everyone, higher education might not be for everyone but it is important for young people to consider all the options available to them before making their decision.

There are a number of reasons people decide to study at HE, including;

- It can provide an opportunity to study something you care about and are interested in at a deeper level
- HE students will develop skills in a number of areas that will help them in the future and within employment
- It's a great opportunity to meet new people and make friends with similar interests

There are also career benefits to study at HE:

- People who have studied a degree (graduates) earn on average **£10,000** a year more than those without a degree*
- Many employers will ask for a degree or equivalent – it doesn't always matter what subject someone studied, but they recognise that a degree provides valuable skills
- A specific degree is essential to enter some professions, such as being a nurse, doctor or psychologist

Source: www.gov.uk/government/news/graduates-continue-to-benefit-with-higher-earnings



Routes into higher education

There are a number of study routes and courses that allow entry to HE courses

Your future career

18+	Level 7 and above	Masters Degree	Post-graduate Diploma/Certificate	Doctorate	
18+	Level 4, 5 and 6	Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher National Diploma (HND)	Higher/Degree Apprenticeship	Undergraduate Degree
16-18	Level 3	A Level BTEC National T Level Advanced Apprenticeship			
14-16	Level 2	GCSE BTEC First Intermediate Apprenticeship			



Choosing a university or college

Choosing the right place to study is an important part of the application process.

Some key things to consider when selecting the best place to study are;

The course – the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is an excellent source of information about different courses available to help individuals ensure that they are selecting the right course for them.

The location – think about where the course is located and the potential benefits and limitations of the location.

Reputation – there are a number of different university ranking systems and guides that can help establish the reputation of the course/institution. Discover Uni (link below) can help you to research and compare courses and institutions.

Employability – it is important to consider the likelihood of employment after completing a specific course, this information can also be found on Discover uni.

A great source of information and key statistics about individual courses is available online at – **www.discoveruni.gov.uk**

The UCAS website is also very useful – **www.ucas.com**



How can I support the application process?

Visit open days – these are a great way to experience universities and colleges first-hand. Parents and carers are welcome at open days, and you can find out more about these on institution websites or through UCAS.



Personal statements – all applicants will need to write a personal statement for their university application. More information about this can be found on UCAS - www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement

Let them make their own decisions – it is great to discuss options together though and to provide encouragement and guidance. It would also be beneficial to encourage young people to seek advice from teachers and careers advisors about their future options.



Try not to take over – the applicant needs to do most of the work around application to HE themselves. This will help them to develop skills and confidence, but your support will be invaluable.



Applying for higher education courses

Individuals applying for a higher education course will generally apply through UCAS – the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. This website contains a great deal of information about each course and university and all UK applications to university and college courses are made through this service.

Applications for higher or degree apprenticeships are usually made through the employer rather than UCAS.

For more information about the application process including timelines and deadlines visit the UCAS website - **www.ucas.com**.

Student Finance and Tuition Fees

The vast majority of individuals studying HE will apply for a student loan through Student Finance England. There are two different types of loan available:

- 1. Tuition loan** – This covers the cost of tuition fees and is paid termly, directly to the university, so it's not possible for students to accidentally spend it! This is NOT income related or means tested and will cover all the tuition fees for the course.
- 2. Maintenance loan** – This is paid directly to the learner and aims to help cover living costs. This loan is partially means tested so you may need to complete a financial assessment as a parent or carer. The minimum amount per year a student could get is currently £3,968 per year, depending on their personal circumstances.

There are also grants, bursaries, scholarships and other means of financial support available for those who meet the criteria. These generally don't need to be paid back and may be available from the government and/or the institution of study. You can find out more about extra help on the student finance website.

For further information about student finance, how to apply and how the loan will be paid back, please visit **www.gov.uk/student-finance**.

Helpful websites

Some useful websites to support you through the application process are:

- www.prospects.ac.uk – helps guide millions of students to make the right choice for them, matching their skills and personality to 400+ job profiles.
- www.ucas.com – the main website for information about going to and applying for university.
- www.theuniguide.co.uk – impartial advice about university
- www.discoveruni.gov.uk – an impartial website which allows you to search and compare undergraduate courses in the UK.
- www.successatschool.org – gives career advice for students aged 13-19. You can search jobs, get advice and find out about employers, work experience, courses, career choices etc.

Parent guides

[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/
applying-university/ucas-undergrad-
uate-advice-parents-and-guardians](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-advice-parents-and-guardians)

[www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk/
parents](http://www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk/parents)

www.careeralchemy.co.uk

Apprenticeships and other options

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

www.amazingapprenticeships.com

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

[www.ucas.com/apprenticeships/
how-apply-apprenticeships](http://www.ucas.com/apprenticeships/how-apply-apprenticeships)

DANCOP Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Collaborative Outreach Partnership

A partnership of universities and colleges from across the two counties, working together to support young people to consider their futures. We aim to inspire and inform learners about their options and provide targeted outreach activities. We work with learners, teachers, advisors, parents, and carers, to break down the barriers that might prevent young people from progressing to higher education.

