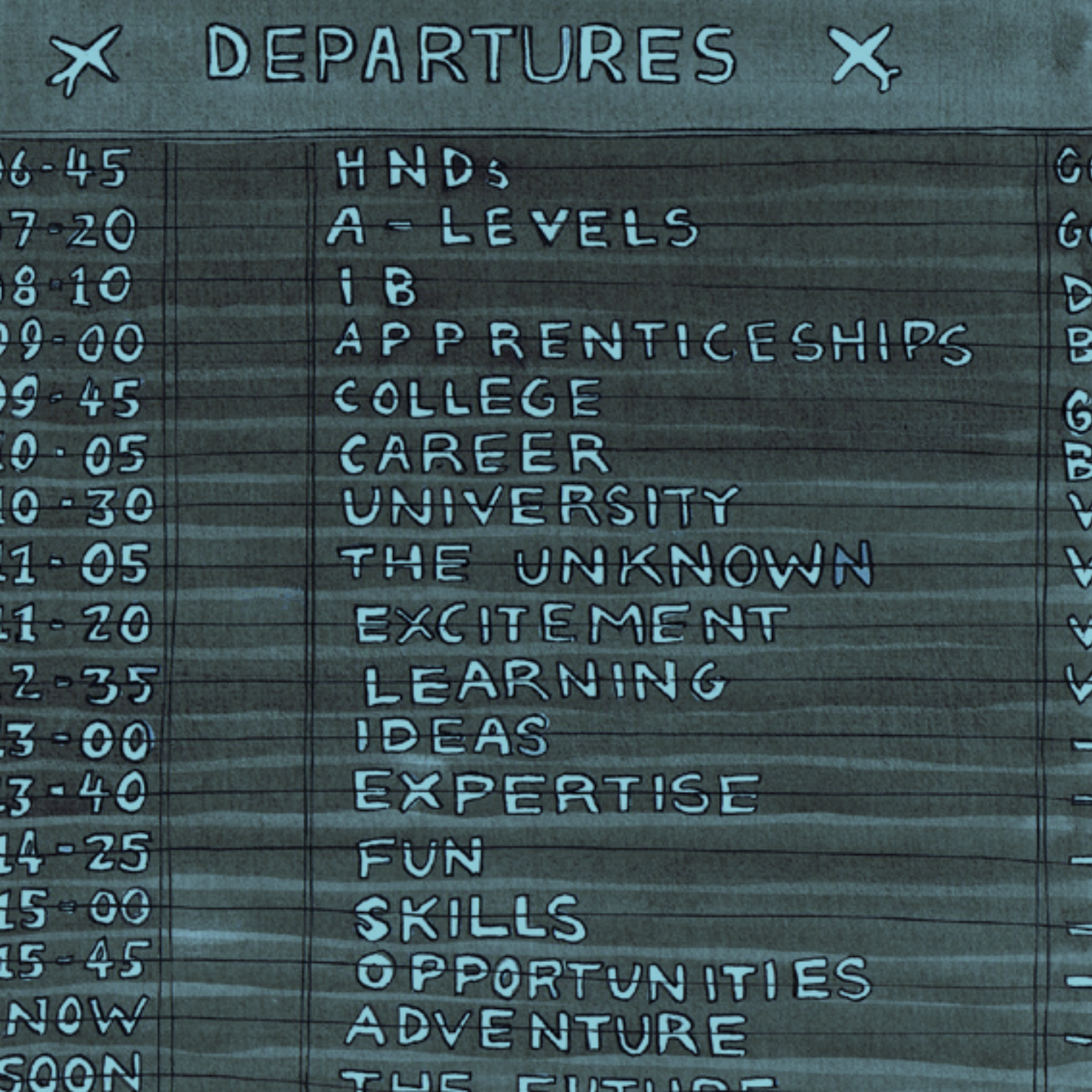




# TO INFINITY, CHOICES AND BEYOND!

A PARENT'S GUIDE



## TO INFINITY, CHOICES AND BEYOND!

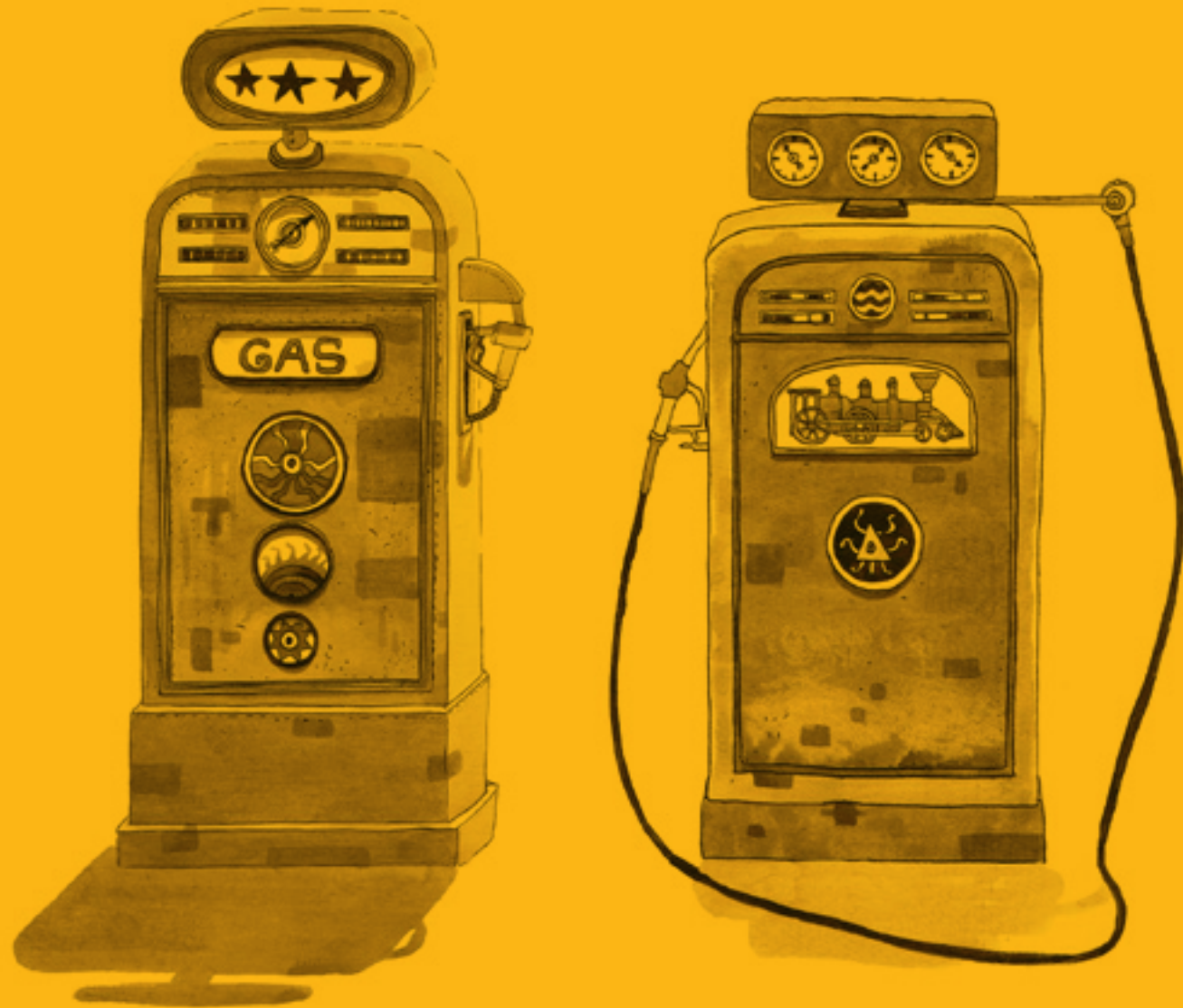
“ A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions. ”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

## WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is for parents, foster parents, carers, guardians or anyone who is helping a young person to make decisions about their future. It contains information about education options for people living in England.

Although the guidance about how to support your child will apply to parents or carers anywhere, please note that some of the details about qualifications and student finance may not apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



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# INTRODUCTION

As a parent or carer, you'll know that education is a crucial factor in your child's future success and happiness. Helping your child to identify their passions, interests and talents and to work towards a satisfying career that's right for them is one of the best things you can do to set them up for adult life.

Whether they choose an academic or work-based route, gaining higher level qualifications and training can boost your child's employability and their earnings.

You're one of the biggest influences in your child's life, so they will turn to you for advice and guidance. If you don't feel very confident about providing it, don't worry, you're not alone! The educational landscape is constantly changing, making it difficult to keep up to date, and parents or carers who haven't experienced university life for themselves can feel out of their depth when it comes to talking to their child about higher education.

That's where this guide comes in. It explains the main decision-making milestones in your child's educational journey, from GCSE choices onwards, including information about different types of qualifications and where they can lead. It provides tips on how to approach discussions with your child about their options, so that you can support them to make decisions that will set them up well for the future. It also offers guidance on supporting your child during the more challenging phases of their education, such as revision and exams, applying for courses or jobs, and moving away to university.

“ Emotional support from parents is vital for children to succeed. ”

## GOOD TO KNOW

You don't need to know all the answers! Throughout this guide we'll signpost you to online information so that you can find out more and help your child with their research.

## FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION

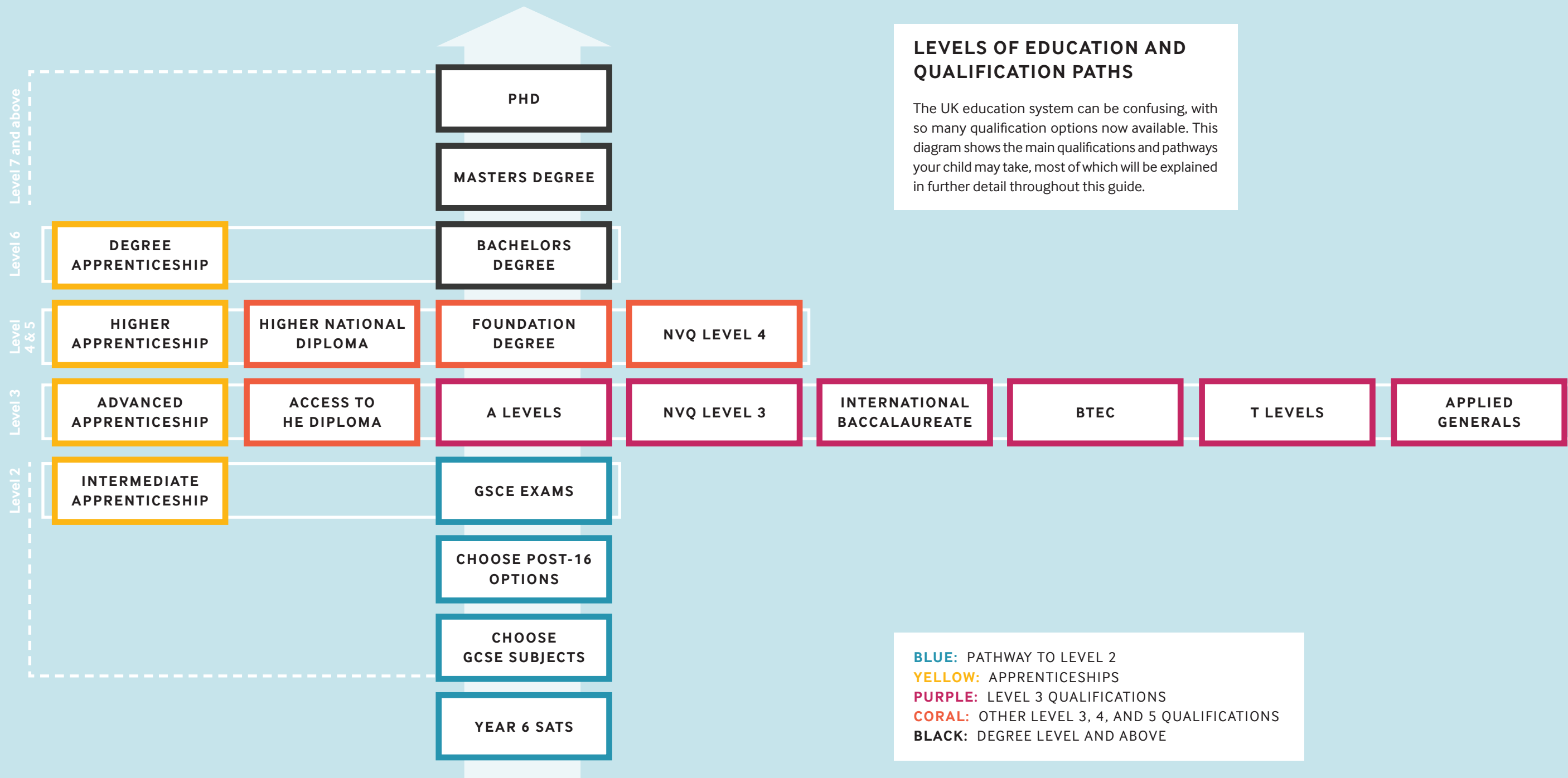
- In 2019, the graduate employment rate (87.5%) was substantially higher than the employment rate of non-graduates (72%). 65.6% of working-age graduates were in high-skilled employment in 2019, compared with 23.9% of non-graduates.

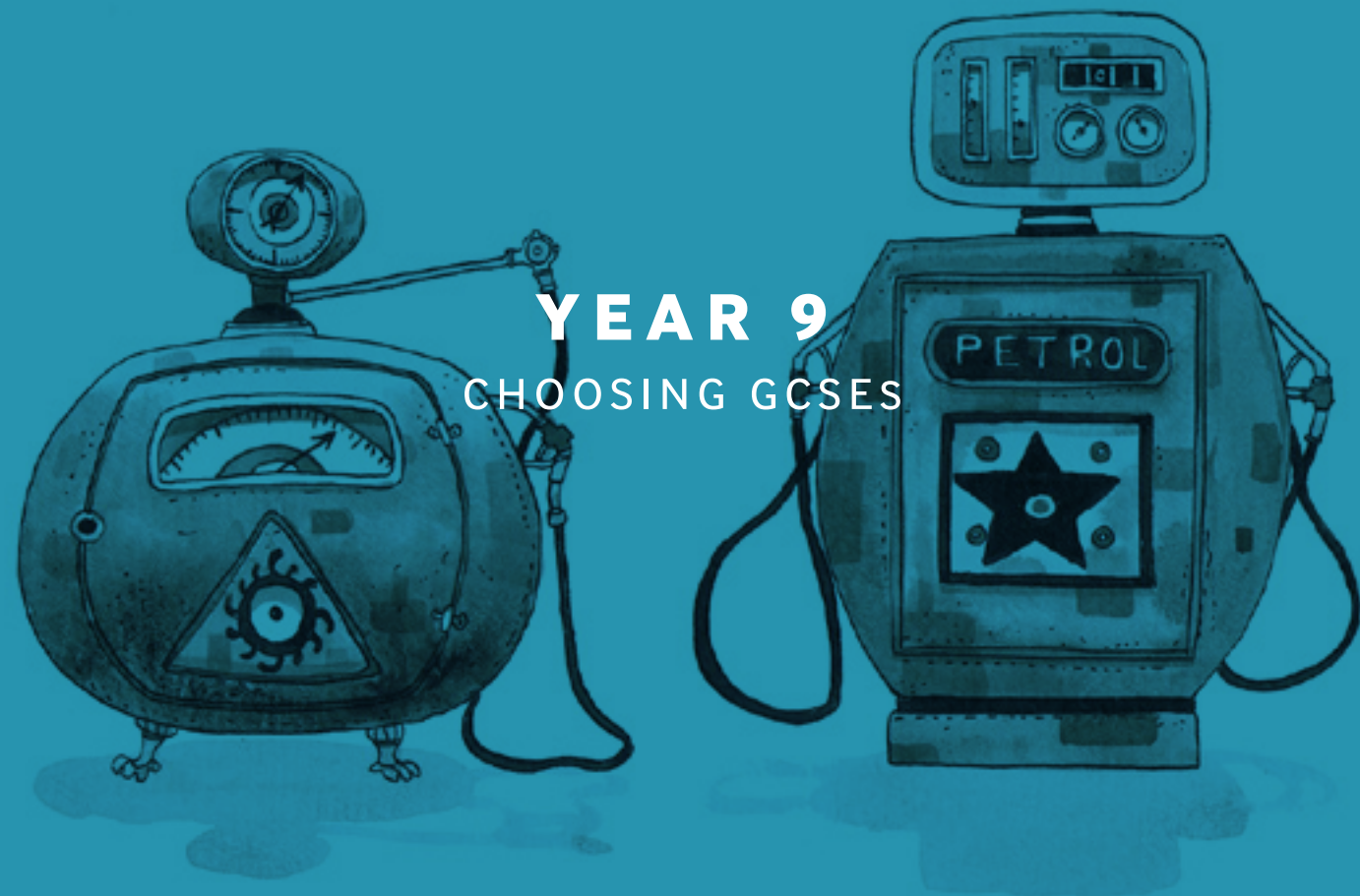
*Office for National Statistics Graduate Labour Market Statistics, May 2020*

- Just 7% of undergraduate students surveyed felt that their parents had no influence on their key education and careers choices.

*Parental Influence on Children's Academic and Employment Choices, GTI, December 2014*







## YEAR 9 CHOOSING GCSEs

For most young people, choosing their GCSEs is the first significant decision they will make about their own education. This usually happens in Year 9, although at some schools students will choose their options in Year 8. While their future career may seem a long way off, it's important that your child thinks carefully about their GCSE choices. The decisions they make now – and the grades they achieve – can have an impact on what they can do later.

For example:

- Your child's GCSE results may affect their education options at 16 and beyond – for example which A levels or BTECs they can take.
- Most college and university courses, and many jobs, require good passes in GCSE English and maths.
- Many university courses require a certain number of GCSE passes. Degrees in some subjects, such as medicine, have specific GCSE requirements in terms of the subjects studied, the number of GCSE passes and the grades achieved.

However, if your child doesn't have a clear idea about what they will do in future, don't worry. Taking a broad range of subjects – including English, maths, sciences, a language and humanities subjects such as history, geography and drama – will help them to keep their options open when it comes to next steps.



## MAKE THE MOST OF THE HELP ON OFFER

Your child's school should give you information about GCSE options, and there is lots of information and guidance online. Many schools also hold options events where you and your child can discuss things with subject teachers and careers advisers. If that's not the case at your child's school, you can arrange to talk to teachers to get their view on the best options for your child.

### CHANGES TO GCSEs

Since 2017, new GCSE courses and exams have been introduced in England. They have more challenging content and a new grading system. Changes were made with the aim that students leave school better prepared for a job or further study.

- The new GCSEs have a grading system that uses numbers rather than letters. The scale runs from 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. The table on the next page shows how it compares to the A to G grading system that has now been phased out.
- The standard pass rate in the new system is grade 4. This is the minimum level your child needs to achieve in English and maths, otherwise they will need to continue to study these subjects up until the age of 18.
- Grade 5 is a 'strong' pass – some careers or courses may require a strong pass in certain subjects.
- The first exams for GCSEs using this system were held in summer 2017, and all GCSE subjects were revised in 2018.

THE NEW GCSE GRADING

NEW GRADING STRUCTURE	OLD GRADING STRUCTURE
9	
8	A *
7 ←	A
6	
5	B
4 ←	C
3	D
2	E
1 ←	F
U	G
	U

DOWNLOAD THE GOVERNMENT'S GCSE REFORMS FACTSHEET  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-new-grading-scale-factsheets](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-new-grading-scale-factsheets)

WHAT SUBJECTS CAN YOUR CHILD CHOOSE FROM?

The following subjects are compulsory and all students will have to take them at GCSE level:

- English (English literature and English language or a single English GCSE)
- maths
- science (core science, double science or triple science)

There may be some other subjects that your child’s school decides to make compulsory, usually relating to a specialist area for the school.

Your child will also choose some optional subjects. Their school must offer them at least one option within each of four subject areas, known as ‘entitlement’ areas. These entitlement areas are:

- arts, including art and design, music, dance, drama and media arts
- design and technology
- humanities, for example history and geography
- modern foreign languages

Your child doesn’t have to take a subject from every area, but taking a broad range of subjects will ensure they have plenty of options later.

ALTERNATIVES AND BACKUPS

It’s possible that your child won’t be able to take all the subjects they would like – either because their school doesn’t offer certain subjects or because of timetable clashes. If this is the case, think about whether there are other ways to supplement their learning. For example, they could take part in sport, music, drama or dance activities outside of school, or join after-school coding, business or language clubs.

There’s a chance that the school might not run a subject if only a few students sign up for it. It’s a good idea for your child to think of a backup subject just in case.

GOOD TO KNOW

All young people up to the age of 18 are currently required to retake GCSE maths and English until they obtain a grade 4 or above, so it will be a big advantage if your child gets these grades first time!

HOW MANY GCSEs SHOULD THEY DO?

Doing up to 9 or 10 subjects is common, but the ‘right’ number will depend on your child’s academic abilities and whether their school has any recommendations or limits. Some children do as many as 12, but this means a bigger workload and more exam pressure, which can in turn lead to lower grades overall, so it’s important to balance quantity with quality.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD GCSE CHOICES

Does your child have a particular education or career goal in mind – such as a specific university degree? If so, check some university websites together to find out whether there are any specific GCSE requirements.

If they don’t have a firm idea about a future career, encourage them to think about:

- Which subjects they really enjoy – if they are interested in a subject, they’re more likely to apply themselves and do well.

- Which subjects they are good at – getting good GCSE grades will give them more choices for their education post-16.
- Which subjects best suit their learning style – for example, history involves a lot of reading and writing, while other subjects, such as art or sciences, can be more hands-on.
- Whether they might like to study languages or work abroad in future, in which case they could take language options.

Looking at the course material together will help your child to make informed choices. Reading about the different subjects might also spark their interest in particular subjects (or not), helping to confirm their ideas about what they want to do next.

PERSONALITIES AND PEER PRESSURE  
Encourage your child to focus on the subjects themselves, rather than:

- Whether or not they like the teacher who will be taking a particular subject.
- Which options their friends are doing.

After all, teaching staff can change and not all friendships last forever!

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CHOOSING GCSES  
**The Uni Guide**  
<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/gcse-choices-university>  
**Careerpilot**  
[www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-14](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-14)

“ We supported our child’s GCSE decisions by going to options evenings with subject teachers and discussing the choices available. We also had to consider the timetabling as it meant some subjects weren’t available if other options were chosen. ”

## VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Some schools offer vocational (work-related) courses alongside GCSEs. Offering a mix of practical and theoretical learning related to a specific career, these can be a good choice if your child has a particular job in mind and wants to gain relevant skills and experience. The qualifications that are most commonly available at this level are BTECs and OCR Cambridge Nationals.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

### Careerpilot

[www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-14](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-14)

### The Uni Guide

[www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/what-are-btecs](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/what-are-btecs)

### Pearson

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec.html>

### OCR

[www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-type/cambridge-nationals](http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/by-type/cambridge-nationals)





## YEAR 10 BUILDING LIFE EXPERIENCE

While it's crucial that your child studies hard for their GCSEs during Year 10, this is also a good time to encourage them to explore new experiences and interests outside the classroom.

As well as enabling them to take a break from their studies, this will help them to think about what they really enjoy doing, which could inform their career choices. They will also develop a broader range of personal and practical skills that will stand them in good stead for the future. Employers and education providers are not only interested in academic achievements – they also want candidates to demonstrate qualities such as confidence, willingness to take responsibility and the ability to work with different types of people.

### WORK EXPERIENCE

Getting some 'real-world' work experience can be really valuable. As well as looking good on their CV, it will give your child a feel for a working environment and help them narrow down their ideas about the type of career or job they would like. It could also rule some options out, which can be just as useful!

If their school offers work experience placements, encourage your child to take one. Otherwise, talk to your child about the idea of arranging their own work experience.

### SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

#### **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Approaching companies to ask for a work experience opportunity may be a daunting prospect for your child. You can support them by:

- Talking with them about the type of job or sector they are interested in, and spending some time with them researching businesses in your area.
- Offering to help with a covering letter and CV.
- Thinking about whether any of your friends, colleagues or family members have useful contacts – could they put your child in touch with the right person at a relevant company?

Remember, work experience is still valuable even if your child can't find a placement that matches their career goals. Experience of working with people or meeting deadlines, for example, will be relevant for many different courses and jobs.

During the work experience placement:

- Ask how it's going – what are they enjoying and what are they finding more of a challenge?
- Encourage them to get stuck into areas they enjoy.
- Suggest they make time to chat to people who are in jobs they find interesting.
- If they aren't finding it hugely enjoyable, encourage them to think about the benefits in terms of employability skills and contacts.
- Afterwards, talk with them about how it went and what they learned from it. Suggest they note down some examples of lessons learned, problems they solved or skills they gained that could enhance their CV or future course applications.

# VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is another way for young people to broaden their life experience and gain useful skills, while making a contribution to a cause they are passionate about.

Many organisations have roles for volunteers, including charities and not-for-profit organisations, schools, hospitals, and local community centres. There are lots of possibilities, such as:

- wildlife conservation volunteering
- volunteering with animals
- working in a charity shop
- helping at a day centre for older people

## SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD VOLUNTEERING

If your child is considering doing some volunteering, you can support them by:

- Helping them to think about different roles or types of organisations that will interest them and also move them closer to their longer-term goals. For example, if they are passionate about animals, can they find a role with a local animal charity? If they are thinking about working in healthcare, could they gain relevant experience by volunteering in a hospital or care home?
- Encouraging them to be realistic about how much time they spend volunteering. For example, they might choose to volunteer for several weeks during their summer holiday, for occasional one-off events, or for a few hours every week. Whatever they decide, it's important that they leave plenty of time for their studies.

# FINDING VOLUNTEER ROLES

Your child can check the websites of local charities and community groups (or go and ask in person), or search for opportunities on websites such as vinspired ([www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)) or Do-it ([www.do-it.org](http://www.do-it.org))

## GOOD TO KNOW

Not all volunteering opportunities are available to under 16s, so make sure your child checks the details carefully before applying.

# PART-TIME WORK

A part-time job is great preparation for working life. Even if it doesn't relate directly to your child's long-term ambitions, it will give them the chance to learn about things like taking responsibility, timekeeping and team work. In addition, they can earn some extra cash and get some experience of managing their own money.

Shops, restaurants, cafés, call centres and hairdressers often offer Saturday or evening work. Suggest your child goes in and asks in person, as businesses may not always advertise. They could also ask relatives or family friends about potential job opportunities.

## GOOD TO KNOW

As with all extracurricular activities, it's important that your child gets the balance right between a job and schoolwork so their studies don't suffer. There are specific rules about how many hours young people can work – see [www.gov.uk/child-employment](http://www.gov.uk/child-employment) for more details.

# OTHER ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Encourage your child to follow their passions, whether through local clubs and groups or with like-minded friends. They might be interested in:

- joining a community drama group or sports team
- coding, learning a language or making videos
- organised group activities such as Scouts/Guides or the Cadet Forces (such as the Sea Cadets or Air Cadets)
- doing a Duke of Edinburgh's Award ([www.dofe.org](http://www.dofe.org)), which might involve volunteering, physical challenges and skills development

## ADDITIONAL CAREER OR ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Look out for any additional support provided by your local education authority (the local government body responsible for education in your area – usually a district or county council). For example, some local authorities run activities such as careers events and other additional support activities.





## YEAR 11

### POST-16 DECISIONS

Year 11 will be a big year for your child, with GCSE exams ahead and decisions to make about post-16 education or training.

By researching the options yourself, you'll be able to help your child with their decision-making. You can also support them by offering help and understanding when it comes to revision and exam time.

#### GOOD TO KNOW

In England, young people between the ages of 16 and 18 must either:

- stay in full-time education
- start an apprenticeship or traineeship (a course with work experience that gets them ready for work or an apprenticeship)
- spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training

For more information, and to find out about rules that apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, visit [www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school](http://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school).

There is a wide range of possibilities for post-16 education and training – some more academic, others focusing on work-related skills and knowledge.

#### A LEVELS

A levels are the most common route to further academic study (including university) as well as training or work. They are usually taught over two years (Year 12 and 13).

#### Are they right for your child?

- If your child is thinking about going on to higher education – for example doing a university degree – most courses require specific A levels at particular grades. (Universities will also often accept other qualifications, such as BTECs and T Levels – **see pages 22 & 24 for more information.**)
- If they are not sure what to do next, A levels are a good way of gaining widely recognised qualifications while they explore their options.
- Many employers will favour candidates who have studied beyond GCSE level.

Typically, to do A levels your child will need to get:

- At least five GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 (A\* to C).
- Depending on the subject, at least grade 7 or 6 (A or B) in the subject(s) they want to study.

However, requirements vary so it's important that they check what they will need for the A levels they are interested in.



# AS LEVELS

AS levels are qualifications typically taught over one year in Year 12. They used to count towards A level grades, but that’s no longer the case. However, they are still a good way of measuring students’ performance in Year 12, and taking AS levels can enable your child to broaden their studies by taking a fourth subject that they enjoy but don’t want to take a full A level in.

- Good AS grades can also be a benefit because:
- Teachers will take AS grades into account when predicting students’ A level results.
  - Your child’s AS results will appear on their university application.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

Universities understand that not all students will opt for AS levels – if your child doesn’t take AS levels, they won’t be at a disadvantage when it comes to the university application process.



# CHANGES TO A LEVELS AND AS LEVELS

In England, the government has been introducing new A and AS levels since 2015. The final phase of revised subjects were taught from September 2018.

- The main changes were:
- Assessment is now mainly by exam. Coursework and practical assignments are only used in certain subjects.
  - Courses are no longer divided into modules, and exams take place at the end of the course. There are no longer exams in January.
  - There is no longer a link between AS Levels and A Levels, so a student’s AS Level marks don’t count towards their A Level grade.
  - Some A Level subjects were withdrawn.

Universities will be aware that students could have a mixture of old- and new-style A and AS levels on their application and will treat them equally. The A\* to E grading system will stay the same.

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT A LEVEL REFORMS**

**The Uni Guide**  
<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/a-level-changes-what-it-means-for-you>

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD CHOOSING A LEVELS

As with GCSEs, encourage your child to identify subjects they are good at, and that they will enjoy studying in more depth for two years. Some subjects will be available at A level that weren’t on offer at GCSE level. If they are thinking of taking a subject that’s new to them, support them in having a good look at the course content to ensure they are fully aware of what it involves.

**IF YOUR CHILD HAS A PARTICULAR UNIVERSITY COURSE IN MIND**

They should visit some university websites to check the entry requirements. It’s worth checking a number of different universities so that they get a full picture of the subjects they will need.

**IF THEY’RE STILL NOT SURE WHAT TO DO NEXT**

One way of keeping their options open is to choose from a group of ‘facilitating subjects’. These are subjects that are most commonly asked for by universities and include the sciences, English literature, geography, history, maths and languages. Choosing at least two of these subjects should leave a wide range of degree courses open to them.

The Uni Guide A level Explorer (<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/a-level-explorer>) is a useful tool – enter different combinations of A level subjects to find out what degree courses and careers they could lead to.



## INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE

The International Baccalaureate (IB) is a widely recognised academic programme, taught in 143 countries worldwide. It is regarded as a good alternative to A levels, with two levels of study for students aged 16 to 19.

- The IB Diploma Programme – this involves studying a choice of subjects from different groupings, including two languages, social sciences, experimental sciences and maths. It also includes activities that engage students in the arts and creative thinking, physical activity and service in the community.
- The IB Career-related Programme – this combines the study of up to four academic subjects with hands-on learning related to a particular career path.

### Is it right for your child?

- The IB is recognised by universities in the UK and worldwide, so could be an advantage if your child is interested in studying or working overseas in the future.
- The Diploma Programme offers a breadth of subject options, so could appeal to young people who want to continue studying a wider range of subjects.
- The Career-related Programme might suit your child if they want to combine work-related and academic study.

## BTECs

BTECs are specialist vocational (work-related) qualifications that combine practical and written work. There are 2,000 BTEC qualifications across 16 different business and industry sectors, from childcare to construction and from engineering to travel and tourism. They can be studied at entry level through to Level 7 (equivalent to postgraduate study).

With lots of different BTEC qualifications available, it's important for you and your child to do plenty of research to find the right one for them. If they are thinking of applying to university, it's also important that they understand how the BTEC(s) they choose are weighted in terms of university entry requirements.

- At Level 3, the qualifications are called BTEC Nationals, and are roughly equivalent to A levels.
- They can be taken alongside (or instead of) A levels.
- They are usually studied full time, either in college or jointly between a school and a college.

### Are they right for your child?

- A BTEC might suit your child if they are keen to learn more about a particular sector or industry but don't want to rule out going to university.
- If your child definitely wants to go to university, they should check that the courses they are interested in accept BTECs. Some universities may recommend that BTEC students complete a foundation year before moving on to degree-level studies.
- Entry requirements vary, but your child may need up to five GCSEs at 9 to 4 (A\* to C) grade to do a BTEC National.

In 2015, one in four students who got into university in the UK did so with a BTEC.

*UCAS, Progression Pathways, January 2016*



# T LEVELS

T Levels are new vocational 2-year qualifications that started in September 2020 with the launch of three subjects: Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction; Digital Production Design and Development; and Education and Childcare. A further seven T Level subjects will be available in September 2021 with more available in 2022 and 2023.

- T Levels follow GCSE study and are equivalent to 3 A Levels. They are designed to prepare students for work while they study.
- Approximately 80% of the qualification is classroom based and 20% is work based. Students gain valuable work experience and will undertake a 45-day industry placement while on the course.
- As they have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses, the content of T Level courses meet the needs of industry and prepare students for skilled employment.
- As part of the course, students will achieve a technical qualification (core theory, concepts and skills for an industry area), undertake an industry placement with an employer and complete a minimum standard in English and maths, if this has not already been achieved.

## Are they right for your child?

- T Levels are an excellent choice if your child is interested in gaining knowledge about an industry, taking part in work experience and learning in the classroom. They are suitable for students who are either looking to enter the workforce at 18, or who are looking to progress on to higher education.
- They are different to apprenticeships, which are 80% job-focused and 20% classroom-based. Apprenticeships are more suitable for students who know the occupation they want to pursue, want to

earn and learn and are interested in entering the workforce at 16.

- Although equivalent, they are also very different to A Levels, as they have more of a vocational and employability focus. However, they will also allow progression on to higher education courses.
- From 2020, T Levels are being taught at selected institutions. You can find out more at [www.tlevels.gov.uk/students/find](http://www.tlevels.gov.uk/students/find)

# NVQs

NVQs are work-related qualifications; they are available in more than 1,000 subjects across a wide range of business sectors, including business and management, construction, manufacturing and healthcare. They can be taken at college or in a workplace. An NVQ at Level 3 is roughly equivalent to two A levels. Most people complete a Level 3 NVQ in one year.

## Are they right for your child?

- NVQs are assessed by testing students' skills in the workplace, so if your child knows what career they'd like to go into and prefers a practical learning style, NVQs could be for them.
- Many universities do not accept NVQs in their own right for entry to degree courses; some accept them alongside A levels or other Level 3 qualifications. If your child wants to leave their options open, they should check the entry requirements of universities and courses that interest them.
- For some NVQ courses, applicants already need to be in a relevant job, so make sure your child checks course requirements carefully.

# APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships offer the chance for over-16s to earn a salary while gaining a recognised qualification and valuable work experience. They last at least 12 months and are full time and workplace based, with additional teaching online or at a college or training provider. With 280 types of apprenticeships and more than 1,500 job roles, they offer plenty of choice.

There are four main levels of apprenticeship:

- Intermediate level, which is considered to be the same as five GCSE passes.
- Advanced level, which is widely regarded as being the same as two A level passes.
- Higher level, which can lead to NVQ Level 4 and above, or a foundation degree.
- Degree apprenticeships – offered at some universities, these enable participants to achieve a full Bachelors or Masters degree as part of their apprenticeship.

***There's more information about higher and degree apprenticeships on page 79.***

## Is it right for your child?

- If your child has decided on a particular career path or sector and would prefer to gain qualifications in a 'real' work environment, this could be the right choice for them.
- They will be paid a salary while they learn.
- Entry requirements vary, but to get onto an advanced apprenticeship many recruiters ask for four or five GCSEs including English and maths.
- Your child could choose to go on to a higher or degree-level apprenticeship, or take a professional qualification for a specific job role. Depending on the qualifications they gain during the apprenticeship, they could also choose to go to university.

# GOOD TO KNOW

Remember that because apprenticeships are paid, you will no longer be eligible for Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits if your child begins an apprenticeship.

After finishing, the majority of apprentices (90%) will stay in employment (including 2% self-employed), with 7 in 10 (71%) staying with the same employer.

*Skills Funding Agency, 2016*

Other work-related schemes your child might come across during their research include:

- **Traineeships** – lasting between six weeks and six months, these offer work experience and numeracy and literacy skills, providing a foundation for an apprenticeship or work.
- **School leaver programmes** – these are similar to higher level apprenticeships, offering paid, on-the-job training which may include gaining a qualification. They can take between 12 months and five years.



## RESEARCHING STUDY OPTIONS

Your child might decide to continue their education in the sixth form of their current school. However, if they want to explore alternatives, looking at school and college websites and sending off for prospectuses will help you and your child get a picture of the courses available and the culture and approach of different institutions. However, the best way to get a feel for whether a school or college is right for your child is to see it for yourselves at an open event. These can take place in the evening or daytime, and schools/colleges will advertise the dates on their websites. Some may offer more than one date.

You can support your child by offering to help them with their research, helping them to think of questions to ask at open events, and going along to the events with them.

### SIXTH FORM OR COLLEGE?

Sixth forms and further education colleges tend to have different cultures and teaching approaches. At a school sixth form students may still have to wear uniform, attend assemblies and work to a structured timetable. Further education colleges tend to be less formal and expect students to take more responsibility for their learning. Sixth form colleges (not attached to a school) are often a middle ground between the two. Encourage your child to think about what suits them and their learning style. Do they like the idea of staying in a familiar and more structured setting, with teachers and classmates they know, or do they feel ready for a bit more independence – and if so, have they got the self-discipline and maturity to thrive in a college environment?

## SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD MAKING THE MOST OF OPEN EVENTS

### BOOK EARLY

It's worth going along to open events as soon as you can during Year 11, as it will help your child to make up their mind about what to do next. Next September may seem a long way away, but the time will pass quickly during this busy year. Many schools and colleges hold open events in the autumn and spring terms for courses starting the following September.

### DO SOME RESEARCH BEFOREHAND

Encourage your child to explore the school/college website or prospectus before the visit, and suggest they think about any questions they'd like to ask. Do the same yourself. As well as looking at the courses on offer, it's also a good idea to consider practicalities such as how your child would get to the school/college, how long the journey would take every day and how much it would cost, as this will all contribute to their decision. If you are given a programme or guide when you arrive on the day, have a quick look through it together straight away to make sure you don't miss anything.

### GET INVOLVED

The open event is likely to include activities such as talks, tours and 'hands-on' introductory practical sessions in different subject areas. Encourage your child to get involved so that they gain as much information as possible and get a feel for the place.

### TALK TO STAFF AND STUDENTS

You'll have the chance to ask staff any questions you have about the courses and facilities on offer. Encourage your child to talk directly to staff too.

If they feel shy about approaching people, having some pre-prepared questions can help.

Encourage them to talk to current students too. Even if the students aren't doing the course your child is interested in, they can offer invaluable insights about school or college life and how it differs from pre-16 education.

### TASTER SESSIONS

Some schools/colleges offer taster sessions or workshops, often lasting for one or two hours, which give potential students the chance to experience a practical learning session, check out the facilities and talk to staff in more depth. These are usually free but places are likely to be limited. If your child is interested it's worth booking a place as soon as possible.

### AFTERWARDS

Have a chat with your child about what they thought of the school/college and the options on offer. If they have made a decision, they should apply straight away.

If they're still not sure what to do, they can contact the college or sixth form direct to ask more questions, talk to a careers adviser or do some more research online.

## GOOD TO KNOW

Your child can apply to more than one school or college and make a final decision when they get their GCSE results. But it's a good idea to apply and receive offers as early as possible during Year 11 so they know what their options are.

Sixth forms and college application deadlines vary. They are likely to fall somewhere between December and February for the next September intake, but it's important to check with individual schools/colleges and make a note of the deadlines so that your child can apply in good time. Some sixth forms and colleges may invite prospective students for an interview – ***for more advice and information about interviews see page 56.***

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS POST-16

Young people from low-income families or from some defined 'vulnerable groups' may be eligible for additional financial support while they are studying.

### 16–19 BURSARY FUND

This is a government fund which:

- Pays a bursary of up to £1,200 a year to support young people who are in one of the defined vulnerable groups, for example care leavers and those receiving certain benefits such as Income Support or Disability Living Allowance, to enable them to take part in education.
- Allows colleges to pay discretionary awards to young people they assess as needing financial help to stay

in education. This is designed to cover costs such as transport, meals, books or course-related equipment.

Both types of bursary are administered through the education or training provider. Your child can apply as soon as they know where they will be studying or training.

This scheme applies to students in England – different schemes apply in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Additional financial help is available to certain groups, for example:

- If you are on certain benefits your child may be eligible for free meals.
- The Care to Learn scheme provides help with childcare costs for young parents in education.
- Dance and Drama Awards help children from lower income families to cover the costs of attending one of 19 private dance and drama schools.

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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BURSARIES  
AND SCHOLARSHIPS

**GOV.UK**  
*[www.gov.uk/education/funding-and-finance-for-students](http://www.gov.uk/education/funding-and-finance-for-students)*

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**YOUR FAMILY FINANCES**

You will still be able to claim Child Benefit and, if you are entitled to it, Child Tax Credit, for your child if they are under 20, living at home and in approved education or training. For full eligibility details visit *[www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/financial-help-if-you-have-children](http://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/financial-help-if-you-have-children)*

**GCSE REVISION AND EXAMS**

The build-up to GCSE exams at the end of Year 11 can be intense and stressful for your child – and for the rest of the family! The best thing you can do is encourage your child to plan carefully and start their revision as early as possible so that they feel more in control.

This section offers some tips and guidance on how to support your child and help them do the best they can. There is plenty of information on the internet too – for young people and for parents or carers – so go online to find out more.

**TYPES OF GCSE ASSESSMENT**

Under the new GCSE system, most subjects are assessed by exam. A few subjects, such as art, dance and drama, may use ‘controlled assessments’ – where students do assignments in class under supervision. Assessed coursework and exams partway through the course are being phased out.

**STUDY LEAVE**

The amount of study leave your child has will depend on their school. Up until a few years ago it was common for study leave to start a few weeks before GCSE exams began. However, many schools have reduced the amount of study leave they offer, as requiring children to go to school for lessons and revision sessions has been shown to improve GCSE results. Typically, study leave will begin after the May half term, so your child may already have done some exams before study leave begins.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
**GCSE REVISION AND EXAMS**

PLANNING

- With their exam timetable as a starting point, work backwards to help your child create a revision timetable, ensuring it covers all the topics they need to revise for each subject.
- Make sure they factor in regular short breaks between study topics.
- Check they have all the books and materials they need.
- Buying new stationery, highlighter pens or coloured notebooks could help make revision more interesting.

THE STUDY ENVIRONMENT

- If your child is studying at home, try to create a calm and peaceful environment.
- Ask where they would like to study – some young people prefer to study in their bedroom; others might like to find a quiet space elsewhere in the house.
- If they want a change of scene, they could try working at the local library or in a café – provided there aren’t too many distractions. Or they could find out whether their school is offering revision sessions or quiet study space.
- Make sure other family members are aware that this could be a stressful time for your child, and ask them to be considerate and minimise distractions.

REVISION TECHNIQUES

Your child will get revision tips and advice from their school, and an online search will also give them plenty of ideas. Doing past papers, making summary notes on index cards or post-its, and

creating topic-based mind maps or spider diagrams are all common methods.

There are lots of ways you can offer to support your child, for example:

- Going over school notes with them.
- Listening while they talk about a subject to test their knowledge.
- Timing them while they do practice papers.

WHAT WORKS FOR THEM?

The most effective revision methods for your child will depend on their individual learning style. Talk to them about which techniques work best for them.

For example:

- Visual learners might prefer to create mind maps and colour-coded revision notes.
- Auditory learners, who find it easier to absorb information by hearing it, could benefit from reading notes out loud, recording information and listening to it, or talking through their knowledge with you.
- Those with a hands-on learning style might find it useful to write things down repeatedly and use real-life examples to reinforce theoretical ideas.

MAKING IT MANAGEABLE

Lots of bite-size chunks of revision can be more effective than lengthy sessions on one topic. Research suggests that 20 to 30 minutes’ intense study followed by a short break helps students maintain their concentration. Your child could use a kitchen timer or app to time themselves.

### KEEPING FOCUSED

The internet can be a big distraction. If your child can't resist the temptation to browse or check social media, suggest they look into using an online 'distraction blocker' tool. There are a range to choose from, all designed to restrict access to certain websites during particular time periods that your child can set.

As exams get closer your child might feel overwhelmed or panicky about the amount they have to do. To help them focus, they can ask their teachers about the most important areas to work on. If needed, help them to review their revision plan and prioritise the most important subjects.

### EXAM DAY PRACTICALITIES

Check that your child:

- Is clear about the location and timing of their exams.
- Has all the stationery and equipment they need for the exam room, such as blue/black pens or the right type of calculator.

### KEEPING STRESS AT BAY

- Let your child know that you are interested and that you are there if they want to talk, but try to avoid nagging or making too many demands on them.
- Keep the fridge well stocked with healthy snacks and try to make sure your child eats regular, nutritious meals. Encourage them to join you for family meals so that they get a break.
- Sleep is important too – a good night's sleep will probably benefit them more than late-night cramming before an exam. If possible, encourage them to have a break from TV,

computer and phone screens before bed.

- Encourage them to get out of the house sometimes – a bit of fresh air and exercise can help clear their head if they feel bogged down.
- Encourage them to stay in touch with positive-thinking friends – they can have a moan together but also motivate one another.

### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Although they might not show it, your child will value your opinion and will want to get good results to please you. Encourage them to believe in their abilities but try not to put too much pressure on them. Let them know that you'll support and love them whatever happens.

### EXTRA HELP

If you think your child might need extra help:

- Talk to their school to find out if they run breakfast or after-school revision sessions or past paper practice.
- You might choose to pay for extra tuition for your child.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT GCSE REVISION, INCLUDING TIPS, VIDEOS AND GUIDES

**Collins4Parents**

*<https://collins.co.uk/pages/revision-collins-4-parents-secondary>*

## RESULTS DAY

Results day can be a nerve-racking time for your child and you! In the run-up, take time to listen to their anxieties and engage with any specific worries they have – just saying 'it will all be fine' could seem dismissive. Discuss alternative plans so that they are prepared if their first choice doesn't work out.

### THE PRACTICALITIES

Most young people get their results by going to pick them up from their school; check with the school what time results will be available. Some exam boards make results available online – again, check with the school to find out whether this applies to your child's exams. Results can also be delivered in the post, or if you are away you may be able to arrange with the school for a friend or family member to pick up the results on your child's behalf.

The benefit of going into school is that teachers will be around to offer your child advice if they need it. However, it can also be a very public way for them to find out their grades. You could chat with them beforehand to see how they feel about opening their results in front of friends and teachers. They might prefer to find a quiet corner at school and open them alone, or do it at home.



## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

### If they got the grades they need...

Time to celebrate! If they are disappointed because they didn't do as well as they were expecting in some subjects, focus on the positives. With the exception of maths and English, one or two lower grades are unlikely to affect their future plans.

You'll need to confirm your child's place at their chosen sixth form or college. Check whether you need to send a copy of your child's results, as some institutions require this.

### If they didn't get the results they wanted...

Try to reassure them that it's not the end of the world and support them as they think about what to do next.

- It's worth phoning their first choice of sixth form or college to check whether they can be flexible about their entry requirements. They may agree to your child retaking a GCSE while studying for their A levels or BTECs, especially if the grade they achieved was a near miss. Encourage your child to make the call rather than doing it yourself, as this will demonstrate their initiative and maturity.
- If not, they could contact their second-option schools/colleges.
- They could retake one or more of their exams later in the year to try to improve their grades.
- They could look at other course options with lower entry requirements, or think about doing an alternative qualification or an apprenticeship.

If they missed a grade very narrowly, or did much worse in a subject than predicted, they could talk to a teacher about making an enquiry to the exam board. The school can ask the exam board to check whether there has been an administrative error and to ensure the paper was marked correctly.

## YEAR 11 CHECKLIST

Key dates and decisions during this important year.

### AUTUMN TERM

- Support your child to find out about their options after Year 11. Websites such as [www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options](http://www.ucas.com/what-are-my-options) and [www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-16/help-with-choosing-your-post-16-options](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk/information/your-choices-at-16/help-with-choosing-your-post-16-options) are a good place to start.
- They can contact colleges, sixth forms and training providers for more information.
- If they need careers advice, your child should talk to their school's careers co-ordinator or tutor. Or they can call a National Careers Service adviser on 0800 100900.
- Visit college, sixth form and training provider open days or evenings with your child.
- Support your child to apply direct for college or sixth form courses. Encourage them to apply for two choices – a first choice and a backup.
- If they want to look for an apprenticeship or job with training after Year 11, encourage them to register with <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
- If they want to join the Army, Navy or Air Force they need to contact an Armed Forces Careers Office.
- Help your child prepare for any interviews they are asked to attend.

### SPRING TERM

- If your child is interested in an apprenticeship, November to February is a good time for them to look, as many larger companies advertise places then. Check individual company websites or go to [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)
- Help your child to write letters to companies to ask about apprenticeships.
- The end of the spring term is a good time to look out for taster days, residentials and other opportunities at colleges and universities that take place in the summer holidays.
- If they are looking to continue their studies full time and money is a concern, contact colleges, sixth forms and training providers to ask about the 16-18 Bursary Fund.
- Get in touch with your local council for information about public transport discounts for travel to sixth form or college.



### SUMMER TERM

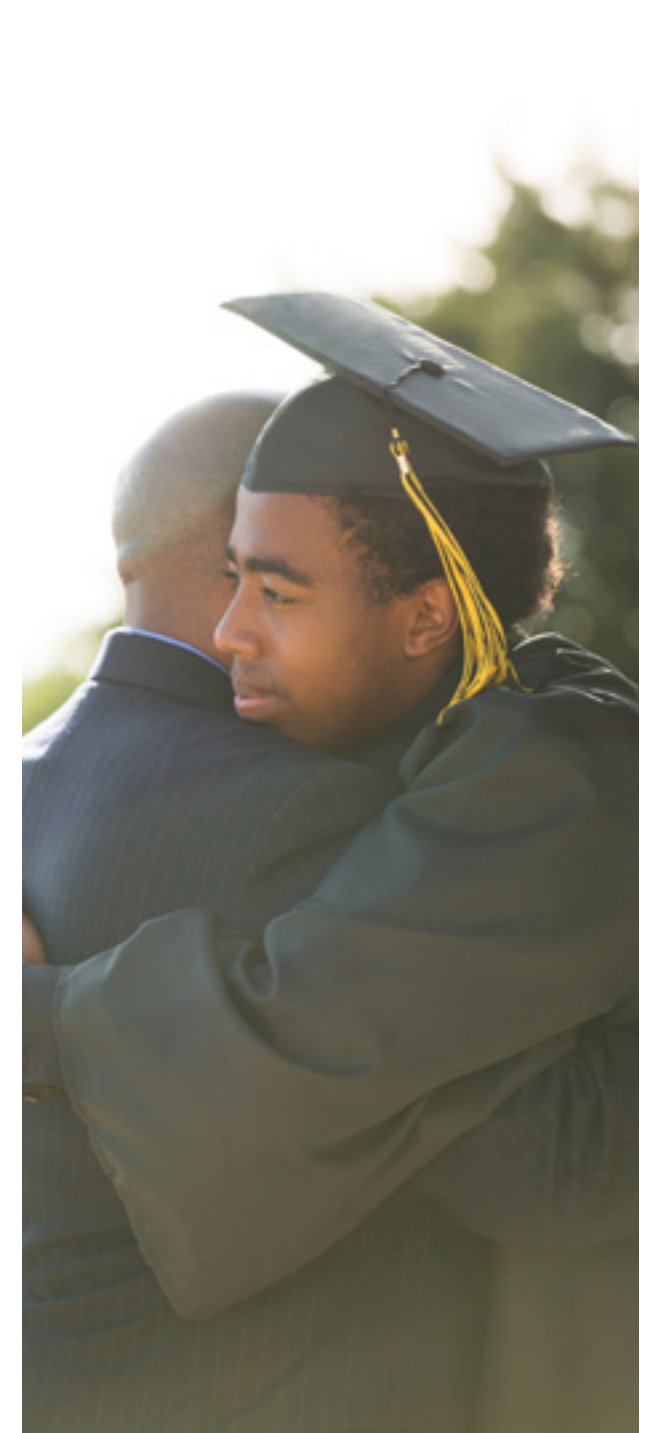
- If your child hasn't decided what they want to do or applied for anything, get in touch with their school to find out if they can see a careers guidance adviser.
- May/June – GCSE exams.
- Keep encouraging them to apply for training opportunities or courses.
- End of June – school leaving date (the specific date varies from year to year).
- Your child should receive a National Insurance number just before they turn 16. If they haven't, they should call the National Insurance registration helpline on 0345 200 3500 or visit [www.gov.uk/national-insurance](http://www.gov.uk/national-insurance) to get their number online or by post.
- Encourage your child to attend induction days at the sixth form or college they have applied to.
- Encourage them to do some work experience or volunteering during the summer, or to get a paid summer job.
- For careers advice once they have left school, they can call the National Careers Services on 0800 100900.

**Mid-July onwards** – BTEC results.

**Mid-August** – GCSE results day.

Once results are in, confirm sixth form/college place.

**Late August** – sixth form/college enrolment.





# YEAR 12

## SETTLING IN TO SIXTH FORM/COLLEGE AND RESEARCHING NEXT STEPS

Starting sixth form or college could present new challenges for your child, particularly if they are studying in a new environment, so they might need a bit of extra support while they settle in. This year they will also need to start thinking about what to do when they have finished their A levels or other qualifications.

### STUDYING AT A NEW LEVEL

The move from school to sixth form or college can take a bit of getting used to. Your child's studies will be more challenging academically and they'll have to take more responsibility for their own education. If they are at a new sixth form or college, they'll also need to learn to find their way around a new building, get used to new teachers and get to know new classmates. Even if they stay at the same school, there are likely to be new rules, responsibilities and ways of working.

Sometimes students can struggle to adapt; it's good to be aware of this so you can offer your support should your child need it.



### SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD ***THE TRANSITION TO SIXTH FORM/COLLEGE***

- If your child is going somewhere new, make sure they are confident about how to get there and what they need to do on their first day.
- They will probably have more free time than they did at school, so it's useful if they can share their timetable with you so that you know when they are going in.
- Find out what support is available at their school/college, so that you can encourage them to seek help if they need it. For example, at college they are likely to have a personal tutor, subject tutors and access to student support services.
- Chat with them regularly to find out how they feel things are going.
- If they are finding things difficult, contact the school/college sooner rather than later and talk to their personal tutor to see what support can be put in place.
- If they feel the subjects or courses they have chosen really aren't right for them, it may be possible to change. However, they should talk to their tutors about this as soon as possible as they may not be able to swap courses beyond a certain deadline.

EXPLORING POST-18 OPTIONS

As the year progresses, your child will need to think about what to do when they finish their course. Would they like to continue their education or training? Or will they be ready to start their career? Encourage them to make the most of opportunities during the year to investigate the options.

FROM THE SECOND TERM ONWARDS

From February/March, your child will have access to opportunities such as:

- **UCAS exhibitions.** Held around the country, these events bring together experts from UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service), university representatives, employers and gap year specialists. Schools or colleges often arrange visits to these exhibitions but your child can also visit independently, in which case you might choose to take them. There may be special sessions for parents or carers. For more details visit [wwwucas.com/ucas/events-exhibitions](http://wwwucas.com/ucas/events-exhibitions)
- **University taster courses and residentials.** These are short subject-specific courses, lasting anywhere from half a day to one week. They are designed to give students a flavour of campus life, and the chance to experience university teaching methods, see the academic, social and leisure facilities for themselves and meet academic staff and current university students. They are generally free of charge, although students may have to cover travel and food costs. Residential courses involve staying overnight at the university.
- **School/college careers fairs.** These are a good opportunity to talk to careers advisers, universities and employers to find out more about higher education, training, apprenticeships and employment options.
- **Career-focused PSHE sessions or talks at their school/college** given by representatives from universities and apprenticeship providers.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
GETTING THE MOST OUT  
OF UCAS EXHIBITIONS

UCAS exhibitions are large, busy events, often with hundreds of organisations represented, so it's a good idea for your child to do a bit of advance preparation.

Before they go, look through the exhibition information together and talk about:

- What they want to get out of the day.
- Whether there are particular university stands they would like to visit.
- The questions they would like to ask university/training provider representatives.
- Whether there are any specific talks or sessions they are interested in.

On the day, encourage them to take a spare bag for all the prospectuses and information they will pick up.

Afterwards, have a chat with them about how it went and the sorts of courses and careers they are thinking about.

- Offer to help them sift through the prospectuses and go through the details of courses that interest them.
- Look at an online map together so that your child can see where different universities are and start to think about whether they'd like to study close to home or further afield.

IN THE THIRD TERM

University open days begin in the summer term and continue until the autumn. If university is their first choice, these are a great way to get a feel for different institutions' courses, facilities and campuses.

**Visit page 52 for more information about getting the most from open days.**

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Your child can also seek advice from:

- Careers advisers at their school/college.
- The National Careers Service, which offers advice by phone, webchat and email. For details visit [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
POST-18 DECISIONS

Arm yourself with as much information as possible so that you're ready to support your child when it comes to discussions about their future.

There are numerous sources of advice and guidance online. The following are a good place to start.

- National Careers Service [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)
- UCAS [wwwucas.com](http://wwwucas.com)
- Prospects [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)
- The Uni Guide [www.theuniguide.co.uk](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk)
- The Complete University Guide [www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)
- Apprenticeships [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)
- Southern Universities Network [www.sunoutreach.org](http://www.sunoutreach.org)
- UniExplorer [www.uniexplorer.org](http://www.uniexplorer.org)

- Careerpilot [www.parentzone.careerpilot.org.uk/parent](http://www.parentzone.careerpilot.org.uk/parent)

In addition, there may be careers/higher education events for parents or carers at your child's school or college, and special parent/carers sessions at UCAS exhibitions, so go along if you can.

DISCUSSING THE OPTIONS

- Support your child to make informed decisions, rather than deciding for them. Putting pressure on your child to follow the path *you* think is best is likely to be counterproductive.
- When you talk with your child about the future, be positive and focus on what they do well, what they are interested in and what they want to achieve. School reports, parents' evenings and grade predictions can be useful reference points for your discussions.
- Encourage them to get some different ideas and perspectives by talking to teachers, careers advisers and other family members.



ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THEIR STUDIES

Whatever their next step, your child will need to demonstrate to universities, training providers or employers that they have a range of skills and qualities in addition to their academic achievements.

During the year, encourage them to continue broadening their experience, confidence and ‘people skills’ through things like:

- Volunteering, work experience or paid part-time work, either during term time or holidays.
- Activities outside school, such as sports or drama.

**See page 15 for more information and guidance on non-academic activities.**

HIGHER EDUCATION DECISIONS

If your child decides they would like to go to university, during the summer they’ll need to decide on the courses and universities they want to apply for. The following quick guide to higher education explains the range of post-18 qualifications and some of the terminology you and your child might come across in your research.

WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION?

Higher education refers to qualifications at Level 4 and above, such as Bachelors degrees, foundation degrees and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).

WHAT ARE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS?

A higher education institution is an organisation that delivers these qualifications.

Most people associate higher education with universities, but higher education institutions can also be called colleges, academies, schools, conservatoires and institutes.

Some further education colleges also provide higher education qualifications.

SPECIALIST HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Some subjects may be taught at specialist higher education institutions such as:

- agricultural colleges
- teacher training colleges
- technology institutes
- business schools
- art schools (for visual arts and crafts, such as painting, sculpture, textile design and graphic design)
- conservatoires (for performance-based arts, such as music or drama)

QUALIFICATION TYPES

Undergraduate qualifications are the next academic step up from Level 3 qualifications such as A Levels. They are delivered at higher education institutions, such as universities. There are various different qualifications at different levels.

Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND)

- Work-related courses provided by higher and further education institutions.
- An HNC takes one year to complete, and an HND takes two years.
- An HND is roughly equivalent to the first two years of a university degree and many students use it as a stepping stone to a full degree.

Certificate of Continuing Education (CertCE)

- Equivalent to the first 60 credits of an undergraduate degree.
- On completion, these can be used towards a full undergraduate degree.

Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) and Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)

- These are levels within a degree course – a CertHE is the same as one year of study and a DipHE is the same as two years.
- They are often awarded if a student leaves a course early, but can be taken as qualifications in their own right.

Foundation degree

- These have abbreviations such as FdSc (science foundation degree) FdA (arts foundation degree) and FdEng (engineering foundation degree).
- Equivalent to an HND or two-thirds of a bachelors degree.
- They focus on specific job or sector skills, in areas as broad as arts and media management, electronic engineering, healthcare and wildlife conservation. Some include work placements for hands-on learning.
- Most take two years to complete full time, or longer if taken part time.
- Usually students can choose to study for an additional year to gain a full degree.
- Taught at university or college, or often both.

Foundation diploma/foundation year

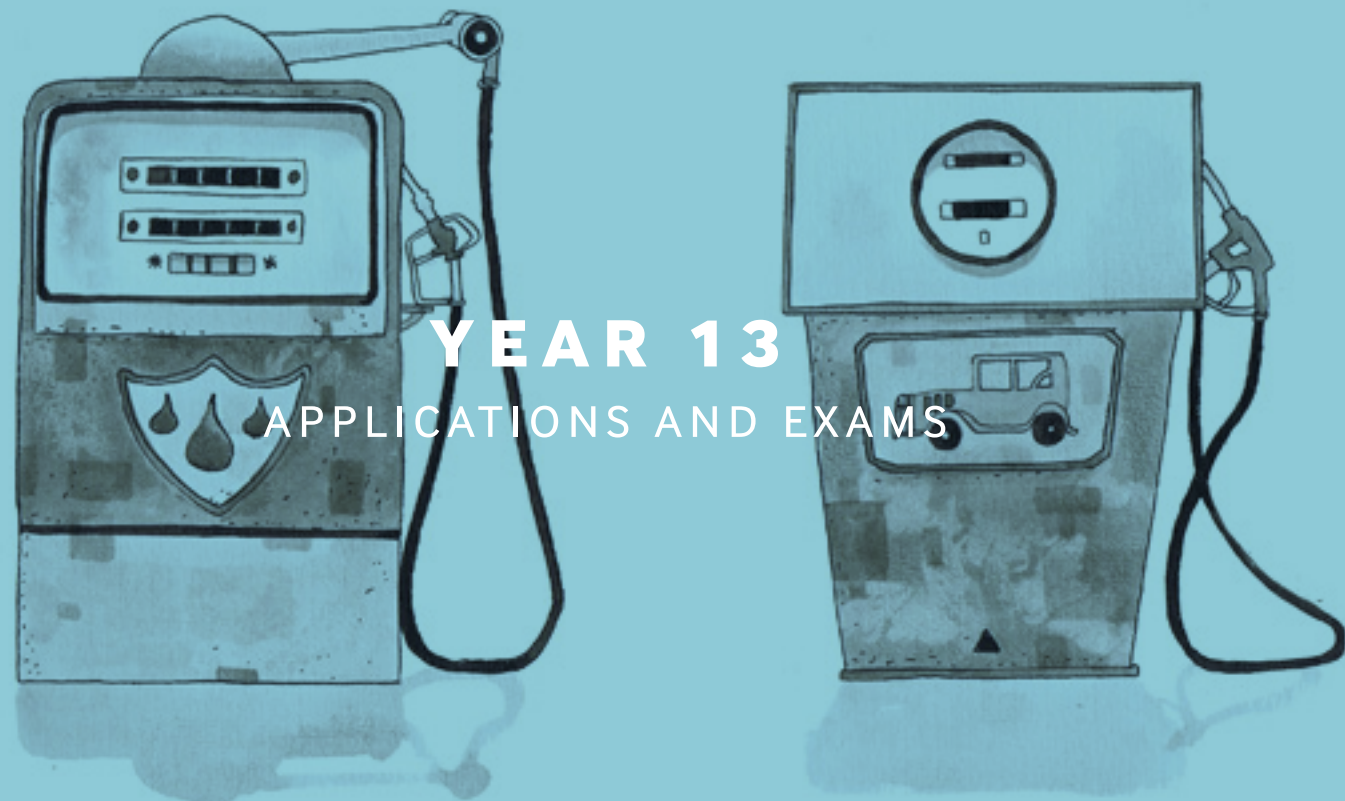
- These are one-year qualifications that can be a stepping stone to a bachelors degree course for students who want to explore a particular subject area for one year or who don’t meet the degree entry requirements.

“ My daughter chose a foundation course because she couldn’t decide exactly what she wanted to do. We believe this is going to be a great entrance for her into university life. ”

Bachelors degree

- Also known as an undergraduate, first or honours degree, this is the most common form of higher education qualification.
- There are different qualification titles but many subjects fall under BSc (Bachelor of Science), BA (Bachelor of Arts) or BEng (Bachelor of Engineering). Other common titles are BM (Bachelor of Medicine) and LLB (Bachelor of Laws).
- Some subjects, such as psychology or geography, are available as BA and BSc courses. The BSc is likely to have more scientific or technical content while the BA will focus more on human or social aspects of the subject.
- Courses can focus on a single subject (single honours) or two subjects (combined or joint honours, or major/minor).
- An undergraduate degree usually takes three years of full time study to complete – some courses take four years including a year abroad or a year’s work placement.
- Some students choose an integrated Masters degree – usually a three-year bachelors degree which leads straight into a further year of Masters-level study.

**You’ll find more information about choosing a university course and the application process in section “Going to university” page 44.**



# YEAR 13

## APPLICATIONS AND EXAMS

By the start of Year 13 your child will hopefully have a good idea of what they want to do next. Now is the time to apply and secure the degree course, training opportunity or job that is right for them. They'll also be busy studying for their Level 3 qualifications.

### APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

If your child wants to go to university, they should begin applying early in Year 13.  
***You'll find more details about choosing a university course and the application process on pages 47 to 61.***

### MAKING A PLAN B

Hopefully your child will get the A level/BTEC results they are hoping for, but it's worth talking to them about a backup plan just in case. Try not to make this sound too negative – you don't want to undermine their confidence – but chat with them about what they might do if they don't get high enough grades for their chosen path. For example, if they can't get onto their ideal degree course, would they want to find a similar course elsewhere with a lower entry requirement, retake their exams and reapply, or take a year out for a rethink?

### EXAMS

As with GCSEs, the amount of study leave your child will have for A level/BTEC revision will depend on their school or college. It's crucial that your child makes a start on their revision early, following a realistic revision timetable and using techniques that suit their learning style (*see page 28*).

### EXAMINERS' REPORTS

As well as practising using past papers, suggest that your child gets hold of the previous year's examiners' report for each subject they are taking. These provide invaluable information about what the examiners are looking for in students' answers and common mistakes made by past candidates. Your child's teachers may be able to provide these, or they are available on examining board websites.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EFFECTIVE REVISION  
AND MAKING A REVISION TIMETABLE

#### The Uni Guide

[https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/  
student-life/creating-a-revision-timetable-  
that-actually-works](https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/student-life/creating-a-revision-timetable-that-actually-works)

[https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-  
application/revision-exams-making-the-grade](https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/revision-exams-making-the-grade)



# RESULTS DAY

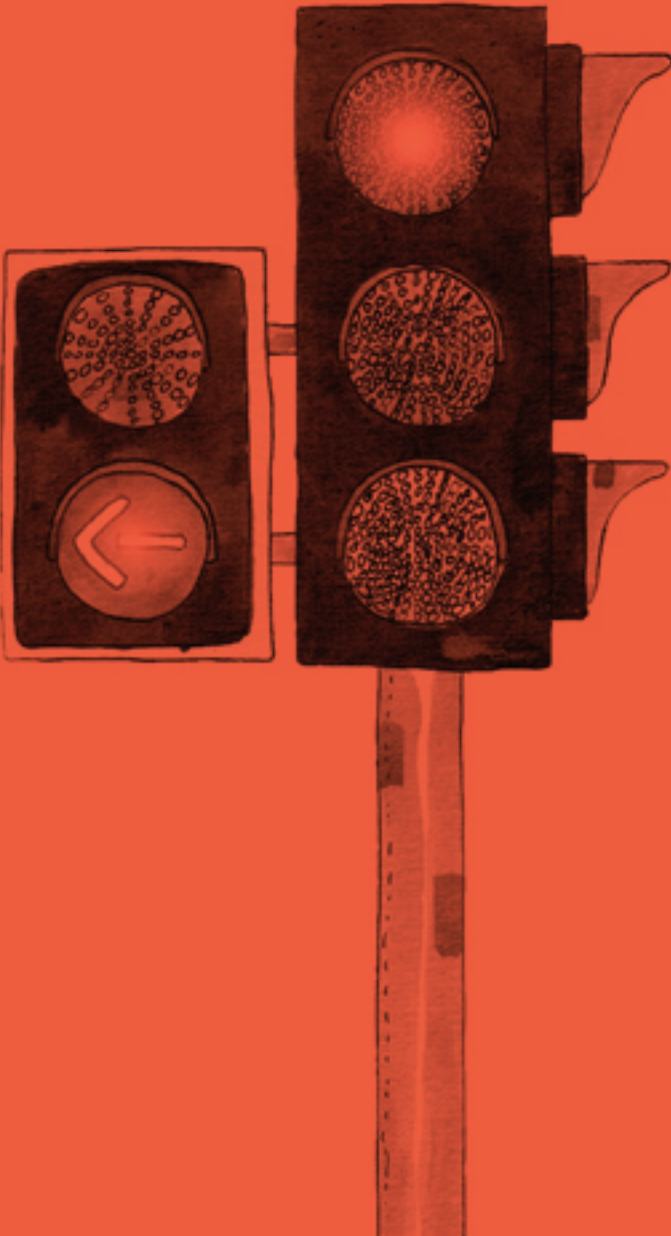
Results for different qualifications come out at different times.

- BTEC results are released from mid-July – the timing will vary depending on the course and how it is assessed. The way your child will get the results will depend on their school or college; they may have to pick them up in person or the results might come by post or electronically. Some schools/colleges will release them at the same time as A levels.
- A level results come out in mid-August.

To minimise stress for your child and you, it’s important to know what to expect on results day and what to do if things don’t go to plan. Hopefully you and your child will have discussed a plan B. However, if they haven’t engaged with the idea of having a backup plan, it’s a good idea to do some research into other options yourself, so you can offer well-informed support if they don’t get their expected grades.

- Ideally your child should be available on results day, as they may need to contact universities, or there could be letters they need to sign relating to their next steps. They should try to avoid being away or at work.
- If they are collecting their results in person (this will be the case for A levels and possibly for BTECs), make sure they know what time their school or college will be open on results day. Ask whether they would like you to go with them, but respect their decision if they say no.

***If your child has applied to university through UCAS, there’s more information about what happens next on page 56.***



# GOING TO UNIVERSITY

A child's decision to go to university can raise lots of questions for parents or carers. How do they apply? How much will it cost? What financial help is available? Where will they live? This section aims to answer these questions and more, enabling you to help your child prepare for their university adventure.



## WHY GO?

University is a big commitment, in terms of both time and money, but by getting a degree your child will be making a big investment in their future. It will increase their chances of getting a good job and improve their earning potential. In addition, for many young people it is also their first taste of independence, and an exciting opportunity to try new activities and meet new friends.

## THE BENEFITS OF GOING TO UNIVERSITY

**It opens up a wide range of career options.**

- A university degree is essential for some professions, for example if your child wants to become a doctor, physiotherapist or architect.
- Many other jobs will only recruit people with a degree, although they may not require a particular subject.

### **Your child is likely to earn more.**

- Graduates earn on average more over their lifetime than people without a degree.

### **It will help them to become career-ready.**

- Universities offer careers advice and many provide high-quality work experience opportunities.
- Your child may have the opportunity to study overseas, which can be appealing to recruiters.
- University life will help your child to become more independent and develop personal and transferable skills such as teamwork, managing their time, meeting deadlines and critical thinking – all crucial for the workplace.
- They will also meet people from different places and backgrounds, building a network of contacts that will be valuable during their career.

### **They will have a great time!**

- University can be a life-changing experience; they'll develop as people, grow in confidence and have the opportunity to make new friends and try new things.

- In 2016, working age graduates earned on average £9,500 more than non-graduates.
- Postgraduates earned on average £6,000 more than graduates.

*Office for National Statistics Graduate Labour Market Statistics, April 2017*

HOW UNIVERSITY DIFFERS FROM SCHOOL OR COLLEGE

**More academic independence.** At university, your child will be expected to take responsibility for their own education. That means, for example, knowing when and where their lectures are and planning their own workload to meet essay and assessment deadlines. This can be a big leap for some students, but universities provide plenty of support while they get used to this new way of working.

**Different learning methods.** Your child will be used to a rigid timetable of lessons and homework. At university, the amount of structured learning time students have each week varies depending on the course. Some degrees, such as English and history, have around 12 to 15 hours of timetabled sessions per week, but students are expected to spend the rest of the time reading and doing library research. Other subjects, such as sciences, are fully timetabled with just a few hours’ free time each week.



Courses are made up of modules or units, each covering a specific topic, and are taught through a combination of:

- Lectures – where an academic presents information to a large group.
- Seminars – interactive sessions facilitated by a tutor, in which a smaller group of students explores a subject.
- Tutorials – discussions with a tutor, either one-to-one or with a handful of other students.
- Independent study – reading, researching and working on assignments.

Depending on the degree your child chooses, they may also have:

- Practicals or workshops – for example conducting experiments in a laboratory, creating artwork in a studio, or learning to use statistics software in a computer suite.
- Fieldwork – where they learn by visiting and studying a particular location.
- Placements – where they spend time in a company to learn workplace skills.

Many courses involve group study, where a number of students work on projects together, and experiential learning – learning by doing practical tasks and reflecting on the experience.

**More freedom in general.** For many young people, going to university means leaving home. This in turn means enjoying new freedoms and coping with new responsibilities. They will have to sort out accommodation, shop and cook for themselves, and manage their own finances. They will also have to balance their academic work with the demands of their social life and the many activities on offer at university.

UNIVERSITY TERMINOLOGY EXPLAINED

- Alumni** = a university’s past students.
- Campus** = the grounds and buildings of the university.
- Conservatoire** = a specialist higher education institution for the study of performance-based courses, such as music or drama.
- Freshers’ week** = a structured programme of activities for new students to help them meet new friends, find their way around and prepare for university-level study.
- Graduate** = someone who has completed an undergraduate degree.
- Halls of residence** = student accommodation.
- Lectures, seminars, tutorials** = lessons.
- Lecturers, tutors, academics** = teachers.
- Postgraduates** = people who are studying for a Masters or PhD.
- Students’ union** = a student-run organisation that runs sports and social activities as well as support services for students.
- Russell Group** = a group of universities that are seen as ‘research intensive’, meaning that they place a strong emphasis on research through their teaching.
- Selective universities** = universities with the highest entry requirements, that require applicants to take an admissions test, or that interview the majority of applicants.
- University Alliance** = a group of universities that have close links with business and are committed to driving innovation and enterprise.
- Undergraduate** = a student doing a bachelors degree.

CHOOSING WHAT TO STUDY AND WHERE

With more than 50,000 courses on offer across UK universities, there are plenty for your child to choose from. They might need some support to narrow down the options. They’ll also need to think about where they’d like to study. Open days are a good way of deciding whether a particular university is right for them.

***You’ll find more information about how to get the most from open days on page 52.***

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
UNIVERSITY DECISIONS

You’ll want to be sure that your child makes a good choice, particularly if you are helping to fund their education. However, it’s important to avoid imposing your own wishes.

- Get involved in looking at courses and universities with them, make suggestions and offer guidance, but let them take the lead. They’re more likely to do well and enjoy their university experience if they are doing a subject they are really interested in, rather than one they have taken to please you.
- If they feel pressured into going in a certain way, they may be reluctant to come to you for advice or support. They might even choose something that takes them in the opposite direction, whether or not it’s right for them.

CHOOSING A COURSE

Single or combined honours?

If your child can't decide between two subject areas, a combined or joint honours course could be the answer. This offers the chance to study two subjects rather than one, taking roughly the same number of modules in each. Some universities also offer a major/minor degree option, which is similar but with a smaller proportion of modules in the minor subject.

Studying a combination of subjects could mean your child doesn't have to drop a subject they enjoy, and provides a broad education. However, finding the right combination may mean narrowing down their choice of universities.

“ Speaking as parents who've been to university and had careers, we both advised our daughter to choose a subject that definitely interested her, but also choose a career that would offer her financial stability. ”



Checking course details

Degree courses are made up of individual modules or units, which cover specific topics within the subject area. Most courses include compulsory modules, which students must take, and some optional modules that enable students to choose topics of interest.

- Encourage your child to look at the modules in detail, as they will vary across different university courses. While lots of universities offer a history degree, for example, the topics they cover in their modules might be very different.
- Suggest they find out how the modules are taught and assessed too, to check the course will suit their approach to learning.
- Does the course offer the amount of flexibility they would like in terms of choosing optional modules? Can they tailor the course to some extent to match their career goals or academic interests?

Other things to check include:

- **Contact time** (time spent in lectures, seminars and tutorials) – do they feel the course offers enough contact time, and are they happy with the balance between timetabled learning sessions and independent study time?
- **Study abroad** – some degrees include a year abroad as part of the course structure; on other courses your child may be able to take part in an exchange programme and spend a semester or term studying at a partner university overseas.
- **Industry placements** – some degrees include a period of time working in a relevant business, which can offer students valuable workplace experience.
- **Accreditation** – this can be an advantage for certain careers, such as accounting, marketing, chartered surveying or healthcare professions. Accredited courses can count towards professional qualifications or registration with a professional body.

Entry requirements

It's important to check entry requirements carefully.

- Does your child have the required GCSEs and are their A level subjects accepted on the types of courses they are interested in?
- They will need to make realistic choices based on their predicted grades.
- Some universities will have higher entry requirements than others. Encourage your child to think about a backup choice with lower requirements in case they don't get their predicted grades.
- The application process may also involve an interview, audition or admissions test, or a combination of these.

**See page 56 for more information about interviews and auditions.**

Admissions tests

Entry to some courses will require your child to take an admissions test set by the university. This is common for courses at Oxford and Cambridge, and for courses at many universities in subjects such as law, medicine and other health professions. Most admissions tests happen between August and November the year before your child starts their studies – some take place even earlier, before they have sent their UCAS application. Make sure your child checks course requirements carefully to find out about any admissions test requirements.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

CHOOSING A COURSE

If they're not sure which subject to choose, encourage them to think about:

- **What they study now.** Are there particular subjects they enjoy and are good at? Will one of these hold their interest for another three years? What sort of career could it lead to?
- **Whether they want their studies to relate directly to a particular career.** If they have a particular job in mind, do they need specific qualifications to go into their chosen field?
- **Whether there is a new subject that appeals to them.** They will have a wider choice of subjects at degree level. If they are interested in an area they haven't studied before, they should look at course details and teaching approaches carefully to make an informed choice.

Use the UCAS subject guide ([www.ucas.com/ucas/subject-guide-list](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/subject-guide-list)) for more information about courses, what they involve and where they can lead.

“ At this stage young people can tend to feel over confident or insecure about their choices. It's always a good idea to discuss their choices with them and how to go about finding what suits them best – with it being their own decision. Referring back to their positives and negatives while in college can be helpful. ”

CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY

Finding the right degree course will be one of the main factors in your child’s choice of university, but there are plenty of other things to take into consideration, such as reputation, location and the services and facilities on offer. Also, different universities have a different ‘feel’ or culture, so it’s important that your child finds somewhere that suits them.

Reputation

There are many elements that influence people’s perceptions of a university – for example, academic standards, research strengths and whether it has a longstanding history. But ultimately people’s judgements of a university’s reputation are subjective, and employers will have different views on which universities they think of as ‘good’.

While reputation is important, your child should avoid making their choice based on reputation alone. Factors such as course content and location are just as important if your child is to do well academically and enjoy university life.

League table position

League tables give universities a ranking based on a number of factors, including entry grades, student satisfaction scores, the ratio of staff to students and graduate employability.

These league tables show universities’ overall scores as well as a ranking by subject area. Each calculates their ranking differently, so it’s worth looking at more than one.

League tables will give you a useful indication of the quality of a university’s courses and facilities, but they don’t always tell the full story, so your child should see them as just one factor in the decision making process. Remember that:

- Rankings can be deceptive because the scores are very close at the top, middle and bottom of the tables. A university in 35th place might only be a few points behind one at number 20.
- Some universities have an excellent reputation with employers for specific subject areas, but this may not be reflected in league table scores.
- Student satisfaction scores are personal views and may be influenced by a specific set of circumstances that won’t affect future students.

THE LEAGUE TABLES ONLINE

The Guardian University Guide

[www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide](http://www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide)

The Complete University Guide

[www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)

The Times (subscription site)

[www.thetimes.co.uk](http://www.thetimes.co.uk)

The Uni Guide website for more information about using league tables

[www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-course/what-do-university-league-tables-really-tell-you](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/choosing-a-course/what-do-university-league-tables-really-tell-you)

“ When it comes to choosing the right university, there’s no ‘one size fits all’. It can help to use information to help visualise your child at the different universities, and watch video clips of actual students talking about life at university. ”

Location

The location your child chooses will have implications for their budget and their lifestyle.

- Does your child plan to study locally and live at home? This is a cheaper option but will be a different experience to living in halls or shared student accommodation.
- If they are planning to study further afield, how far away do they want to be from home? How long will it take to travel home, and how much will it cost?
- Living costs are higher in some cities than others.

City or campus?

Some universities are located in the middle of cities, some in more suburban areas, and others on leafy, out-of-town campuses, with students living and studying on the same site. Your child will need to think about which set-up suits them best.

- How do they feel about ‘commuting’ to lectures?
- Are they excited by the idea of big-city life or would they feel more comfortable somewhere smaller or more peaceful?

Facilities and services

- How good are the university’s academic facilities? Depending on the subject your child is interested in, an extensive library, a high-spec computing system, the latest laboratory equipment or spacious art studios could contribute to a better learning experience.
- What are the social, leisure and sports facilities like?
- Are there good support services for students, such as advice on finances and housing, career support and health and wellbeing services?

MORE HELP AND GUIDANCE

There are lots of websites that provide information and advice about how to choose a course and a university. To get you started, you and your child could visit:

The Uni Guide

[www.theuniguide.co.uk](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk)

UCAS

[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/ucas-undergraduate-what-study](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/ucas-undergraduate-what-study)

The Complete University Guide

[www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/where-to-study/choosing-a-university](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/where-to-study/choosing-a-university)



UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

Once your child has narrowed down their options, open days are the best way for them to really get a feel for the universities on their list before they apply. These days it's common for parents or carers to go with their children, although some young people choose to go on their own or with friends.

If you do go along, seeing the university for yourself can be reassuring. If you can visualise your child living and studying there, and are happy with the quality of education and support on offer, you'll be less worried when they eventually go.

What does an open day involve?

Most open days will include tours of the university campus and local area, talks about specific subject areas and about the services and facilities on offer to all students, taster sessions, and the chance to chat with staff and current students. There may also be talks especially for parents or carers.

Dates and registering

You and your child can search [www.ucas.com/open-days](http://www.ucas.com/open-days) for open day dates, and you'll find more information about specific universities' open days on their websites. Most universities ask visitors to register for a place so make sure you or your child does this.

If you can't make it on to campus

If you and your child aren't able to make it on to campus – don't worry. Lots of universities now offer virtual open days where you can find out about the university, courses, location and hear from staff and current students online. Your child will still have to plan their day effectively - and ensure they have a comfortable space with a good internet connection to explore the event. The following information refers to visiting universities in person for open day events, but much of the advice applies to virtual open days too.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

BEFORE THE OPEN DAY

Whether or not you are going along, you can help your child beforehand by:

- Checking they have made any necessary practical arrangements. Do they need to register for the open day and if so, have they done it? If they are going on their own, have they planned transport and do they need some money to pay for a bus or train fare?
- Helping them to plan the day. Look through the information together and talk about which sessions they will find most useful and how to structure their time to fit everything in.
- Encouraging them to think of things they would like to ask staff and students while they are there.

If your child would like you to go with them, remember to let them take the lead – resist the temptation to take control yourself. Although you'll have your own questions and opinions, it's important that they get what they need from the day, as ultimately the choice will be theirs!

ON THE DAY

You can support your child on the day by:

- Getting them there – whether you drive or get the bus or train together.
- Staying in the background but encouraging them to get involved in the activities on offer and talk to people. Attending a talk for parents or carers will give you a chance to ask the questions that you want to ask.
- Giving them some space – if they are happy with the idea, leave them to it while you take a walk around the campus or local area.

- Encouraging them to look around the city as well as the university, and to think about how they'd feel living there.
- Making sure you both take time to refuel. It will be a busy day, so have an occasional sit-down and something to eat and drink to avoid either of you getting tired and grumpy!
- Taking notes of anything important in case your child doesn't.

AFTERWARDS

- Chat with them about what they liked or didn't like about the university, and whether they can imagine it being their home. Find out what they thought of it compared to others they have visited.
- Be objective. Your child's opinion is what's important. They might be influenced by what you say, so find out what they think before offering your perspective.
- Encourage your child to contact the university's admissions team if there were any questions that staff couldn't answer on the day.



GOOD TO KNOW

If your child can't attend an official open day, think about visiting the campus together on a 'normal' day to have a look around and talk to students. If they enquire beforehand, your child may even be able to arrange to talk to a member of staff from the department they are interested in.

“ I would recommend that your son or daughter visit all the universities that they are applying to and do as much online research as possible. Also, they should consider very carefully where they think they would really like to live in the country and, crucially, how far from home they are prepared to go. ”

THE UNIVERSITY  
APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications to study full-time courses at universities, colleges and conservatoires in the UK are processed through an organisation called UCAS. Your child can apply for up to five courses in total.

For full details of the UCAS application process visit [wwwucas.com](http://wwwucas.com). You can also sign up for the UCAS parents' email newsletter, which provides useful information and guidance. To register, visit [wwwucas.com/parents-signup](http://wwwucas.com/parents-signup).

WHEN TO APPLY

Your child should apply in good time to meet the deadlines, which are:

- **15 October** – for all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine/science, and dentistry at all universities. Your child will be able to apply for courses with different deadlines later, as long as they are within the limit of five courses overall.
- **15 January** – for most other degree courses.
- **24 March** – for some art and design courses (others have a mid-January deadline so be sure your child checks carefully).

Universities don't wait for the January deadline to start offering places – students can receive offers late in the autumn term – so it's good to view 15 January as a deadline rather than a target.

COMPLETING THE ONLINE FORM

UCAS's undergraduate application system is called 'Apply' and the whole process is done online.

- Your child will need to register on the UCAS website by giving some basic details and setting some security questions; they'll be given a username and will set a password.
- Their school/college may give them a 'buzzword' to enter in their form; this links their application to their school/college.

After registering, there are seven more sections to complete:

- Personal details.
- Additional information, including equality monitoring questions, and details of any summer schools or taster courses they have attended in preparation for higher education.
- Student finance – your child can sign up for an alert to let them know when they can apply for student finance.
- Choices – their chosen courses/universities (**see page 48 for more guidance on choosing a course**).
- Education – details of schools attended since the age of 11, exams taken, results, and any exams still to be taken.
- Personal statement – their opportunity to tell universities about their strengths and why they should be offered a place.
- Employment – basic details about part-time jobs.

There is also a section at the end for a reference, which is usually completed by a teacher. If your child is applying independently, they can ask an employer or trainer to be their referee.

There is an application fee, which may be payable direct to UCAS or via your child's school/college. If your child isn't sure which, encourage them to check with a teacher.

DEFERRED ENTRY

If your child is thinking about taking a gap year before they start university (*see page 81*), they can apply now and defer their start date by one year. They can do this by selecting a deferred start date in the 'Choices' section of the UCAS form. Universities will often have their own guidance on applications for deferred entry; your child should check their websites or prospectuses for details. Most universities will want students to explain their reason for deferring and their plans for the year out in their personal statement.

Not all courses will accept deferred entry applications, so your child should check the entry requirements carefully.

Depending on their chosen course, it may be possible for your child to defer after they have made their application, but they'll need to contact the university to discuss this.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your child doesn't have to fill the UCAS form in all at once – after they have registered they can go in and out of the form, saving their information as they go. They can go back and edit different sections until they are happy with it.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
DRAFTING THE PERSONAL  
STATEMENT

The personal statement is your child's opportunity to stand out from the crowd by talking about their skills, experience and ambitions. It's a crucial part of the UCAS application, but it's also the section many young people find most difficult.

It's worth doing some research yourself so that you can offer the best possible guidance. Have a

look at the resources on the UCAS website. These include videos and a personal statement tool that helps your child think about what to include and how to structure their statement within the given word limit.

You can offer practical help by encouraging your child to write some notes about:

- What makes them interesting or different (in a positive way).
- Why they chose the subject, and why they are excited about the course.
- Work experience and other activities, and the skills and qualities they demonstrate.
- How these skills and qualities could be useful on the course – for example project management, meeting deadlines or communication.

If they're stuck for ideas, they could ask you, their teachers and their friends for feedback.

Once they've gathered their thoughts, they will need to create a focused and structured personal statement.

- Offer to look through drafts and encourage them to use plain, cliché-free English.
- Check their spelling and grammar, or make sure they ask someone else to.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WRITING AN  
EFFECTIVE PERSONAL STATEMENT

The Uni Guide

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/personal-statements/writing-your-personal-statement>

UCAS

[wwwucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement](http://wwwucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement)

**THE SCHOOL/COLLEGE’S ROLE**  
If your child is applying through their school or college, when they submit their form it will go to the school/college rather than directly to UCAS. The school/college will then check the form, add the reference, and submit the form to UCAS.

Encourage your child to talk to the teacher who will be writing the reference about what they are applying for and why, so that the teacher can personalise the reference.

The school/college is likely to give your child a deadline to complete their form that is sooner than the UCAS deadline, so that they’ve got time to process all their students’ forms before the UCAS cut-off date. It’s important to make yourself aware of any internal school/college deadlines so you can ensure your child submits their application in time to get it checked by a teacher.

**VISIT DAYS**  
Once your child has applied, a university might invite them to a department open day or visit day. These are different from general open days as they focus on one area in more detail. They might include a tour of facilities, a taster lecture, and meeting staff and current students. Sometimes universities combine this with an interview (formal or informal) or an audition. If your child can go along it is well worth it, especially as it gives university staff a chance to meet them in person, which can help staff make a decision about whether to offer a place.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**  
Once your child’s form is submitted to UCAS:

- UCAS processes the information, which can take up to 48 hours.

- Your child will receive a welcome email, explaining how to use Track – the online system that allows them to follow the progress of their application.
- Their application will be sent to your child’s chosen universities.
- Your child may be invited for an interview or audition, or may be required to do an admissions test.

**SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
INTERVIEWS/AUDITIONS**

When they prepare, your child should bear in mind that interviewers are typically looking for evidence that they have good subject knowledge, can think independently and are enthusiastic about the course and university.

- Help your child work out the logistics – check that they know where they need to go and how they will get there. Encourage them to allow plenty of time to avoid any extra stress.
- Ensure they have read through the information that has been sent to them about the interview/audition so that they know what to expect.
- Check that they’ve thought about what to wear. The university might specify a dress code for interviews, but if not they should wear something comfortable and smart. If it’s an audition, they should wear something appropriate for the type of performance.
- Help them to think about the questions they might be asked – ‘Why did you choose this subject?’ and ‘Why do you want to study here?’ are good places to start.
- Also, help them to think of some questions they can ask, perhaps about teaching methods or the content of the course.

- Encourage them to take up any mock interview/audition opportunities, for example with teachers or careers advisers.
- If they have to choose an audition piece, encourage them to avoid obvious or clichéd pieces.

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PREPARING FOR  
INTERVIEWS/AUDITIONS**

**Prospects**  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/getting-into-university/preparing-for-a-university-interview](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/getting-into-university/preparing-for-a-university-interview)

**The Uni Guide**  
[www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/university-interviews-how-to-prepare](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/university-interviews-how-to-prepare)  
[www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/how-important-are-auditions-for-getting-on-to-performing-arts-courses](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/how-important-are-auditions-for-getting-on-to-performing-arts-courses)

**UCAS**  
[www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/undergraduate-interview-invitations](http://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/undergraduate-interview-invitations)



**UNIVERSITY DECISIONS**  
Universities will let UCAS know when they make a decision, and UCAS will send your child an email prompting them to look at the decision in Track. The decision could be:

- **A conditional offer** – an offer of a place that depends on your child getting certain grades.
- **An unconditional offer** – if your child already has the required grades, or the university has decided to give them a place whatever grades they achieve (*see below*).
- **An unsuccessful application** – where the university decides not to make an offer.

**Unconditional offers**  
Some universities may make an unconditional offer regardless of whether the student has received their results or not. If a student confirms this as their first choice, they will be committing to that place.

This type of unconditional offer can seem tempting as it means your child has a place however they do in their exams. However, it still needs to be the best course and university for them.

If your child decides to accept an unconditional offer, it’s really important that they still apply themselves to their studies. If they change their mind about the university course, or decide to do a different course, their A level or BTEC grades are still going to matter. In addition, the knowledge they gain while doing these qualifications will help to prepare them for further study and work.

**When all the decisions have come in**  
Your child will need to reply to any offers they have received within the deadline they are given.

The replies can be:

- Accepting an offer as their firm choice. This commits them to that course at that university, assuming they meet the offer conditions.
- Accepting an offer as their insurance choice. The insurance choice is a second choice in case your child doesn't meet the conditions of their firm choice, so it's sensible to pick an insurance choice with lower entry requirements.
- If your child has used all their five choices and hasn't received any offers (or has declined any offers they have received), they could use UCAS's free Extra service to look for another course. Extra is a good opportunity for students with no offers to apply for other courses without having to wait for Clearing. Your child could apply using Extra any time between the end of February and the beginning of July. There are more details at [www.ucas.com/extra](http://www.ucas.com/extra).

### GOOD TO KNOW

Track shows the deadlines by which your child will need to reply to their offers. Make sure they check these – if they don't reply within the deadline their offers will automatically be declined.

### SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD REPLYING TO OFFERS

Before they reply, check that your child has compared the different offers, is clear about the tuition fees for their chosen courses and, if relevant, has discussed any particular needs with their universities of choice (for example, if they need additional support because of a disability or learning difficulty such as dyslexia).

If they are finding it difficult to choose their firm and insurance choices, go over the options with them. Encourage them to think about what they want to get out of university life and which of the courses will help them achieve it.

Generally, it's a good idea to pick an ambitious firm choice (one that might be slightly higher than their predicted grades) as students often underestimate their own ability. Also, even if they don't quite get the required grades, it's possible that the university may still accept them if it is a near miss. Their insurance choice should at least be aimed at their predicted grades.

If your child has already made up their mind, ask them how they reached their decision and check that they seem sure of their choices.

If there's anything they don't understand about the conditions of their offers, encourage them to contact the university.

### ON RESULTS DAY

As well as being sent to your child's school or college, most exam results are sent to UCAS, which shares them with universities. For BTEC results this can happen from mid-July; A levels results come out in mid-August. Universities will then make their decisions.

- If your child has achieved the grades for their firm or insurance choice, the university will confirm their place in Track.
- If they have done better than expected, they can choose to use Adjustment (*see below*).
- If they haven't met the conditions of their offer, there's a chance that the university could still offer them a place on their chosen course, on another course, or for a different year of entry. The university will confirm this via Track or by contacting your child directly after the results come out. Or, if they are unsuccessful with their firm or insurance choices, your child can choose to use Clearing.

**For more information and guidance about results day, see page 42.**

### GOOD TO KNOW

There are some types of non-standard exam results that UCAS doesn't share with universities. If your child is taking one of these, they will need to send their results to their firm and insurance choices. They can check at [www.ucas.com/sending-exam-results](http://www.ucas.com/sending-exam-results).

### Adjustment

If your child has done better than expected, and has exceeded the conditions of their firm choice, they might wish to use Adjustment. This gives them a certain period of time during which they can look for an alternative course. If they don't find one they will keep their original place. For more details visit [www.ucas.com/adjustment](http://www.ucas.com/adjustment).

### Clearing

If after receiving their results your child doesn't have a place, they can look for another course using Clearing. Clearing starts in July, so if your child has received all their results (for example BTEC results), they don't have to wait until A level results day in August to use Clearing.

Finding a place through Clearing involves:

- Looking through the official list of Clearing vacancies published online by UCAS and in *The Telegraph* newspaper. The list is updated regularly, so if your child can't see the course or university they are looking for, it's worth trying again later just in case.
- Talking to the universities they are interested in to find out if they would be accepted, and getting informal offers over the phone.
- With the agreement of the relevant university, adding their Clearing choice in Track. It is then up to the university to confirm the place in Track.

For more details and guidance, visit [www.ucas.com/clearing](http://www.ucas.com/clearing).



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD  
**IF THEY DON'T GET A  
UNIVERSITY PLACE**

If your child has their heart set on going to university but doesn't get a place, they are likely to be disappointed and anxious about what to do instead. As well as offering emotional support, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them not to make any hasty decisions. It's probably better for them to step back and think about next steps rather than accept a place on a course they're not really interested in.
- Helping them to seek advice – for example from teachers, school/college careers advisers or the National Careers Service ([www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)).
- Discussing possible alternatives with them. Could they retake their qualifications and reapply? Would they be interested in a career-related training option, such as an apprenticeship (see page 79) or HND (see page 38)? Or would they like to take a gap year to give them time to think about their options (see page 83)?



THE UCAS APPLICATION PROCESS  
**AT A GLANCE**

YEAR 12

**DURING YEAR 12 AND 13**  
**Research courses and universities**  
Check entry requirements and the different application deadlines on the UCAS website.

**BY 15 OCTOBER, 15 JANUARY OR  
24 MARCH, DEPENDING ON THE COURSE**  
**Register and apply online**

**AFTER APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED**  
**Go for interview/audition if required, wait  
for universities' decisions**  
Universities will decide whether to make your child an offer. There are two types of offer: unconditional or conditional.  
**See page 57 for more details.**

If your child is not accepted by one or more of their choices, or if they decline an offer, they can use Extra to apply for more choices.

YEAR 13

**ONCE ALL UNIVERSITIES' DECISIONS HAVE  
COME IN**  
**Reply to offers**  
Your child will need to reply to their offers by a specific deadline. They should:

- Select a firm choice – their first choice.
- Select an insurance choice as a backup, if their firm choice is conditional on getting certain grades.
- Decline any other offers.

YEAR 13

**JULY/AUGUST**  
**Find out about places**  
When results come out, your child will be able to see in Track if their place is confirmed.

- If their firm choice is unconditional, their place is confirmed.
- If their place is conditional, the university or college will update their record to show if it is confirmed.

If your child doesn't get a place because they didn't meet the requirements, they can use Clearing to apply for more courses.

If they got better grades than expected, and meet or exceed the conditions of their firm choice, they can choose to look for an alternative course using Adjustment.

UCAS TERMS EXPLAINED

- Adjustment** = an optional service that gives students who get better grades than they expected the opportunity to find a different course.
- Apply** = the name of UCAS's online application system.
- Buzzword** = a code supplied by schools/colleges to link students' UCAS applications to their school/college.
- Choice** = the university course(s) your child applies for.
- Clearing** = a process through which students who did not achieve their firm or insurance choice can look for alternative courses, or for anyone making a first-time application after 30 June.

- Conditional offer** = an offer of a university place that requires the student to get certain grades.
- Extra** = a service that allows students to add another course choice if they don't have any university offers.
- Firm choice** = your child's first choice of course.
- Insurance choice** = your child's second choice of course – usually one with lower entry requirements than the firm choice.
- Personal statement** = part of the UCAS application form in which students demonstrate their skills and qualities in order to persuade universities to offer them a place.
- Track** = the online system through which students can track the progress of their university application.
- Unconditional offer** = an offer of a university place to a student who already has the required grades.
- Unsuccessful application** = when a university decides not to offer a student a place.
- Withdrawal** = when a choice is withdrawn either by the university or by the applicant.

## PAYING FOR UNIVERSITY

Cost is one of the biggest concerns for parents or carers of prospective university students. Student fees have risen in recent years, and, understandably, parents and carers worry about how much they can afford to contribute and the amount of debt their child might get into.

The following section aims to give you the information you need about student fees and loans, and break down some of the myths about university finances.

The good news is that student loan repayments are based on what graduates can afford to pay rather than the amount they borrow, and students don't have to pay anything back until they have finished their degree and are earning over a certain amount.

### TUITION FEES

This is the cost of the course itself – for example teaching time and library/computer facilities.

- Students have to pay their own fees, but they can get a loan to cover the cost.
- Universities can charge up to £9,250 per year (2020/21).
- This loan is not means-tested – which means the amount your child receives doesn't depend on your household income.

### LIVING COSTS

Your child will also need to pay for things like accommodation, food, transport and socialising.

- They can apply for a maintenance loan to help towards these costs.

- The amount they can borrow will depend on various factors, including where they will be studying and your household income.
- For example, in 2020/21, a student living outside London, who is from a household with income below £25,000, could be eligible for a maintenance loan of up to £9,203 per year.
- The amount available to students from higher income households will be less; they – or you – will need to make up the shortfall.

### WHO PROVIDES STUDENT LOANS?

Student loans are provided by the Student Loans Company (SLC). SLC is a non-profit making, government-owned organisation. For students living in England, applications for a student loan are made through Student Finance England. There's a different process for students from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, as well as the Channel Islands.



## REPAYING STUDENT LOANS

For both types of loan, your child will only have to start making repayments:

- After they have finished their degree.
- When they are earning a salary over a certain amount. The current threshold (in 2020) is £26,575, with graduates paying 9% of anything they earn above this amount.

The tuition fee and maintenance loans are linked to keep repayments simple, and are paid back directly from graduates' salaries.

After 30 years, any outstanding balance is automatically cleared and no further repayments are required.

There's more information about repaying student loans on the Student Loans Company website, [www.slc.co.uk/repayment](http://www.slc.co.uk/repayment).

“ You realise that student loans don't mean a huge lump sum payback, it's over a period of time and it's related to what they're earning. If my son goes for a job with low earnings he won't have to pay anything back until he gets to a certain threshold, so that's good to know. ”

## STUDENT LOAN INTEREST

While they are still studying, the interest on your child's loan will be inflation plus 3%.

After they have finished their course, they will pay a rate of interest based on the UK Retail Price Index (RPI) and their current level of income.

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### FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENTS

#### GOV.UK

[www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan/what-you-pay](http://www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan/what-you-pay)

#### Student Loans Company

<http://media.slc.co.uk/repayment/qsg>

#### Money Saving Expert

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/)

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## APPLYING FOR STUDENT LOANS

Your child can apply for their tuition fee and maintenance loans online at [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance). Encourage them to do this as early as possible, as it can take up to six weeks to process their application. They don't need to wait to receive offers from universities before applying. For more guidance and application deadlines visit [www.gov.uk/get-undergraduate-student-loan](http://www.gov.uk/get-undergraduate-student-loan).

Most of the process is done online, however your child may need to send proof of identity through the post, and will have to print, sign and return a declaration form. They will then receive a letter confirming how much they can borrow.

Once your child has registered at university, the tuition fee will be paid straight to the university. The maintenance loan will be paid into your child’s bank account at the start of each term.

**Your input into the student loan application**  
If your child wants to apply for the maximum amount of maintenance loan, they will be asked to include information about your household’s taxable income in their student loan application.

Once their form has been submitted, you may be asked to provide proof of earnings – for example your P60 or Self-Assessment tax return, and your National Insurance number. You will also be asked for evidence of any taxable state benefits, pensions or any investment income. This is just part of the checking process so there’s no need to worry if you are asked to provide more details.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will then check the information you have submitted against their records.

Student Finance England will write to your child when all your information has been confirmed.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROCESS AND  
WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO PROVIDE  
**GOV.UK**  
[www.gov.uk/support-child-or-partners-student-finance-application](http://www.gov.uk/support-child-or-partners-student-finance-application)

**The Uni Guide**  
[www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/advice-for-parents/expert-advice-for-parents-student-finance](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/advice-for-parents/expert-advice-for-parents-student-finance)

**Should I take out a loan so my child doesn’t have to?**  
Student loans are generally seen as a better deal than commercial loans because of the way they are repaid, so in most cases it will be more expensive to take out a commercial loan. The Money Saving Expert website shows some useful comparisons at [www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/should-i-get-student-loan](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/should-i-get-student-loan).

**Do fees have to be paid up front?**  
No. If your child has applied for a tuition fee loan, this will be paid direct to the university when they register there.

**What if my child can’t afford repayments?**  
If they are earning less than £26,575 your child won’t be asked to make any repayments. Above that threshold, repayments are linked directly to earnings to ensure they are affordable. If their salary goes down, so will their repayments.

**What if interest rates go up?**  
Because repayments are based on income rather than the amount owed, the interest on your child’s loan won’t affect how much they pay back each month. In many cases the added interest is irrelevant, as graduates who earn a mid-range salary are unlikely to pay off their entire student loan within 30 years, after which the remaining debt is written off. For more details visit [www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/repay-post-2012-student-loan](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/repay-post-2012-student-loan).

**Will my credit history, or my child’s, affect their chances of getting a student loans?**  
No. Student loans are not credit checked.

**Will having a student loan affect my child’s credit rating?**  
No, their student loan won’t affect their credit rating or appear on a credit report.

**Will it stop them getting a mortgage?**  
Your child may be asked about their student loan in a mortgage application, but merely having a student loan shouldn’t affect a lender’s decision about whether to give your child a mortgage. However, student loan repayments may be factored into the affordability checks undertaken by lenders, which could affect how much they can borrow.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW STUDENT  
FINANCE WORKS  
**MoneySavingExpert.com**  
[www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes)



**OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT**  
**Financial support offered by universities**  
Depending on their circumstances, your child may be able to access extra financial support from their university, such as:

- **Scholarships** – often these take the form of a lump sum and are offered to academically talented students.
- **Bursaries (cash grants that don’t have to be repaid) and fee waivers (reduced fees)** – these may be offered to students from lower-income households.
- **Hardship funds** – assistance for students who are experiencing financial difficulties, usually in an emergency or exceptional circumstances.

Each university has its own schemes and eligibility rules, so your child should check with their chosen institution for details.

**Disabled Students’ Allowance**  
The Disabled Students’ Allowances is designed to cover any extra costs your child may have due to a disability, long-term illness, mental health problem or specific learning difficulty. This could include specialist equipment such as computers or extra travel costs.

**For eligibility criteria and more details, visit** [www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas).

**Part-time and holiday jobs**  
Many students choose to earn some extra money by working during term time, vacations, or both. This can also give them useful experience and help to enhance their CV. However, it’s important that they leave plenty of time for their studies.

- Many universities have an employment service that can help students find part-time work on or off campus.
- A temping agency may be able to find them short-term jobs during holidays.
- Or they could ask around in local shops, bars or restaurants.

STUDENT FINANCE  
**APPLICATION PROCESS**

- ✱ Apply online at [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance) before the deadline (typically the end of May for students in England, other deadlines apply for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland).
- Send by post any evidence requested by Student Finance England (SFE).
- If your child is applying for the full maintenance loan, SFE sends email to parent/carer requesting information about household income.
- Use link in email from SFE to enter household income information online.
- Information is checked against HM Revenue and Customs records; this takes up to two weeks.
- Depending on their circumstances, SFE might ask parents/carers to submit additional evidence about income or marital status.
- Send any additional evidence requested as quickly as possible to avoid delays.
- SFE lets student know that their parents’/carers’ information has been received and confirmed.
- Print, sign and return the declaration form.
- SFE writes to student confirming loan amount.
- Register at university.
- SFE makes first payment.

✱

STUDENTS  
STUDENT  
FINANCE  
ENGLAND  
PARENTS/  
CARERS

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE STUDENT  
FINANCE APPLICATION PROCESS  
**GOV.UK**  
[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

**CHOOSING ACCOMMODATION**

With their place at university secured, your child will need to decide what sort of accommodation they would like to live in.

**UNIVERSITY HALLS OF RESIDENCE**

- This is the preferred option for most first-year students.
- Most halls comprise a group of study bedrooms with a communal lounge/kitchen area, but they vary in size and layout. It’s a good idea for your child to look around some halls during open days to get a feel for what they might prefer.
- There may be a choice of room type, for example rooms with a shared bathroom or en suite rooms. Costs will vary accordingly.
- Bills are usually included and halls may offer a package that includes some meals, so they are a good first step towards living independently.
- Halls may have a warden or supervisor to keep an eye on students’ welfare and conduct.
- Some universities will guarantee a place in halls for new students who meet their terms and conditions, but this is not always the case, so it’s a good idea for your child to apply as early as they can.
- Some halls of residence offer term-time only contracts; this is often cheaper but, depending on the university, may mean that students have to move out at Christmas and/or Easter.
- The cheapest option is likely to be a shared room with shared bathroom, self-catered and term-time only.

**PRIVATE HALLS OF RESIDENCE**

- These are similar to university halls but owned and managed by a private company.
- Your child should check the amenities and communal facilities on offer, and what is included in the rent.

**PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION**

- If your child doesn’t manage to get a place in halls, this is a common alternative.
- A good choice for students who are ready for a bit more independence.
- Many students move into a privately rented house or flat for their second and third years, sometimes sharing with friends they have met in halls.
- Universities often have their own accommodation agency that can help students to find approved private rented accommodation.
- Your child will probably have to sign a tenancy agreement with a landlord; they should make sure they understand the terms of the agreement. The university or students’ union will probably have a housing advice service that can help them if they are unsure.
- Students in private rented accommodation are usually responsible for paying bills on top of rent, so your child should check what is and isn’t included in the rent.
- They may have to pay rent over the summer even if they aren’t living there; if so, they will need to budget accordingly.

**LIVING AT HOME**

- If your child is studying locally they may want to stay at home.
- If you’re happy with this, it can save them a lot of money – and save you some worry. However, you might want to set out some ground rules to ensure things remain harmonious.

- Living at home may make it harder to get stuck into student life, so they may need to make extra efforts to socialise and meet people.

GOOD TO KNOW

All universities have staff who can support students who are struggling to find accommodation. Universities and/or students’ unions often have lists of approved landlords and can give advice about contracts.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CHOOSING  
UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION

**The Uni Guide**  
[https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/  
student-accommodation/how-to-pick-the-  
right-student-accommodation-for-you](https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/student-accommodation/how-to-pick-the-right-student-accommodation-for-you)



PREPARING TO GO

As their course start date approaches, your child will need to think about the practicalities of moving to university, such as what to take and how much money they'll have to spend.

If this is their first taste of independent living, you can help them to prepare by making sure they know how to do some basics. If they can use a washing machine, find their way around a supermarket and prepare a few simple meals, and know what a bill looks like and how to pay it, they'll be off to a good start.

You may also need to prepare yourself for your child's departure, as this will no doubt be an emotional time for you as well as for them.

MONEY MATTERS

Student bank accounts

Even if your child already has a bank account, it's worth their while switching to a student account as this will give them access to an interest-free overdraft and other benefits.

To open an account, they will need to provide proof of their identity, their address and their student status, and a copy of their student loan financial assessment form.

Freebies vs long-term benefits

Encourage your child to compare the different banks' offerings so that they get a deal that suits them.

Banks compete for student custom by offering a range of goodies, such as a free student railcard or shopping vouchers. These might be tempting, but encourage your child to make a judgement based on features that may be more beneficial in the longer term, such as the level of interest-free overdraft on offer.

Money management

As well as day-to-day expenses such as food, socialising and travel, your child will need to consider:

- **Utility bills** – these are usually included in halls of residence fees, but if your child moves into privately rented accommodation they should check whether any of the bills are included in the rent. They may be responsible for a share of the electricity, gas or water bills.
- **Internet** – some halls of residence offer free Wi-Fi. In private rented accommodation, your child will probably have to share the cost.
- **Mobile phone** – they might want to review their contract and look at different packages to make sure they are getting the best deal.
- **Insurance** – check your own home contents insurance to check whether it covers your child's belongings while they are away. If not, find out whether it's more cost effective to add them to your policy or set up a separate one.
- **TV licence** – halls of residence may have a licence for communal areas but this won't cover individual rooms. However, if your child will be watching on a device that uses batteries only and is not connected to the mains, they can be covered by your home TV licence. If they are in private rented accommodation with a joint tenancy agreement, they only need one licence to cover the whole household. For more details visit [www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/for-your-home/students-aud1](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/for-your-home/students-aud1).
- **Additional course costs** – your child may need to budget for course-related materials, optional field trips and things like printing and photocopying. They should check their course information to find out what is and isn't covered by the course fees. It's not necessary to buy all the books on their reading list – they can save money by buying second-hand copies of their core text books and borrowing others from the university library.

GOOD TO KNOW

Households in which all the residents are full-time students don't have to pay council tax. If your child gets a council tax bill by mistake, they should contact the local council to let them know that they are exempt. For more details, visit [www.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-full-time-students](http://www.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-full-time-students)

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STUDENT BANK ACCOUNTS

Money Saving Expert

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/Student-bank-account](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/Student-bank-account)

The Student Room

[www.thestudentroom.co.uk/life/money/best-student-bank-account](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/life/money/best-student-bank-account)

Which?

<https://www.which.co.uk/money/banking/student-and-graduate-bank-accounts>

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD MONEY MANAGEMENT

They might think it's boring, but working out a realistic budget is vital if your child is to remain in control of their student finances. Help them to pull together all the information about their incomings and outgoings to help them understand how much money they'll have at their disposal.

Add together all their student income and funding, for example:

- Student loans
- Parents' or carers' contribution
- Any scholarships or bursaries
- Savings
- Income from a job

Then take away essential costs such as:

- Rent
- Household bills
- Contents insurance
- Transport costs
- Credit card or debt repayments
- Phone bill
- Food and toiletries

Divide the remainder to come up with a weekly amount for non-essentials such as new clothes, socialising and entertainment.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT STUDENT MONEY MANAGEMENT

UCAS budget calculator

[www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/budget-calculator](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/budget-calculator)

The Complete University Guide

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/after-you-start/budgeting-for-university>

Money Saving Expert budget planner

[www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-budgeting-planner](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-budgeting-planner)

**Making money go further**

There are lots of ways that students can get the most out of their budget – for example, taking advantage of student discounts in high-street stores and getting a railcard for cheaper train travel.

They will find plenty of money-saving tips online; encourage them to visit sites such as [www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/preparing-for-university](http://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/preparing-for-university) or [www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-guide](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-guide) for ways to save.

**WHAT TO TAKE**

Packing for university can be a struggle – there’s a limit to how much your child can take so they’ll probably be agonising over which of their clothes and possessions they can do without.

- Encourage them to travel light. Their room in halls is likely to be small with limited storage, and in some halls they may have to move their things out during holidays.
- Get them to check what is provided in their halls. Their room may already have a bin, lamp and noticeboard, and they may have access to a shared iron and ironing board. There may be a kettle, toaster and microwave in the communal kitchen.
- It’s worth holding off buying items such as kitchen utensils and seeing what they need when they arrive. It’s likely that several of their housemates will bring things like pan sets and crockery and they’ll end up sharing. Or groups of housemates can buy things between them once they’ve worked out what they need.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

There are companies that provide starter packs containing basics such as towels, bedding and kitchen utensils that can be delivered straight to students’ rooms. This can be particularly useful if your child is travelling to university by public transport rather than by car. If this is of interest, they should check whether their university has a special deal with a particular starter pack company.

**PACKING CHECKLIST**

The following is a guide only. Your child should check their accommodation details to see what’s included and whether there are any rules about what they can and can’t take. It might be easier to buy some of these items when they arrive – if so, you could make a list together.

**Paperwork**

- Passport
- Driving licence (if they have one)
- Official university, student loan and accommodation correspondence
- Bank account details and cards
- National Insurance number
- Student discount cards (e.g. railcard, National Union of Students (NUS) card)
- Insurance details
- Current GP details
- Prescriptions, including glasses/contact lens prescriptions

**Bedroom and bathroom**

- Bedding – duvet, pillows, bed linen, mattress protector
- Towels
- Clothes hangers
- Toiletries
- Toilet roll (if not provided in halls)
- Washbag (especially useful if their shared bathroom is down the corridor)

**Clothes**

- Their usual casual clothes (and remember winter is on the way)
- Underwear
- Sportswear (swimsuit, trainers etc.)
- Something smart enough for an interview (e.g. for an internship/part-time job)
- Pyjamas/dressing gown

**Laundry**

- Washing products
- Laundry bag/basket
- Drying rack

**Kitchen**

- Crockery (a few mugs, plates and bowls) and glasses
- Cutlery
- Wooden spoon and other utensils
- Sharp knife
- Chopping board
- Tin opener
- Bottle opener
- Saucepan and frying pan
- Baking tray
- Washing up liquid and sponge
- Tea towel
- Oven gloves

- A few cupboard basics (e.g. some tinned food, cooking oil, cereal, snacks, tea bags, coffee, etc.)

**Health**

- Painkillers and cold medication
- Prescription drugs (if relevant)
- Glasses/contact lenses
- Contraceptives

**Electricals and tech**

- Laptop
- Tablet
- Mobile phone
- Mini speakers
- Chargers and cables for all the above
- Printer
- Headphones
- Memory stick
- Hairdryer
- Alarm clock (or they could use their phone)

**Course-related items**

- Stationery – pens/pencils, A4 notepads, folders etc.
- Reading list and text books (if they already have them – universities will confirm if any course materials are required in advance)

**Some things you might not think of...**

- Ear plugs – in case they want to sleep while their neighbours party
- Door stop – when they first move in, an open door will encourage people to drop in and say hello
- A large, sturdy bag – for lugging their laundry to the halls washing machine or to a laundrette

- A fancy dress costume – if their freshers' week programme includes a fancy dress party
- One or two favourite decorative items – to make their room a bit cosier when they first move in

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WHAT TO TAKE

#### The Student Room

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/university/freshers/what-to-take-to-university-checklist>

#### UCAS

<https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/big-list-absolutely-everything-you-need-take-university>



#### BEFORE THEY GO...

A checklist of key tasks for your child as they prepare for university life.

- Apply for accommodation.
- Open a student bank account.
- Apply for student loans.
- Go to the dentist for a check up.
- Visit the GP for a health check and make sure vaccinations are up to date – the NHS recommends that all students have a meningitis vaccine.
- Learn some basic recipes.
- Get to know their new area – they could visit if it's practical, or research it online.
- Buy a student railcard or, if they have a car, find out about parking at university.
- If they have a disability or need extra learning support, contact the university's specialist support team.
- Check what is provided in their accommodation and decide what to pack.
- Buy any additional items they will need in halls.
- Check whether they will need to buy any extra course materials or equipment.
- Look into insurance for their belongings.
- Find out whether they'll need a TV licence.
- Plan their student budget.
- Gather together all the different bits of paperwork they'll need to take and file them in one place.
- Read through the joining information sent by the university.
- Check the freshers' week programme and, if needed, register for activities.
- Plan how they will get there – will you be taking them in the car, or do they need to book train tickets?

#### COPING WITH CHANGE

Going to university is a big step, so it's natural for your child to have some anxieties about it. It's also a significant moment for you; their departure signals the end of an era. It's important to acknowledge your own feelings and consider some coping strategies for yourself.

- Talk to friends whose children have left home about how they felt and how they coped with it.
- Think about how to spend any extra time you'll have. You may be able to spend more time with other family members, or take up a new hobby.
- Accept that you'll miss them, and that you won't adjust overnight – give yourself time.
- Try not to communicate your worries or feelings of sadness to your child. They'll be dealing with their own emotions about going away, so they need you to be the strong one! They may avoid coming to you for support if they think you'll get upset.
- Agree with your child about how you'll stay in touch and how often.
- Remember that universities have a network of support services (*see page 74*) so if your child does need help or support they won't be alone.
- Look forward to seeing them when they come home! Bear in mind that they will have got used to a bit more independence so it may take a few days to settle back into family life.

“ We were sad when our children left home for university, but excited for them at the same time. ”

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PREPARING FOR CHANGE

#### The Complete University Guide

[www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/preparing-to-go/advice-for-parents](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/preparing-to-go/advice-for-parents)

#### SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

##### PRE-UNIVERSITY WORRIES

- If your child is worried, encourage them to talk about specific concerns. They might be worried about missing friends and family, making new friends, whether they'll be good enough academically, how they'll cope with living on their own, or a combination of these.
- Acknowledge their concerns, but help them look at the positives too. Reassure them about their strengths and remind them of other challenges they have overcome in the past.
- Talk about the fact that all the other new arrivals will be feeling exactly the same; everyone will be keen to make friends so that will make it easier.
- Remind them that their current friends won't disappear – they can keep in touch with old friends while they make new ones.
- Reassure them that you will be OK when they leave – they may be worrying about you.
- Let them know that you believe they will be fine, but that you'll be there for them whatever happens.

##### ON MOVING-IN DAY:

- If you help your child to move in, remain calm and supportive – the process of moving in is likely to be hectic and a bit stressful, and while your child may not show it, they'll probably be nervous.
- Take cues from your child about how long to stay. At some stage they'll want to get on with meeting their new housemates, which will be awkward if you are around!
- Saying goodbye will no doubt be emotional for both of you. Let them know that you'll miss them, but save any tears for the car if you can!

SETTLING IN AND SUPPORT SERVICES  
AT UNIVERSITY

Once your child has arrived at university they will become part of a vibrant social and academic community, with a busy schedule of welcome events to help them settle in and meet people. At most universities this will include:

- **Freshers’ week** – a programme of events designed to help students get to know each other and find out about all the different activities available to them on campus. As well as social events there are usually tours of the campus and city, and a sign-up day for the students’ union societies and sports teams.
- **Student services information sessions** – to let students know about services such as learning support, welfare, accommodation and health services.
- **Academic induction** – which might include welcome talks from lecturers, tours of the department, library and facilities, and sessions on study and research skills.
- **Halls social events** – organised by student committees in each hall of residence.
- **Buddy or ‘parent’ schemes** – where new students are matched with a second or third year who can offer advice and answer questions about university life.



Student-run clubs and societies

There will be numerous clubs, societies and sports teams, run by students for students, for your child to get involved in. These are a great way for new arrivals to meet like-minded people and become part of a social circle. They generally cover a wide range of interests, from judo to filmmaking and from salsa to public speaking. There are also faith groups and clubs linked to different subject areas.

GOOD TO KNOW

Freshers’ week has a reputation for wild partying, and while club nights and pub crawls will no doubt feature, it’s not all about drinking and staying up all night. Most freshers’ programmes include other activities too, such as quizzes, paintballing, barbecues, comedy nights and film screenings. So if your child isn’t a party animal, they should still find plenty to enjoy.

Support services

It’s only natural to worry about your child’s welfare when they move away from home. Remember that if they do run into any problems or need some advice, there will be plenty of people they can turn to.

- **Academic support** – most universities run a personal tutor system, which means your child will be allocated a member of academic staff who they can talk to about academic queries or any other issues they might have. In addition, their subject tutors will have ‘office hours’ during which they are available to give students any extra guidance or answer questions. There will also be workshops and advice for students who want to develop their academic skills.
- **Practical support and emotional welfare** – the university and students’ union will run services offering advice on financial and accommodation matters, as well as counselling and emotional support.
- **Support for students with additional needs** – there will be a team dedicated to supporting students with disabilities, mental health problems, long-term health conditions or learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Encourage your child to make contact with the team before they start their course if they are likely to need this type of support.
- **Health services** – many universities have a GP practice on campus. Encourage your child to register during their first weeks at university, rather than waiting until they are ill.
- **Career support** – careers advisers will be available to help your child make decisions about their future. Most university career services also run employability workshops, careers fairs and mentoring schemes, and they may advertise internship and job opportunities.

“ We were delighted when our daughter started university. She had thoroughly investigated the course and was moving to a lovely part of the country. She has made good friends and has got involved in promoting the university on open days, talks etc, which has been fantastic for increasing her confidence. We are both incredibly proud of her. ”

GOOD TO KNOW

Many universities will have a multi-faith chaplaincy offering spiritual guidance to students of different religions, and there will be dedicated spaces for prayer and contemplation on campus. Student communities tend to be diverse, so your child should be able to get in touch with people of the same faith – perhaps through a faith-based student society.

## GOING TO UNIVERSITY AT A GLANCE

### Research the options

Your child should consider attending UCAS exhibitions, talking to teachers and careers advisers, attending university taster courses/ residential, etc.

*See page 36*

### Narrow it down

Looking at prospectuses and websites, reading course details and thinking about location will help them to narrow down their preferred courses and universities.

*See page 47*

### Go to university open days

To get a feel for what it would be like to study there and ask questions about the course and facilities.

*See page 52*

### Apply via UCAS

The deadline is 15 January for most courses. For full details visit [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com).

*See page 54*

### Go to auditions/interviews

They'll be invited either by letter from the university, or via Track.

*See page 56*

### If required, take an admissions test

This may be separate from the UCAS process, so check course details carefully.

*See page 49*

### If the university runs them, go on subject-specific visit days

To meet tutors and learn more about the department. These may happen after students have been made an offer.

*See page 56*

### Receive offers

Some universities may respond within weeks – others may take longer.

*See page 57*

### Apply for student finance

Full details and deadlines at [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance).

*See page 66*

### Reply to offers

Make firm and insurance choices by the given deadline.

*See page 58*

### Apply for accommodation

Check the university's information for options and deadlines.

*See page 66*

### Find out results

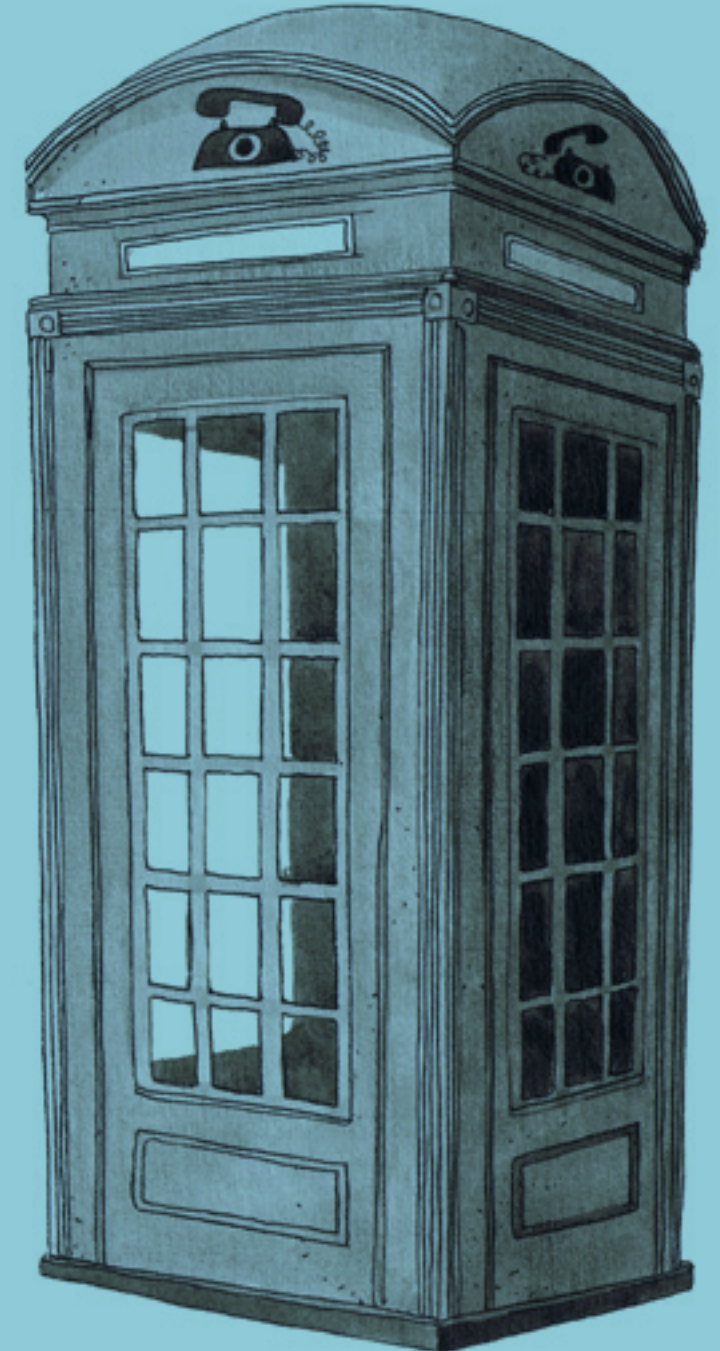
Their place is automatically confirmed if they achieve the required grades. Otherwise they can use Clearing or other UCAS services to search for an alternative.

*See page 59*

### Prepare to go

The university will send your child all the details they'll need about arriving and moving in. They can get ready for student life!

*See page 68*





# ALTERNATIVES TO UNIVERSITY

If your child isn't sure about spending another three years in full-time education, they could consider getting some qualifications while they earn by doing an apprenticeship, or going straight into the world of work. Or they might choose to take a gap year to gain some new experiences while they consider their options.

Just like the Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships described on page 23, higher and degree apprenticeships combine work and training – but at this level they also offer the chance to gain a degree-level qualification.

## EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATION LEVELS

TYPE OF APPRENTICESHIP	QUALIFICATION LEVEL	DEGREE EQUIVALENT
Higher apprenticeship	Level 4, 5, 6, 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree apprenticeship	Level 6, 7	Bachelors or Masters degree

## HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

- Nearly three-quarters of apprentices agreed that their chances of earning a higher wage in future had increased.
- 80% of apprentices agreed that their chances of progressing to a higher level of training had also increased.

*Learners and Apprentices Survey 2018 ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/808273/BRANDED-Learners\\_and\\_Apprentices\\_Survey\\_2018\\_-\\_Main\\_Report\\_-\\_14\\_May\\_2019\\_-\\_Clean.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/808273/BRANDED-Learners_and_Apprentices_Survey_2018_-_Main_Report_-_14_May_2019_-_Clean.pdf))*

Higher and degree apprenticeships involve:

- At least 30 hours a week in the workplace.
- Learning from staff at all levels of the business, and working closely with a senior colleague who provides coaching and supervision.
- Additional training at a university, college or training provider, as well as learning at work or online.
- Depending on your child's chosen role or sector, they may also gain professional qualifications or membership of relevant professional associations.

Apprenticeships offer:

- The same rights and benefits as other employees, with a contract and paid holidays.
- The potential to earn a salary equivalent to similar roles in the company.
- Additional benefits may include a pension, access to a car, or a relocation allowance if your child has to move.

They are offered:

- In a wide range of sectors and occupations, including accounting, broadcast technology, healthcare science, IT and software development, legal services, product design and retail.
- By large companies such as Balfour Beatty, Google, Rolls Royce, Sky and Santander, as well as smaller businesses.

CAREER PROSPECTS

Higher and degree level apprenticeships are specially designed to meet industry demand for a highly skilled workforce, so apprentices become valuable employees. Your child might be offered a role within the same company when they complete their training, but if not they will have an impressive set of skills and knowledge that will help them find a role elsewhere.

Apprentices can reach senior manager and boardroom level, particularly in the fields of construction, engineering and energy. For example, 30% of the senior UK managers at Rolls Royce were apprentices at the company.

“ Doing an apprenticeship is an excellent opportunity for my son to learn practical and relevant skills with a recognised training provider while being employed for the first time. He signed a training contract with a local firm of chartered accountants. He has learned basic bookkeeping and has successfully completed his first examination. ”

Is an apprenticeship right for your child?

- This could be a good option if your child:
- Has a firm idea of the type of career they would like to go into.
  - Is keen to get into the world of work – and start earning – straight away, rather than doing more full-time study.

- Wants to gain higher level qualifications but prefers a more practical approach to study.
- Feels they can cope with the challenge of juggling a busy schedule of work and study.
- Wants to gain a degree without having to pay student fees.

FINDING AND APPLYING FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

- The Find an Apprenticeship tool ([www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)) is a good place for your child to start their search.
- Vacancies are also listed on UCAS ([www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships](http://www.ucas.com/understanding-apprenticeships)), Not Going to Uni ([www.notgoingtouni.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk)) and Amazing Apprenticeships ([www.amazingapprenticeships.com](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com)).
- If your child is interested in working for a particular company, it's worth checking their website and following them on social media to hear about vacancies as soon as they come up.

When to apply

- Vacancies are advertised throughout the year and each vacancy will have its own application deadline.
- Typically, larger organisations will start to advertise places in the autumn, with most vacancies coming up in January and February onwards.
- If your child hopes to start their apprenticeship in August or September, they could start looking for vacancies from spring onwards.
- Your child shouldn't wait until the last minute to apply, as some companies will close recruitment once they have a certain number of candidates.
- Suggest your child registers for alerts at [www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship) to hear about new vacancies.

FINDING A JOB

If your child is ready to join the workforce, but isn't sure about what sort of role to apply for:

- Suggest they do some research into different types of job. The National Careers Service website contains over 800 job profiles, each with information about what the job involves, the skills and qualifications required, typical salaries and career prospects. The profiles are available at <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/explore-careers>.
- Encourage them to think about their skill set, what they are good at and what they enjoy. You'll find more guidance on the Parent Adviser website, [www.parentadviser.co.uk/advice-for-parents.aspx](http://www.parentadviser.co.uk/advice-for-parents.aspx).
- For additional advice, they can talk to a National Careers Service adviser via webchat or by calling 0800 100900.
- Go through job adverts in your local paper or on recruitment websites and talk about whether they appeal and why.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT JOB HUNTING AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR VACANCIES, VISIT:

**National Careers Service website**  
<https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/advertised-job-vacancies>  
**There's also more information on page 82 of this guide.**

“ If you're supporting your child to apply for an apprenticeship, keep your ears and eyes open. Pay particular attention to online recruitment websites, as these are used by businesses of all shapes and sizes across all activities. ”

EFFECTIVE APPLICATIONS

Whether they are looking for an apprenticeship or a job, your child will have to master the art of the application form. Recruiters will want to see evidence of their personal qualities as well as their academic abilities, and this is where activities outside school/college can provide some useful examples.

- For job application forms and cover letters, encourage your child to think of examples from any volunteering, paid work, work experience or other activities that demonstrate the skills and personal attributes the recruiter is looking for.
- They will need an up-to-date CV that is clearly laid out, provides a realistic picture of their achievements and gives tangible examples of relevant experience. Encourage them to tailor their CV to each job they apply for.
- Offer to proofread CVs and applications – or suggest they ask someone else to do it.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WRITING CVs AND COVER LETTERS

**Prospects**  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/cvs-and-cover-letters)

# RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

Recruitment methods for apprenticeships and jobs will vary from company to company; some will have a very structured approach while others will be less formal. Either way, the process is likely to include some of the following:

- application form
- online test
- telephone interview
- face-to-face interview
- assessment day (a day of exercises, often with a group of applicants, to assess their skills and potential)



## SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD APPLYING FOR JOBS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

- Read about the role your child is applying for so you understand what’s required.
- Talk through job descriptions together and help them to think of specific examples that show how they meet the employers’ requirements.
- If they have gaps in their skills or experience, help them to think of ways they might fill them.
- Offer to read through their application to check for typing or grammatical errors – or suggest they get someone else to do it.
- Be aware of deadlines and encourage your child to get their applications in as soon as possible.
- If they get an interview, make sure they have planned how they will get there and what they will wear.
- Offer to help by asking mock interview questions – or if you have a friend or colleague with relevant career experience, ask whether they might do a mock interview with your child.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

**The Student Room**  
[www.thestudentroom.co.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/apprenticeships)

**Which? University** (downloadable higher and degree apprenticeships guide)  
<https://university.which.co.uk/teachers/apprenticeships>

**Prospects**  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/applying-for-jobs](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/applying-for-jobs) and [www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips)

# TAKING A GAP YEAR

Some young people decide to take a year out – also known as a gap year – before going on to university, starting an apprenticeship or embarking on their career.

## WHY MIGHT YOUR CHILD WANT TO TAKE A GAP YEAR?

There are lots of reasons why young people think about taking a gap year. They might want to:

- Have a break from full-time education before starting university. For many courses, it’s possible to defer a university place for one year (*see page 55*).
- Think about what to do next if they didn’t get onto their chosen university course.
- Gain new skills and real-world experience to enrich their future learning or help focus their ideas about next steps.
- Learn a language or improve their foreign language skills.
- Earn some money to help fund their studies.
- Take the opportunity to do something they are passionate about, and that is unrelated to their career or study plans, before committing to the responsibilities of work, training or education.

## WHAT COULD THEY DO DURING THEIR GAP YEAR?

Here are some popular gap year activities. Your child could choose to take part in an organised programme or make their own plans.

- Travelling or living overseas – to see the world and broaden their horizons, or to immerse themselves in a new language and culture.
- Volunteering in the UK or abroad – to learn new skills, experience new perspectives and feel good about

making a contribution to society. From football coaching in a developing country to supporting people with dementia at a local centre, there are lots of roles on offer. Your child could choose a role that will help them learn skills relevant to their future studies.

- Working, either abroad or at home – to gain skills and experience, and perhaps to fund travel or other activities later in the year.
- Doing unpaid work experience – to boost their CV and find out more about a sector or career that interests them.
- Doing a combination of two or more of these.

Websites such as Gapyear.com ([www.gapyear.com](http://www.gapyear.com)) and Gapforce ([www.gapforce.org](http://www.gapforce.org)) will give you a good idea of the opportunities on offer, as well as information about what your child will need to do to prepare for a successful gap year.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The idea of your child travelling the globe or spending time away from their education might make you feel a bit anxious. However, taking a gap year can have lots of benefits.

- It is a chance for your child to reflect on their future if they are unsure about what to do next.
- It can broaden your child’s horizons and help them to mature and develop as a person, which will help them to cope better with the challenges of university, training or a career.
- They could choose an activity that relates to the subject area they plan to study, enhancing their future education.
- They can draw from their experiences to add new skills to their CV – and demonstrate to recruiters or admissions tutors that they have drive, confidence and initiative.

## SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD ***PLANNING A GAP YEAR***

Talk to your child about the different gap year options and offer to help them work out what they want to achieve from the year and make plans. Hopefully this will reassure you that, whatever they decide, they've really thought it through.

The following might give you some useful starting points for your discussions.

### IS A GAP YEAR RIGHT FOR THEM?

Taking a gap year doesn't suit everyone. If your child is unsure about it, help them to weigh up the positives and negatives. As well as thinking about the benefits (like the ones listed on the previous page), your child should also consider whether taking a gap year might:

- distract them from their longer-term goals
- make it harder to return to study or work
- be expensive and leave them in a worse financial position
- require more confidence or independence than they feel ready for.

If they would like to do something more adventurous but feel anxious about it, they could consider volunteering overseas as part of an organised group, or going travelling with a friend.

### MONEY MATTERS

If your child wants to travel, talk about how they will pay for it. Are they thinking of working while they travel? Or will they stay at home and work for a few months to save up for their travels?

### MAKING A PLAN

Careful planning is crucial if your child is going to make the most of their year. Talk to them about the logistics and practical arrangements – for example the application process for a formal volunteering programme, or getting visas, vaccinations and insurance for travel.





## AFTER HIGHER EDUCATION

While no university can guarantee employment for their graduates in today's competitive environment, going to university offers lots of opportunities for your child to maximise their employability.

### CHOOSING A CAREER PATH

If your child is doing a degree with a clear career path, such as medicine or law, their way ahead may be fairly straightforward. If not, they will need to start thinking about potential careers while they complete their studies. Their university careers service can help them consider the options, and help them develop the experience and skills they will need when they start to look for work. For example, they may be able to access:

- work experience opportunities and volunteering, to build up professional skills
- careers fairs, where they can connect with recruiters
- CV writing and interview workshops
- enterprise and self-employment advice

### GRADUATE SCHEMES

Graduate schemes are structured training programmes offered by companies who want to develop the next generation of leaders for their organisation. They usually last one or two years, and are available in a range of specialisms such as HR, finance, marketing and law. Your child will be able to apply for graduate schemes from the end of their second year at university. The selection process can be tough and there is often stiff competition for places, but they can be a great foundation for graduates' careers.

You might hear the phrase 'milk round' – this refers to the tradition of companies touring university career fairs to promote their graduate schemes.

At least a sixth of places on the top graduate schemes now offer starting salaries of more than £40,000, with nine of the UK's best known graduate recruiters paying wages of at least £45,000 for their 2019 intake.

*High Fliers, The Graduate Market in 2019*

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT GRADUATE SCHEMES

#### Prospects

[www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/graduate-schemes](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/graduate-schemes)

### INTERNSHIPS

Graduate internships are a way for your child to get additional work experience. They last for a set period and may or may not be paid. Doing an internship can help your child to decide if they are moving into the right career and will enhance their CV. Many companies recruit from their pool of interns, so there's a chance it could lead to employment.

Internships are advertised via:

- university career services
- websites such as Prospects ([www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)) and Graduate Talent Pool (<https://graduatetalentpoolsearch.direct.gov.uk/gtp/index>)

Your child could also use their own networks – for example tutors and existing employer/business links – to seek internship opportunities, or approach companies direct via social media.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT INTERNSHIPS AND WORK PLACEMENTS

**Prospects**  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/work-experience-and-internships/internships](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/work-experience-and-internships/internships)

## GETTING A JOB

Your child will be able look for graduate jobs in a range of places, including:

- their university careers service
- careers fairs
- newspapers’ websites
- professional associations
- trade journals
- recruitment agencies
- professional social media platforms, such as LinkedIn
- websites such as Prospects ([www.prospects.ac.uk/graduate-jobs](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/graduate-jobs)) and Universal Jobmatch ([www.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch))

There is more guidance about applying for jobs on page 80, and websites such as Prospects ([www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice)) will give your child lots of tips about job hunting and the recruitment process.

## SELF-EMPLOYMENT

This is an option for young people with a business idea or who would like to offer their skills as a freelancer or consultant. Going it alone involves lots of planning and research, is hard work and doesn’t offer the security that comes with being an employee. However, it can be very rewarding to be your own boss.

Universities often have enterprise societies where your child can develop their entrepreneurial skills during their degree. They could also seek support from ‘incubator’ schemes that support fledgling businesses. The government’s business support helpline, [www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline](http://www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline), is a useful starting point for more information.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT SELF-EMPLOYMENT

**Prospects**  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/self-employment](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/self-employment)

**Target Jobs**  
[www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-an-employer/324809-how-to-become-an-entrepreneur-when-you-graduate](http://www.targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/choosing-an-employer/324809-how-to-become-an-entrepreneur-when-you-graduate)



## FURTHER QUALIFICATIONS

Some graduates choose to continue their studies at postgraduate level by taking a Masters or PhD course. This can boost their career prospects and earning potential by giving them deeper knowledge of a specialist area – either following on from their previous degree or in a completely new field. Postgraduate study is also a route towards working as a researcher in industry or as a university researcher or lecturer.

Postgraduate employment rates are some of the highest at 88.7%.  
*Graduate Labour Market Statistics, May 2020*

There are two main types of postgraduate qualification:

### MASTERS DEGREE

- Typical qualification titles include MA (Master of Arts), MSc (Master of Sciences) and MRes (Master of Research).
- They usually take a year to complete full time, or two years part time.
- There are two types of Masters degree – taught and research. Taught Masters degrees have a structured curriculum with lectures and seminars. Research Masters degrees are less structured and enable students to do in-depth, independent study into a topic, with supervision from an academic tutor.
- Most Masters degrees require a good undergraduate degree.
- If your child chooses to undertake a Masters degree – they could get a Postgraduate Masters Loan from the government to help with fees and living costs. You can find out more information at [www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study](http://www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study).

### PhD

- A PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), also called a doctorate, is the highest level of degree qualification.
- With supervision from an expert academic, students conduct a significant piece of original research in a specific field, and write it up in a document known as a thesis – usually up to 100,000 words.
- They are usually completed in three or four years full time, or up to six or seven years if done on a part-time basis.
- To do a PhD your child will need to gain a good undergraduate and Masters qualification in a relevant subject.
- Some PhDs – usually in the sciences – are part of funded research projects. Sometimes called studentships, these are paid and are advertised by the institution in the same way as jobs.
- Your child can approach a university with their own research proposal.
- Government loans are available to cover the cost of PhD fees and living costs (see [www.gov.uk/doctoral-loan](http://www.gov.uk/doctoral-loan) and [www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/funding-postgraduate-study/phd-loans](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/funding-postgraduate-study/phd-loans)). Universities also offer bursaries and scholarships to help with PhD costs, although these are usually limited.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT POSTGRADUATE STUDY AND ITS BENEFITS

**UCAS**  
[www.ucas.com/ucas/postgraduate/postgraduate-study](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/postgraduate/postgraduate-study)

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ABOUT THE SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES NETWORK

The Southern Universities Network (SUN) provides resources and outreach activities for schools and colleges to encourage young people to make positive choices about their education. It is a partnership made up of higher education institutions in Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight, plus a number of schools, local councils, further education colleges and Education Business Partnerships.



