Higher Horizons+

All about university

2020 Edition

OfS Uni Connect Programme

About this booklet

Higher Horizons+ is a group of universities working together to offer information, advice and guidance about University and Higher Education to young people in Year 9 to Year 13.

This booklet is designed to give you all the facts about university, and how everything works, including student finance, how to choose a university, and how to apply through UCAS.

Higher Education (HE) refers to a range of courses that you can take after finishing A Levels and BTECs. Higher education often means university, but you can also study higher education level courses at College.

University – what's it all about?

Most students are aged 18 when they go to university, but there is no age limit for studying a HE level qualification.

You can study full time or part time.

Instead of studying a large mix of subjects, you usually focus on one or two subjects chosen by you.

You can choose whether to live and study away from home or go to university locally.

There is no uniform, unless your chosen subject requires it (usually Health-related subjects like Nursing or Physiotherapy).

Studies are more focussed around independent learning and research outside of lectures.

University: what's in it for me?

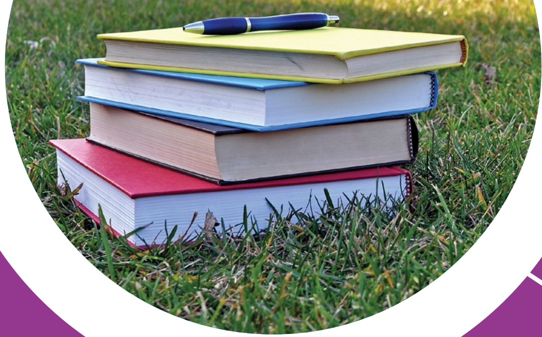
There are many benefits to studying at university and completing higher education level study. University isn't like school, so in addition to your studies you will get the chance to develop new skills to help you in your career, join societies and sports clubs to try out new hobbies, or even become involved in volunteering through your Students Union.

- Meet new people from a wide variety of backgrounds and build lifelong connections.
- Explore a subject that you are passionate about.
- Discover new interests and activities.
- Develop necessary skills to enhance your career prospects.
- Build self-confidence, independence and responsibility.
- Explore exciting opportunities for studying abroad.

Did you know that graduates earn more money over a lifetime than non-graduates? This is called the Graduate Premium, and means you are more likely to be in a higher paying job if you have a degree than if you go straight into employment after sixth form or college.

Tip:

By attending university open days, university students and staff will be on hand to answer any questions that you have about university life.



With so many universities to choose from, you may be wondering how to decide what's right for you. Here are a few things to think about.

Choosing a University

Campus vs City Based Universities

Campus based universities are located all on one site. They have their own shops, bars, restaurants, sports facilities and accommodation all in one place, offering a real sense of community. However, if the buzz and greater variety of a city is more appealing, a city-based university may be more up your street. City-based universities can have buildings spread all over a large city, so you may have to hop on a bus between lectures!

Size and Facilities

A larger university may offer a wider range of facilities with a larger number of students. More things to do, and more people to meet!

Rankings

When considering your options, you may also consider looking through league tables to explore how different institutions fair in terms of student satisfaction (how happy the students are), graduate prospects (how many graduates get jobs after university), entry requirements (what grades you need to get in) and more. Visit The Complete University Guide for more information:

thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings

Location

Do you wish to study close to home or further afield? Do you need to consider a university that has accessible transport links? Alternatively, you may wish to explore studying overseas.

Course Selection

Is your chosen subject offered by more than one university? Not all universities will offer the same courses. Use the UCAS search tool for more information on the courses offered across the UK:

digital.ucas.com/search

Finance

What's on Offer?

Student Finance England (SFE) provide financial support on behalf of the UK Government to students from England entering higher education in the UK. The two main costs incurred at university are tuition fees and living costs.

Tuition Fee loans - Key Facts:

- For a full-time course, the maximum tuition fee that universities or colleges can currently charge new students is £9250 (2021).
- The tuition fee loan is paid directly to the university – so you can't accidentally spend it!
- A tuition fee loan does not depend on household income.
- The loan is repayable, but only when your income is over £27,295 a year.

Maintenance Loans for living costs – Key Facts:

- All eligible students can receive a maintenance loan to help with living costs.
- The amount of the loan will depend on where you live and study.
- The loan is paid directly into your bank account each term.
- The loan is repayable, but only when your income is over £27,295 a year.

Bursaries and Scholarships:

- You may be awarded further financial support depending on your chosen institution and course.
- The amount may be awarded based on family income, getting good grades in your A Levels or BTECs, or a combination of the two.
- Bursaries and scholarships do not need to be paid back.

Other financial help and support may be also available if you:

- Have children, or an adult dependent on you.
- Have a disability, including a long-term health condition, mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty.

For more information on what options are available to you through Student Finance and how to apply visit **www.gov.uk/studentfinance**

Repayments

After graduation your loans are combined to make one amount you have to repay.

You only start to pay back your student loan when you earn over £27,295. Payments come out of your wages automatically – you don't have to do anything.

Your loan will be wiped out after a certain amount of time (in 2021 this currently happens after 30 years) and can never be passed on to a family member.

How to work out the monthly repayment amount

annual salary before tax – **£27,295**

then work out **9%** of the remainder

÷12 Round down to the nearest **£1**

Here's an example...

£30,000 - 27,295 = £2,705
9% of £2,705 is £243.45
£243.45 / 12 is £20.29

Round down to the nearest pound = repayments of £20 a month

Qualifications at HE

Undergraduate qualifications are the next step up from Further Education. There are a number of different undergraduate level qualifications available. Here are some of the most common options:

Foundation Degree

A Foundation Degree bridges the gap between A Levels or BTECs and a full Bachelor's Degree. People often study Foundation Degrees if they want to study a subject they did not do at sixth form or college or if they didn't do quite as well as they expected in their A Levels and need to boost their learning ready for a Bachelor's Degree. Some Foundation Degrees can be completed at college, but those at university enable you to progress straight on to a Bachelor's degree. Foundation Degrees usually take a year to complete.

Bachelor's Degree

Perhaps the most 'traditional' qualification, a Bachelor's degree is designed to give you a thorough understanding of a subject, typically taking 3 years to complete on a full time basis. Most people who go to university study a Bachelor's Degree, based on the subjects they did at A Level or BTEC.

Higher and Degree Level Apprenticeships

Higher and Degree Level Apprenticeships are vocational qualifications, enabling you to focus on a particular profession, earning money and studying towards a degree level qualification at the same time. A degree apprenticeship leads to a full university degree but are currently only available in certain subject areas and at certain universities.

How to Apply

UCAS stands for Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and is the website that students use to apply to university in the UK.

Pre-application:

You start your application on the UCAS website (www.ucas.com)

- You will have a personal account known as 'Track'
- Do your research: You should begin to research your course and university options between May and September, making a note of the application deadlines that you need to meet for your chosen course.
- Make sure you visit the universities that you are interested in; Open Days are a great way of getting a real taste of what it would be like to study there.

The application:

- Your application will consist of: your personal details, your chosen courses and institutions, your education history, employment history and a personal statement.
- Your personal statement is a chance to show the university why you want to study with them and why you are passionate about the subject(s) you have chosen. Your teachers might be able to give you advice on what to include in your personal statement.

What happens next?

- Once completed, your application is sent to UCAS and to your chosen universities.
- You can view the status of your application and find out if you have received an offer from your chosen universities online through UCAS Track.
- Once all your offers are back, you are able to accept two of them. This is called your 'firm' or first choice and your 'insurance' or second choice.

Results Day

- On results day, you will be able to confirm your final choice.
- If you got the grades your university asked for you will automatically be accepted on to your chosen course.
- Didn't get the grades you were expecting? Don't panic!
- If you haven't met the conditions of your offer, you will have the option of entering Clearing. This means you might still be able to get a place at a university. Your teachers in school will be able to advise you on what to do on the day if this happens. You can also call your university to see if they will accept you with your final grades – some might if you are close to the grades you needed.

Useful Websites

Higher Education Apprenticeships
careerpilot.org.uk/info/apprenticeships/higher-apprenticeships/
Information on what a Higher Education Apprenticeship involves with further guidance around earnings and progression.

I Could
icould.com
A charity organisation offering career inspiration and information.

National Careers Service
nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/
Advice and guidance designed to help you make decisions on learning, training and work.

Prospects
prospects.ac.uk
Interactive career finder with employment advice.

Pure Potential
purepotential.org
Information about a range of options at post-18 including higher education, apprenticeships, school leaver programmes and employment.

Student Finance - DirectGov
direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
Information provided by the government.

Student Finance – The Student Room
thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance
Information provided by the Student Loans Company.

Success at School
successatsachool.org
Career advice for schools and students aged 13-19. Search jobs, advice and find out about employers, work experience, courses, career choices and apprenticeships.

The Complete University Guide
thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings
Compare university rankings across the UK.

UCAS
ucas.com
Lists all higher education courses available across the UK.

Unistats
unistats.ac.uk
The official website for comparing higher education course data

Which?
university.which.co.uk/search/institution
Browse through over 300 university and college profiles

Action Log - Use this page to plan your next steps into Higher Education.

Notes

Action	By When?
e.g. Book onto a university Open Day	*During year 12*

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