

The Parents' Guide to **University**

2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- What's the right course
- Questions for open days
- UCAS explained
- Personal statements
- Results Day 2025

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The Parents' Guide to University

2023-2024

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Important features

USEFUL LINKS

If you want to delve deeper and find out more, we've included useful links to other reliable sources. Simply click on the picture icons to be taken to our recommended websites.

KEY INFORMATION

Information we think is particularly important has been highlighted throughout this guide; pay special attention to these!

SUMMARIES

To help save you time, we have provided useful summaries at the end of each chapter containing the key points.

KEY TERMS

Easy to understand definitions are provided throughout this guide in the key terms boxes. Don't let tricky terminology stop you from supporting your child.

CASE STUDIES

Real-life examples give you a chance to hear directly from teens, parents, and teachers about their experiences.

INTERACTIVE

To make moving around this guide easier, the contents and chapter headings are interactive. Simply click on a heading to be taken to the chapter or page you would like to read.

This guide does not need to be read sequentially – browse what interests you most.



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Half of all UK students applying to university have never had a parent go through the process



Introduction

The prospect of your teen going to university is very exciting. Attending university can offer them a great foundation for their future success and happiness; both in obtaining further qualifications and in providing a protected environment to transition from teenager to adult. It's an exciting time for you too. Yes, it's only their hard work that can get them to university, but you've contributed along the way with love, support and encouragement.

It can be a daunting time as well. There is pressure to make the right choices, a myriad of options available and the prospect of a different way of life, not only for them, but for you too. Selecting the right university will be one of the most important decisions your teen faces and you will want to help them every step of the way. The "right" university means the right

university for them: one which offers courses they'd like to study; where they will fit in and feel comfortable; one that will stretch their abilities without breaking them; and one where they will feel safe and happy. The "right" university for one student may not be the same for another – even within the same family. So how do you decide what is right? We'll guide you.

Of course, whilst going to university is first and foremost about getting a higher-level qualification, it offers much more than that. It's about learning to research independently, create professional relationships, develop lasting friendships, live without parental supervision, take up lifelong hobbies and interests. It's learning to be a grown-up: self-reliant, resourceful and confident. It's a time when you'll get to watch your teen become an adult.

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If you have teens in years 10-13, sign up for our free fortnightly emails for parents with tips on post school options and teenage wellbeing.



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All the information you need

The selection and application process can seem complicated, especially if you have not been to university yourself. If you have, that may have been some time ago and things have probably changed. There's plenty of great information online for students, but very little designed specifically for parents, so it can be quite complicated to track down the exact information you need.

That's why we've created this straightforward guide covering the application process, starting from what your teen should consider in making good choices to what happens on results day once they've completed sixth form - and everything in between.

This includes step-by-step information on:

- What to look out for when considering different universities and courses;
- The UCAS application process;
- What to do on results day, whether predicted grades have been matched, surpassed or missed.

With so much depending on it, the thought of applying to university can be stressful for parents and teens alike. We believe that once you understand the process and timelines, this will eliminate much of the stress for you (and, in turn, your teen) ensuring energy is focused in the most constructive way to get the best possible outcomes.

Our aim is to help you provide calm and informed support, with the ultimate goal of helping your teen create a future to fulfil their potential. This will empower you to offer more helpful guidance to your teen, with the ultimate goal of helping them create a future to fulfil their potential and make themselves (and you!) happy.

Researching universities and courses should be an enjoyable experience, not a headache. Don't forget: your teen has as much choice and influence in selecting the right university as the university has in selecting the right students.

Choosing the right university



“ I had a preferred university when I was researching potential courses, but I changed my mind after visiting.

Types of universities

Different terms are used for different types of university and this can be confusing. Some universities are members of more than one group whilst others choose not to be members of any. There are over 160 universities vying for applications. What's the difference and do the names mean anything?

Broadly speaking, the categories of university relate to the time at which they were established. This lends itself to different subject specialisms and teaching styles.

Ancient Universities

The original seven “ancient” universities were established before 1600: Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dublin.

Red Brick/Civic Universities

“Red Brick” universities were established during the industrial revolution of the 1800s, usually in cities. They got their name because of their iconic red brick - a popular building material at the time. The original six members (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield) specialised in much needed vocational skills such as

medicine and engineering (rather than the arts, language and theology as studied at earlier universities). Some universities established later, but before 1960s “civic universities”, are included in this category (such as Nottingham and Reading).

Plate Glass Universities

The “Plate Glass” (or “plateglass”) unis were established during the 1960s and, like red brick, take their name from the construction materials of the buildings – typically plate glass in concrete frames which was popular at the time. Plate Glass Universities were the next batch of universities to be given royal charter between 1963 and 1992.

New Universities

“New” universities generally refer to what were previously called polytechnics until gaining university status from 1992 onwards.

▪ [The Complete University Guide](#)

Russell Group Universities

Some universities belong to the “Russell” Group. The name originates from informal meetings held in the Russell Hotel of 17 university heads who were keen to ensure their interests were represented to government. There are currently 24 Russell universities, all of which have an excellent reputation for research, teaching and industry sector links. They benefit from high levels of funding and, given their strong

reputation, entry requirements are likely to be high.

Don't get too caught up by university types and reputation. What matters is your teen finds a university with a degree they're interested in taking in and an atmosphere where they'll feel settled and comfortable.

[Click here for a full list of all Russell Group universities](#)



Important factors to consider

Teaching and learning

How your teen learns best is important to consider when choosing a university. If they prefer lots of direction from teachers, a more traditional learning environment (an older university) might help them achieve better results and vice-versa if they work better when left largely to their own devices.

Industry links

Try to find out about the university and its industry links. Strong ties with industry often indicate excellent internship and placement opportunities which is very attractive for post degree employment prospects, especially important if you do not have these links within your own families and contacts.

University size

Like secondary schools, universities can vary enormously in size. Large universities offer a much wider subject choice, alongside greater social opportunities with an astonishing array of clubs that could give your teen the chance to learn a wonderful new hobby that lasts a lifetime. Smaller universities cannot compete with this (especially specialist establishments); however, they may offer a great-er sense of community and belonging.

Campus or city

The great advantage of campus universities is that everything is in one place – lectures, accommodation, clubs, laundries, shops etc. They are usually situated just outside or on the borders of larger towns – “a town within a town”. The impression can be that they are safer, offer less distractions and provide a stronger sense of community because, in the main, students tend to stay campus based.



City universities offer the same facilities, but they are split up across the town so travelling from one place to another is part and parcel of the package. This provides a closer experience to life at work, but getting from one place to another can take a chunk out of the day.

However, unlike campus universities, city universities do give students a chance to become fully immersed

in the city itself. Whilst approved accommodation may be offered in the first year or two, later in their degree students are often required to find their own accommodation independently.

Bournemouth University A campus based university



Proximity to home

Flying the nest is more appealing to some than others! This is an important consideration. Attending university is, for most students, the first time they've lived away from home. For some, this is exciting and appealing, for others it's traumatic and challenging. Is it important to your teen that they can easily pop home at weekends or will they be happy only returning during holiday periods?

In some cases, universities won't offer accommodation in halls if the family home is within a certain mileage, so it's worth checking the university website. Living at home avoids accommodation costs, although it can dilute the university experience. This can be combatted by signing up to plenty of clubs and socials. Don't forget, as parents it will be different for you too! Your lifestyle will change if your child continues to live at home as an adult attending university rather than school.

Rural or city based

A university's location could drive many of the social activities they offer, so if your teen is happiest immersed in the countryside and loves trekking, mountain-climbing and cross-country, they could feel short-changed by being plunged into an urban setting and vice-versa. If they have a particular passion, it's worth checking out whether the university already has a group focused around this hobby or, if not, how easy it would be to set up. Don't consider it trivial to focus on pastimes, happiness is a primary driver for success, and a university's environment can contribute hugely.

Don't choose for them

It's tough putting aside your preferences and supporting your teen in their choices, particularly if they are polar opposites to your own. It's natural to feel protective, but university provides a good opportunity for them to fly the nest in a protected environment.



Open days

Most universities offer an “open day” for prospective students, including lectures and talks, as well as existing staff and students on hand to answer questions. Websites, literature and videos can all give an excellent sense of the university, but nothing beats a personal visit.

If you can, join your teen on visits without taking control; go with them on open days to give them support and guidance (it can be daunting visiting a new place, much more so when you think it could hold the key to your future happiness) but give them some time alone if they need it.

Think beyond academics

Don't focus solely on the academic elements of the university. Check out halls of residence, social centres and sports facilities. If the university is town-based, spend time in the local area and give some thought to how it would feel living there for the next few years. It's not a lifelong commitment, but three-to-five years, especially for a late teenager, seems a long time.

From a practical viewpoint, what looks like a hop, skip and a jump on the map could prove a deal-breaker when thinking of the practicalities of living in one part of town but learning in another.

Plan ahead

It is vital your teen arrives prepared to get plenty of answers to whether the university can meet their needs. Ideally, being armed with lots of questions to ask during a visit gives a good basis for conversation and interaction on the day, which could help them stand out.

However, if your teen hasn't yet gained the confidence to do this, then they could contact a student representative ahead of the visit and get answers by email or set up a chat with a student while they're there. What's important is to get a good sense of the comprehensive opportunities available and whether they are offered in an environment that suits your teen's personality to make the most of them.

Trust your teen's instincts

No matter how appealing a course might be, if your teen hates the feel of the university the minute they step in the door, it's highly unlikely that they will get either the qualifications or experience they deserve. What looks good in theory doesn't always match up in reality. Pay heed if they take an instant dislike to a place.

Make the most of any offers

Remember to check the university websites. Some offer vouchers towards the cost of travel to open days.

Virtual Open Days

Some universities offer “virtual open days”. These may include video tours, online seminars and chats with students and lecturers.

Whilst virtual open days do not provide the same insights as making a personal visit, do get your teen to make the best out of them where physical visits are not possible. Without the need to travel, they may even be able to attend more open days, giving them a broader perspective on what's on offer and how universities differ.

Encourage your teen to make the most of open days



Preparing for an open day

To get the best value out of university open days, it's advisable to prepare in advance. Open days often include a variety of lectures, walking tours and presentations, so your teen should check what's on offer and plan accordingly.

In addition, they should make a list of questions that they want to ask each university so they can compare and contrast differences to help with their decision making. Which questions should they ask staff, which are better aimed at students, or should they ask the same questions to both?

Prepare questions

Do not be afraid to ask questions. Open days provide the perfect opportunity to receive direct answers to questions that may be difficult to find online. Furthermore, answers to some questions may be different compared to the previous year, such as whether they would make exceptions to the entry requirements stated on their website. Both you and your teen should think of some questions in advance rather than thinking on the spot.

Speak with students

Whilst open days provide an opportunity to receive information on the degree course and the university itself, nothing beats hearing from someone with first-hand experience of what it is like to study there. It's a good idea for both of you to speak to current undergraduate students if the opportunity arises - ask them questions about teaching quality, societies, accommodation and the local area.

- [Whatuni?](#)
- [UCAS Events](#)

Walk and observe

Walk around the campus and university town or city. Try to encourage your teen to get a good feel for the environment. Can they imagine themselves living there? Do the students look happy? Is it a friendly place to be?

The art of seduction

Universities take the opportunity of open days to showcase their most impressive facilities. Be mindful, what you are being shown likely

represents the very best they have to offer. Don't let your teen be totally seduced by this, they must make their decision based on plenty of other research too.

Can't attend? Don't worry

Call the admissions team to make a private viewing. You'll still be able to look around and speak to staff from the relevant faculty. There may also be virtual open days and virtual tours available online.



Explore other options

The Parents' Guide to Apprenticeships

Includes information on:

- Types of apprenticeship and the pros and cons
- Degree apprenticeships – how they differ from full-time university degrees;
- How to research an apprenticeship
- The application process and why it differs from applying to university
- How you can help them prepare for interview to make the best impression

[Buy now](#)



Possible open day questions:

Qualifications:

- Will I still be considered if I do not meet my predicted grades or if I do not have the GCSE entry requirements stated on your website?
- Will you consider other qualifications when making an offer (e.g. music, EPQ, additional courses)?

The application process

- What is the university looking for in a student's application / personal statement - is there anything I can do to increase my chances of being offered a place?
- Can you recommend any reading or activities to inform my personal statement?
- How do you feel about gap years and deferred entry applications?
- Do you hold interviews?
- Is it an advantage to get my application in early (before the UCAS deadline)

The course

- How will the course be assessed? Will it consist mostly of coursework or exams?
- How many students will be on the course?
- How many hours of timetabled teaching does the university provide and what is the ratio between

lecture and seminar teaching?

- What additional support does the university provide if a student finds certain parts of the course particularly challenging?
- Does the university provide any additional support for students with a particular learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)?

The university experience

- Can a student take on part-time employment whilst studying?
- Does the university provide opportunities to study abroad / work in industry (or can you tell me more about these opportunities)?
- Can you tell me more about the student union and what opportunities there are for students to get involved?
- What sports and student clubs can I get involved with?

Accommodation

- Is a place in halls of residence guaranteed?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of living on or off campus?
- Where do most students live in years two and three?

Career prospects

- What type of careers / jobs do students go on to have after graduating?

Chapter summary

University is about much more than obtaining further qualifications. To succeed, your teen must feel comfortable.

1. Think about location, size, and atmosphere of the university;
2. Choosing the right course is more important than the university type;
3. Will distance from home affect your teen's success and happiness;
4. Will your teen do better in a closed (campus) or town-based (non-campus) environment;
5. Take advantage of open days or university visits, and try to ensure your teen prepares in advance.

You may also be interested in:

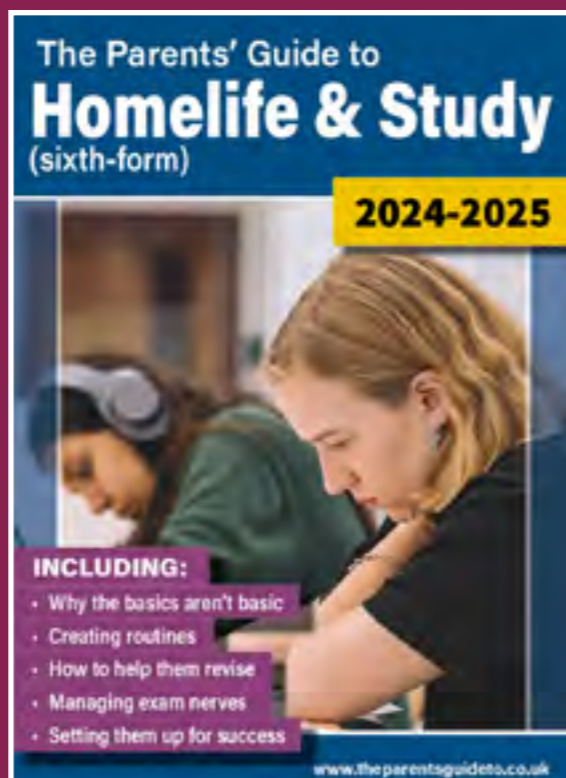
The Parents' Guide to Homelife and study

Includes information on:

- Keeping them healthy
- Providing the right homelife
- Ways to help them revise
- How to support them during exam time
- How to help them with exam nerves

Buy now - GCSE

Buy now - Sixth Form



Advice from parents



Nayan Ashra

Virtual tours of the campus and accommodation might not be as good as the real thing, but they're still worthwhile and give a good idea about what's on offer



Cosima Quinn

Don't worry if the right university for your teen is far from home and you don't get to see each other as often as you would like. Sara could only come home during the holidays, but we found lots of ways to keep in touch - Facetime and Whatsapp were our favourites.



Sarah Albourne

Make sure the university offers facilities for your teen to enjoy their hobbies. The Olympic sized swimming pool at Birmingham university enabled Chris to continue competing on a national level.

Choosing the right course



“ After a lot of research, I decided to do a degree course in Space Science and Robotics. I may never be an astronaut, but I could develop equipment that gets used in space.

Types of courses

Most university courses offer a three-year undergraduate programme, but some offer “sandwich” courses which last four years, one of which is spent in the workplace (which could be overseas). There’s also the opportunity to obtain certificates of education, diplomas, higher national diplomas and foundation degrees.

Bachelors

Usually three or four years long, these can be single subject, dual subject (dual or joint honours) or several subjects (combined honours). Typically there’s a quantity that everyone studies – the core – and then options to specialise by taking different modules. Some bachelors offer sandwich courses, which means an additional year in a work placement as part of the degree. In some cases there’s the option to convert the bachelors to masters by studying for an additional year.

Bachelor of Arts or Science?

The major difference between a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and a Bachelors of Science degree (BS or BSc) lies in the subject chosen for study (i.e. more science focused or arts focused). For some subjects, this classification may differ between universities, such as economics and psychology. In this case, a BSc in economics or

psychology is normally more suitable for students with an aptitude for maths and scientific study compared to their BA equivalents.

Foundation years

This is a one-year study period that can count as the first year towards a degree or as a standalone course. Foundation years are designed to increase knowledge in specialised subjects required for a degree course and are usually taken if students didn’t meet the entry requirements of the university either because of poor grades or different subject combinations.

Diploma in Foundation Studies (art and design)

A route towards art and design courses allowing specialisation in a student’s specific area of art or design.

Foundation degrees

Not to be confused with foundation years, foundation degrees last two years and offer an alternative if a pupil hasn’t reached the grade for a degree course, doesn’t want to commit to three or more years at university, or prefers more vocational study. They can be “topped up” with a final year to equate to a bachelors degree.

Degree of bachelor level apprenticeship

This is a comparatively new university offering, allowing students taking an apprenticeship to gain a bachelors (or masters) qualification by both working and studying at university part time.

Higher National Certificates (HNCs) or Diploma (HNDs)

The Certificate takes one year and is equivalent to a first year degree course, whilst the diploma takes two years and is equivalent to the first two years of a degree course. Both can be topped up to a full degree by extending the course or joining a degree course at a later stage. The benefit here is to be able to study for a degree in stages.

Finding the right course for them is a top priority for your teen



Choosing the right course is more important than the university type



Researching the right course

There are over 50,000 undergraduate courses available in the UK, so the right course is out there – it just might be tricky to find it! There's plenty of information about university courses available so your teen should research diligently before making choices, rather than relying on “my teacher recommends it”, “my parents took it”, or “I like the university because my friends are going”.

When to step back

This research is something that your teen should undertake – not you on their behalf. Avoid the temptation to use this as an opportunity to investigate options you would have liked to take given the chance. It may be tough with the benefit of hindsight and experience, but try not to forget it's your teen's life and their choices, not yours.

Finding focus

Thinking of favourite subject choices is a good way to narrow focus, but don't forget many of the subjects offered at degree level aren't covered in sixth form options, so don't let your teen restrict themselves to only considering topics they've already studied. Of course, if they are already set on a certain career path, their choice of degree may be obvious, which can be helpful. If not, some thought and reflection on things

they enjoy that might apply to the workplace can give direction so some research on jobs might help streamline options by providing guidance on routes into industry.

Too much choice?

If they are struggling with a starting point, investigating what's of interest to them is a good place to start. You think they spend too much time playing video games? How about a BA in Computer Games Design – it can be a lucrative business post-graduation. Not academic but loves sports? BA in Sports Management. A passion for understanding how things work? How about MEng(Hons) in Product Design Engineering? Always reading crime thrillers? Perhaps they'd enjoy a BA in Criminology.

Predicted grades

Your teen should research courses with entry requirements that are closely aligned to their predicted grades, allowing for some aspirational and safe choices either side.

- [UCAS course search](#)
- [Uni Guide search](#)

Suggested starting points

Factors to consider:

Is your teen academic or practical?

- Do they enjoy being in the classroom?
- Do they enjoy learning in a studio or outside?
- Do they enjoy writing essays and researching topics or prefer to make and produce things?

Which school subjects do they enjoy?

- Is there a particular part of a school subject they have enjoyed?
- Do they have a natural flair for a subject?
- If they enjoy more than one subject, are there any common themes?

What are your teen's hobbies?

- Is your teen particularly passionate about any music, sport or art related activities?
- Think about your teen's personality traits
- Try to think outside the box - do they have a particular interest in current affairs? Gaming? Helping others?

Has your teen expressed interest in a particular career?

- Try to think of subjects that will help them pursue this career without narrowing their options too much if they change their mind later

There is plenty of information about university courses available, and whilst it's up to your teen to do the research, as parents you can help guide them by checking that the courses they shortlist fit their personality.

For example, a teen that likes to be active and enjoys practical studies and

getting involved is likely to do better on a course that has plenty of experiential learning rather than one that is largely based around lectures and seminars.

On page 32 there are some suggestions for things to consider when deciding whether a course meets your teen's needs.



League Tables

League tables can be a useful guide in assessing a university's suitability for your teen when used in conjunction with other considerations. However, one league table may not show the whole picture, so review different types of league tables together.

National league tables

National league tables are published annually by the Complete University Guide, The Guardian and The Times / Sunday Times. They focus on full-time student experience and cover a range of factors including student satisfaction, entry standards,

facilities and academic services. Well established universities have had a long time to hone their subject offerings and know how to perform well in league tables. By contrast, new universities do not have this advantage and whilst they may not appear high-up on the rankings, they may offer new, innovative subjects which can prove more relevant to today's working environment.

A variance of 20-30 places on the league table could indicate as little as a couple of points difference, so bear this in mind when considering where a university is ranked.

Subject-specific league tables are more relevant than national league tables



Subject specific league tables

Don't miss out on considering subject league tables to see how a university delivers in the specific subject area of interest. This is different from national league tables, which shows how a university performs overall. It's possible a university may rank low on overall league tables, but be very strong and well-respected in a particular area of study (and vice versa).

If seeking out a professional degree, check for professional accreditation by approved membership bodies. This is a good indicator of whether the course is highly regarded within industry and whether it's equally valued both within the UK and internationally.

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

A national scheme run by the Office for Students, the TEF rating is decided by an independent panel with expertise in teaching and learning, of which over a third are student members. Ratings awarded are gold, silver, bronze (or "requires improvement" for those not awarded a grade) in two categories: student experience and student outcomes. Participation is voluntary, so not all universities will have TEF ratings. The latest TEF results were released in 2023.

- [The Guardian 2024](#)
- [The Times 2024](#)
- [The Complete Uni 2024](#)
- [The TEF Ratings](#)

University entry requirements

Different universities have different entry requirements, so it's important to check the university's website for details. Entry requirements are set out by the university to assess whether your teen is suitable for a particular course.

Unis set their own standards

Subject combinations, types of qualification and subject grades needed for entry not only vary from university to university, but may also differ within the same university for different degrees. As a rule, universities are not flexible about their entry requirements (i.e. if they set minimum grades, your teen will have to reach those grades); however, there are sometimes exceptions to rules (if your teen can offer something special or if many students have failed to meet the entry requirements that year) so it's always worth speaking to admissions to see where they might flex requirements.

Not all sixth form qualifications are considered equal by some universities. For example, some do not accept BTEC or T Levels and others consider certain A Levels weightier than others.

Customised admissions tests

Some universities not only require a specified qualification grade at A

Level (or minimum number of UCAS points) but they also have their own admissions tests / examinations to help them assess candidates like for like. Interviews may also form a critical part of the application process, but not for all universities. If applying for performing arts, auditions will also be likely to feature and other art subjects may require the development of a portfolio.

GCSEs could matter

Some universities may also specify certain GCSE results. With AS Levels no longer contributing to your teen's final A Level grade, universities are increasingly looking at GCSE performance as a formal indicator of your teen's academic ability.

It's worth checking

Always check with the university (by ringing the admissions tutor) if your teen's particular qualification is not listed on their website. Some universities are willing to be flexible for the right candidate.

▪ [Tariff calculator](#)

UCAS points tariff

In order to compare students as fairly as possible, UCAS offers a tariff whereby each sixth form qualification is awarded a certain number of points (previously known as the "points system"). These points are allocated through a combination of the length of study and the grade achieved.

This tariff is recognised nationally across the UK and universities use it to gauge the standard of achievement for sixth form students. It enables them to make comparisons between students

who have studied different types of sixth form courses – i.e. National Highers, BTEC, A Levels etc.

Depending on the perceived course difficulty and the type of university, the minimum entry requirements will vary both from university to university and from course to course within the same university.

Not all post sixth form establishments cite a UCAS tariff, they might specify grade requirements (i.e. x3 A Levels, minimum ABB), but it is the same thing.

GCE Qualifications		EPQ	UCAS POINTS
A level	AS level		
A*			56
A			48
B			40
C			32
		A*	28
D		A	24
	A	B	20
E	B	C	16
	C	D	12
	D		10
		E	8
	E		6

The IB Diploma:

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE DIPLOMA				UCAS POINTS
IB DIPLOMA HIGHER LEVEL	IB DIPLOMA STANDARD LEVEL	IB EXTENDED ESSAY/ THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE	WELSH BACCALAUREATE SKILLS CHALLENGE	
H7			A*	56
H6			A	48
H5			B	40
H4	S7		C	32
H3	S6		D	24
	S5		E	16
	S4	A		12
	S3	B		10
		C		8
		D		6
		E		4

T Levels:

T Levels	UCAS POINTS
Distinction*	168
Distinction	144
Merit	120
Pass (C or above on the core)	96
Pass (D or E on the core)	72

BTEC Qualifications:

BTEC Qualification (QCF/RQF)				UCAS POINTS
Extended Certificate	Foundation Diploma	Diploma	Extended Diploma	
			D*D*D*	168
			D*D*D	160
			D*DD	152
			DDD	144
			DDM	128
		D*D*	DMM	112
		D*D		104
		DD	MMM	96
	D*D*			84
		DM	MMP	80
	D*D			78
	DD			72
		MM	MPP	64
	DM			60
D*				56
D	MM	MP	PPP	48
	MP			36
M		PP		32
	PP			24
P				16

University websites

University websites may look different when comparing side by side, but the information they relay is similar and will definitely cover course content, information about the teaching style and entry requirements.

It's important to be aware that degree courses vary significantly between universities:- even when the degree title is the same! So make sure your teen pays close attention to understanding the differences in course modules, assessment methods, teaching styles and entry requirements between universities.

These differences could be deciding factors in which course (and university) is your teen's preferred option. For example, if there are two universities of similar rankings and style that they like almost equally, where one offers a course with a teaching style better suited to their personal learning preferences, or course content more closely matching their areas of interest - perhaps they are really keen to have overseas experience - this would be a significant contributor to their final decision.

Course content

Degree courses vary between universities and each degree may provide a very different experience for your teen. Thoroughly research the modules that each degree provides by comparing core modules (mandatory modules of study) and optional modules between each university degree.

Furthermore, some universities may provide additional options, such as a the possibility of studying abroad (usually in a partner university) or a year long work placement. These may be important considerations in giving your teen a particular advantage when entering their chosen career.

- What are the core modules that must be studied in years 1, 2 and 3?
- Which optional modules are on offer?
- Is there an option to study abroad?
- Is there an option to spend one year in industry?
- Is there an option to combine this subject with another subject?

Teaching and learning

Not all students learn in the same way so it is important to research how each degree is delivered and assessed. If your teen is particularly anxious when it comes to examinations, then choosing a degree which is mainly assessed through coursework or presentations may increase your teen's chances of success.

Moreover, think carefully about your teen's learning needs. Will they thrive in small classroom based environments (seminars), lectures or more practical learning environments?

- Does teaching mainly consist of large lectures or seminars?
- Is the course largely exam based or coursework based?
- What are the facilities like?
- Is a dissertation in year 3 required?
- For practical subjects such as Media Studies, how much of the course is theoretical and how much is practical?

Entry requirements

Each university sets its own entry requirements so make sure your teen is accessing courses based on their ability and potential. Entry requirements provide a good indication of the difficulty of each degree course and so it is important to be realistic in what your teen can access when moving into higher education.

Remember, your teen can only apply to a maximum of five universities through UCAS, so carefully note all the entry requirements for each university before applying to check whether your teen is likely to meet these.

- What are the minimum entry requirements?
- Does the course require a grade in a particular subject?
- Will the course accept BTECs, T Levels or alternative qualifications to A Level?
- Do they require a minimum Level of Maths or English?
- Does the course require a portfolio or an interview prior to making an offer?

It can take 6-8 weeks to hear about support entitlement



Understanding uni fees

With university fees at almost £10,000 per year plus living costs on top, the prospect of committing to three or four years studying can seem as if the financial burden outweighs the benefits. But graduates earn more than school leavers and payback terms are linked to earnings (as explained later) so it can be a worthwhile investment.

Loan applications

Loan applications are made to the country of home residence, not the destination university through Student Finance. So, if your teen lives in Scotland and is going to university in England, applications are made to Scotland. Student Finance is the organisation responsible for providing Tuition Fee Loans and Maintenance Loans to students at university. Applications must be made separately.

Tuition fee loan: the loan to cover the annual cost of the university degree
Maintenance loan: the loan to cover cost of living such as accommodation, food, course materials.

Timing

Applications for student finance can be made prior to receiving results and confirming a university offer. So, once application to UCAS has been completed, your teen can make a provisional application for student finance whilst waiting on results. Loan applications must be made at least eight weeks before the course commences, otherwise payment may be delayed: don't forget this covers both types of loan - tuition fees and maintenance loans. We recommend encouraging your teen to apply early to ensure loans are processed on time.

Tuition fees

The tuition fees (up to £9,250 per annum) are paid via Student Finance direct to the university (once the place has been accepted) and parental earnings do not impact this.

Maintenance loans

The maintenance loan is influenced by parental earnings. Simply put, the higher the family income, the less money granted:- parents will be expected to cover any shortfall. However, assessment is made on "residual" income - i.e. the money left over after debts and expenses have been paid (so not pre-tax earnings or even net income). This money is paid termly directly to the student.

A different type of loan

Divorced / separated Parents

Where parents are separated or divorced, income is assessed on the parent with whom the teen resides and (if applicable) their current partner (irrespective of whether or not that partner is responsible for the teen). Income for the other biological parent is not assessed.

Repayments

Repayments are collected via Student Loans Company, who work alongside HMRC to collect repayments in line with earnings after the degree is complete.

Repayment terms are generous, so avoid thinking that student loans are like conventional bank loans or even a mortgage. Importantly, no money is taken until earnings reach a certain threshold, they are paused if earnings drop below that threshold (maternity or redundancy), they are not evaluated on partner earnings and they are wiped clean after 40 years after the first payment was due.

Other financing options

It's worth reviewing scholarships, grants and bursaries to see whether you teen might qualify for additional income, particularly if they are studying for specialist degrees such as medical, social work or teaching.

Prepayments

Be careful with making pre-payments. Many students never repay the full amount of their loans before the amount is wiped clear. Trying to save on interest fees can prove a false economy. However, if they are likely to have continued employment at a high salary, then it might be worth making a prepayment. There are online calculators to help work this out.

Be aware!

Even with the maximum maintenance allowance, it may be necessary to supplement living costs, either through you contributing directly or your teen getting work whilst studying:- or a combination of both!

- [GOV UK](#)
- [The Student Loans Company](#)
- [Student Finance calculator](#)

1. No payments are made until the student is earning £25,000 in the April after graduation (or the April four years after their course starts if studying for more than four years);
2. Once they qualify for payment, they repay only 9% on any amount earned over the threshold (so if they earned £26,000 in April after graduating, they would pay £7.50 a month);
3. Repayments are docked directly at source and they cease if salary drops below the threshold;
4. Interest rates apply from when the loan is given (i.e. start of the degree);
5. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 40 years.



The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is assessed by individual need



Entitlements

For students with a learning need, mental health issue or disability, there's the option to apply for dedicated funding to help with extra costs associated with their condition. It's called Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs).

This is in addition to student finance and there is no need to repay the money awarded. It may cover specialist equipment (i.e. a computer, voice recognition software, dictaphone), non-medical helpers (i.e. proof reader, note taker, sign interpreter), extra travel (i.e. the cost of taxis if you teen can't take public transport) and / or accommodation contribution (i.e. if the bathroom needs to be adapted to meet your teen's needs). It is applied to costs incurred directly because of undertaking the course (rather than costs that would be accumulated anyway) and costs incurred over and above that of those made by any student without a similar disadvantage.

The allowance is assessed not by household income but individual needs and, upon eligible application,

it will be necessary to undergo a "study needs assessment" at an approved DSA centre (they will send you a link identifying local assessors). However, if a student is applying for both financial support and DSAs, they must complete their student loan application through Student Finance England first (as explained in Understanding Fees section) else they will not be able to make the online application.

Don't forget , if your teen has an education and healthcare plan ("EHCP") this will lapse on higher education, but support will be available through the DSA.

Whilst notification of eligibility can take place relatively quickly, it can take a long time to process and complete all stages of the application (up to fourteen weeks), so do apply early. To qualify for DSAs, a student must be an undergraduate and studying for at least one year (this can be part time, depending on the "course intensity") and have written evidence from a qualified specialist about their condition.

The maximum allowances can be found online, however, very few students are entitled to the full benefit and most receive much less. Money is usually paid to the organisation providing the service although in some cases it may be paid to the student's bank account. Refunds and reimbursements will not be given for any costs incurred prior to the appropriate application and approval systems. If awarded the cost of a new computer, it will be necessary to contribute £200 towards this.

It's not necessary to inform the college or university if your teen receives DSAs; however, it might be helpful for them to know to ensure your teen gets all the support available. In addition, colleges and universities will have a disability adviser who will be able to give you help and advice about your teen's entitlements.

Conditions that might qualify for DSA include:

- social, emotional and mental health difficulties (such as ADD, ADHD)
- sensory and / or physical needs (such as visual impairment or equipment to support a physical difficulty)
- cognition and learning difficulties (such as dyslexia or dyspraxia)
- communication and interaction needs (such as difficulties with speech / language, Asperger's Syndrome, autism)
- some long-term health conditions (such as HIV, cancer, chronic heart disease).

Keep Student Finance England updated about any changes in their condition because it may mean an entitlement to more allowance.

- [GOV UK - DSA](#)
- [UCAS - DSA](#)



Chapter summary

Choosing the right course at the right university takes research.

1. Understand how courses differ from one another to steer the decision making process;
2. How long does your teen want to commit to further education (at this stage) and do they want to go abroad?
3. Be guided by league tables, but don't obsess over them;
4. Check university entry requirements carefully;
5. Investigate financing options for both tuition fees and maintenance loans and apply with plenty of time.

Explore all their options:

The Parents' Guide to Post 18 Options

Includes information on:

- University
- Apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships
- Higher education courses at college
- Traineeships
- Jobs with training
- Gap Years
- Starting their own business

Buy now



Advice from parents



Christian Roier

Encourage your teen to find part-time work over the holidays as this will help cover living expenses during term-time. We couldn't cover 100% of Alfie's living expenses, but the money he made as a support assistant in a summer camp helped make up the difference.



Rebecca Baxter

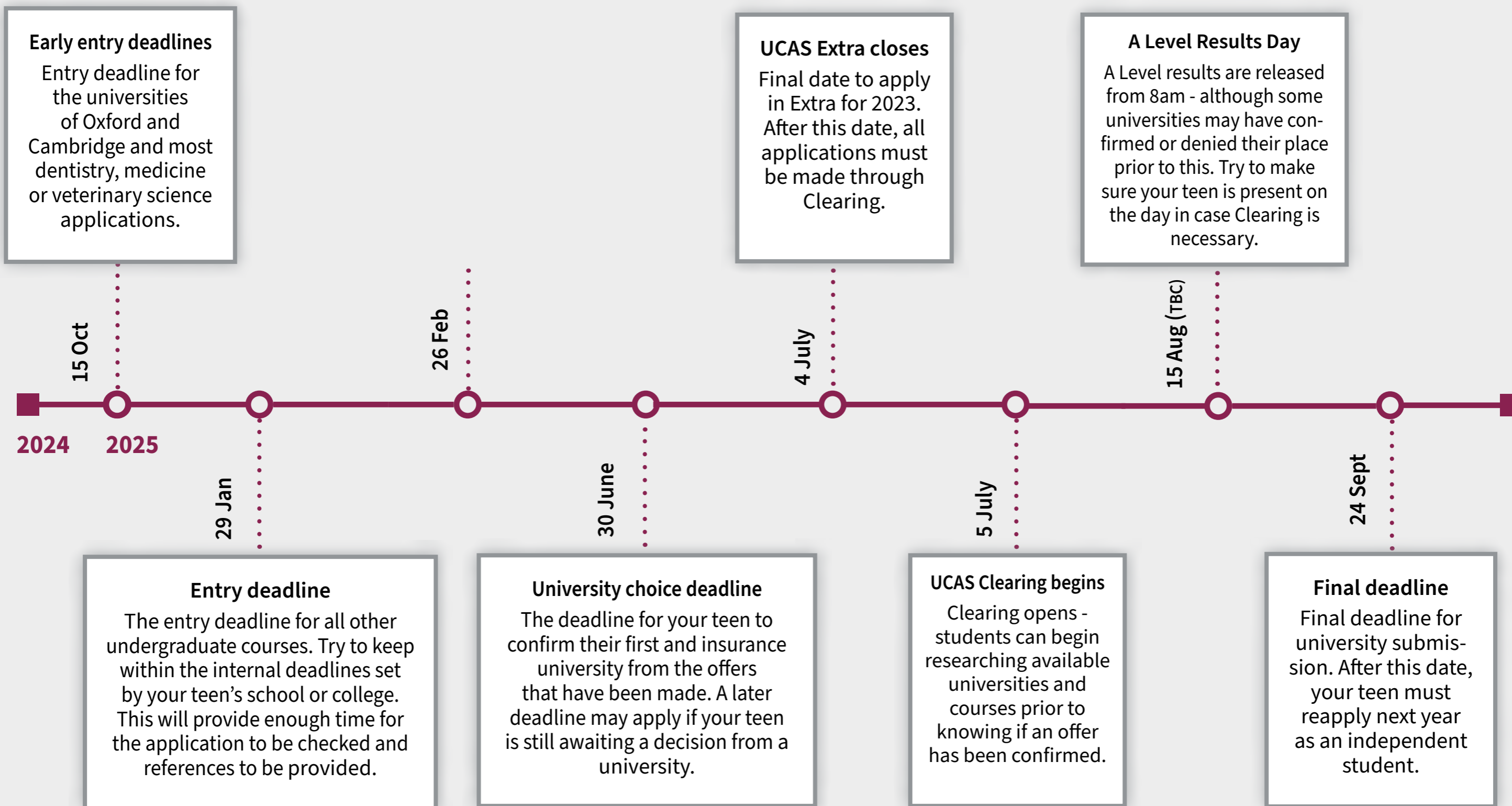
Don't worry if your teen doesn't have a career in mind - it's OK not to know at this point. Philippa has always loved reading and chose to study English Literature; she's really enjoying her time at university.



Christopher Alonge

Don't let the most famous university names drive your teen's decision. After looking into it, Leon found the best media studies course to suit him was at Southampton University, which has excellent industry links.

UCAS key dates



Always keep to the deadlines specified by your teen's school or college

[Click here for the latest dates](#)

Get the full guide:

Explore all the options:



What's Included:

Types of universities and courses

Open days – why it's important to visit

League tables – do they matter and what should you look out for?

Tuition and maintenance loans –

UCAS and the application process –

Results day – how you can help if they don't get the results they need

Other options if they don't get a uni place

Preparing for university life and how you help them once they leave home

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What's Included:

What your child chooses to do after sixth-form or college can have a big impact on their future.

This guide provides a summary of all their choices at 18 years old, including:

- University
- Apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships
- Higher education courses at college
- Traineeships
- Jobs with training
- Gap Years
- Starting their own business

Buy now

Browse the full collection:

The Parents' Guide to
Post 16 Options
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- A levels
- BTECs
- Apprenticeships
- The EPQ
- Other options

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The Parents' Guide to
T Level courses
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- T Levels explained
- What's available
- Doors they open
- Links to industry
- Students they suit

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The Parents' Guide to
Apprenticeships
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Covers all entry levels - from 2-7
- How to apply
- Getting interview ready
- Degree apprenticeships
- Where apprenticeships lead

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The Parents' Guide to
Post 18 Options
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Best next steps
- Work or further study?
- Meeting university costs
- Applying for an apprenticeship
- Getting ready to leave home

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The Parents' Guide to
University
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- What's the right course
- Questions for open days
- UCAS explained
- Personal statements
- Results Day 2025

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The Parents' Guide to
Helping your teen stand out
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Hobbies and passions matter
- Most sought after skills
- How to get work experience
- Which hobbies develop which skills
- Play to their strengths

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The Parents' Guide to
Teenage stress & anxiety
2024-2025

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Spotting the signs
- Quick-fix solutions
- Building their resilience
- Why the basics aren't the basics
- Where to get support

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The Parents' Guide to
Homelife & Study
(sixth-form)
2024-2025

INCLUDING:

- Why the basics aren't basic
- Creating routines
- How to help them revise
- Managing exam nerves
- Setting them up for success

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The Parents' Guide to
Homelife & Study
(GCSEs)
2024-2025

INCLUDING:

- Why the basics aren't basic
- Creating routines
- How to help them revise
- Managing exam nerves
- Setting them up for success

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Parent Guides:

Our range of interactive guides provide you with easy to follow advice, hyperlinks to reliable sources and the most up-to-date information.

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A-Z of universities

A

University of Aberdeen
Abertay University (formerly University of Abertay Dundee)
Aberystwyth University (Prifysgol Aberystwyth)
Anglia Ruskin University
Anglo-European College of Chiropractic
Archbishop of Canterbury, The
Arden University (formerly known as Resource Development International)
Ashridge Business School
Aston University

B

Bangor University (Prifysgol Bangor)
University of Bath
Bath Spa University
University of Bedfordshire
Birkbeck, University of London
University of Birmingham*
Birmingham City University
University College Birmingham
Bishop Grossteste University
University of Bolton
Arts University Bournemouth
Bournemouth University
BPP University

University of Bradford
University of Brighton
University of Bristol*
Brunel University London
University of Buckingham
Buckinghamshire New University

C

University of Cambridge*
Canterbury Christ Church University
Cardiff Metropolitan University (Prifysgol Metropolitan Caerdydd)
Cardiff University (Prifysgol Caerdydd)*
University of Chester
University of Chichester
City University London
Courtauld Institute of Art, The (degrees awarded by University of London)
Coventry University
Cranfield University
University for the Creative Arts
University of Cumbria

D

De Montfort University
University of Derby
University of Dundee
Durham University*

E

University of East Anglia
University of East London
Edge Hill University
University of Edinburgh, The*
Edinburgh Napier University
University of Essex
University of Exeter*

F

Falmouth University

G

University of Glasgow*
Glasgow Caledonian University
University of Gloucestershire
Glyndŵr University (Prifysgol Glyndŵr)
Goldsmiths, University of London
University of Greenwich
Guildhall School of Music and Drama

H

Harper Adams University
Hartpury University
Heriot-Watt University
University of Hertfordshire
Heythrop College (degrees awarded by University of London)
University of the Highlands and

Islands

University of Huddersfield
University of Hull

I

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine
Institute of Cancer Research
Institute of Education, University of London

K

Keele University
University of Kent
King's College London*
Kingston University

L

University of Central Lancashire
Lancaster University
University of Leeds*
Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan University)
Leeds Arts University
Leeds Trinity University
University of Leicester
University of Lincoln
University of Liverpool*
Liverpool Hope University
Liverpool John Moores University

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
University of London
London Business School
London Institute of Banking and Finance, The London Metropolitan University
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
London School of Economics and Political Science, The (LSE)*
London South Bank University
University College London*
Loughborough University

M

University of Manchester*
Manchester Metropolitan University
Middlesex University

N

NCG
Newcastle University*
Newman University, Birmingham
University of Northampton, The
Northumbria University Newcastle
Norwich University of the Arts
University of Nottingham*
Nottingham Trent University

O

Open University, The
University of Oxford*
Oxford Brookes University

P

Plymouth University
University of Portsmouth

Q

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Queen Mary, University of London*
Queen's University Belfast*

R

Ravensbourne
University of Reading
Regent's University London
Richmond, The American International University in London
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen
University of Roehampton
Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance
Royal Academy of Music
Royal Agricultural University
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (University of London)
Royal College of Art
Royal College of Music
Royal College of Nursing
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Royal Holloway, University of London
Royal Northern College of Music
Royal Veterinary College, The

S

University of Salford
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London
University of Sheffield*
Sheffield Hallam University
University of South Wales (Prifysgol De Cymru)
University of Southampton*
Solent University
University of St Andrews
St George's, University of London
University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth
St Mary's University, Twickenham
Staffordshire University
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of Suffolk
University of Sunderland
University of Surrey
University of Sussex
Swansea University (Prifysgol Abertawe)

T

Teesside University
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

U

University of the Arts, London

University College of Estate Management
University College of Osteopathy
University of Law, The
University of Ulster

W

University of Wales (Prifysgol Cymru)
University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Prifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant)
University of Warwick*
University of the West of England, Bristol
University of West London
University of the West of Scotland
University of Westminster
University of Winchester, The
University of Wolverhampton
University of Worcester
Writtle University College

Y

University of York*
York St John University

* Russell Group Universities

The Parents' Guide to **University**

2024-2025



HIGHLIGHTS:

- What's the right course
- Questions for open days
- UCAS explained
- Personal statements
- Results Day 2025

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