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Teachers' Guide to University 2027

The key higher education facts for school and college staff

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Welcome to the UniTasterDays Teachers' Guide to University 2027

The year was 2007. Tony Blair was in Downing Street, George Bush was in the White House, and David Tennant was in the TARDIS. And I was in the Great Hall at the University of Birmingham for my graduation ceremony.

I left campus with a degree certificate. More than that, I left with three years of knowledge and networks, of expertise and experience, of motivation and memories. I ventured into the graduate market with the confidence, learning, and empathy that I gained from university. As a result, I found lots of opportunities waiting for me.

Graduates from all corners of the UK have gained a similar employability glow-up because of their university years. They underwent an uplifting, upskilling transformation which helped them achieve the careers (and life) they desired. For this reason, university was the obvious option for a long time. But then...

The year was 2012. David Cameron was in Downing Street, Barack Obama was in the White House, and Matt Smith was in the TARDIS. And UK students were in London, protesting with megaphones and placards. Tuition fees were rising to £9,000 a year. Suddenly, university no longer seemed a no-brainer.

In reality, it was a mental block, rather than a financial block. The student loan system ensures higher education is affordable to all (page 78). Even so, the rise in tuition fees gave students pause for thought. University now needed careful consideration.

After all, if your students are paying (or repaying) that kind of money, they'll want maximum value

for their investment. They'll desire the university that makes them the smartest, happiest, most employable. Research and university events became even more critical. That remains true, which is why this guide dedicates an entire section to each.

At least there are no more surprises. Or are there?

The year is 2026. Andy Burnham is in Downing Street, Donald Trump is in the White House, and Billie Piper is in the TARDIS. And your students have likely found a new complication. No longer cost, but another potential barrier: choice.

Higher education has never been more varied. The traditional three years on a campus is one path amidst many. Your students now have endless choice on how, where, when, and what they study. This freedom can be overwhelming. But help your students reframe their thinking. Choice isn't a burden. It's a gift.

The sector has listened and responded with new routes to gain a degree. This guide is here to navigate you and your students through these options: degree apprenticeships, part-time study, online learning, and so much more. Let us be your compass.

Here at UniTasterDays, we can't predict the next Prime Minister, President, or Doctor. But we can predict one thing. Your students are going to have a life-changing university experience, no matter how they choose to study. In doing so, they'll gain the skillset, mindset, and heartset to achieve success in the many years ahead.

Simon Fairbanks,
Associate Director
Community Engagement,
UniTasterDays



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My advice for teachers by Baasit Siddiqui

Director of Siddiqui Education



Why curiosity matters

Curiosity, for me, is the gateway to deeper learning, and it's also where university really comes into its own. In a world of misinformation, social media noise, and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, our young people need more than just knowledge; they need to develop a **critical mindset**.

They must learn to question, analyse, and seek truth. These are skills that university is uniquely placed to nurture.

But the challenge in education is always the same: how do we help students buy in to the idea? How do we help them see the *relevance* of what they're doing?

We'll always have some students who know from an early age that university is their goal. Others are equally certain it's not for them, perhaps because they want to pursue apprenticeships or enter the workforce directly. Both paths are valid.

But I'm particularly passionate about supporting the *undecided students*. Those young people who are unsure, who don't have a role model who's been to university, who might feel it's out of reach. These students are often pioneers in their families or communities. They need encouragement, support, and most importantly the belief that university is a possible and positive next step.

Over the past 15 years, I've had the privilege of working with young people in a wide variety of settings. During my time as a full-time teacher, I was fortunate to support students through the trials and triumphs of preparing for university. This included helping them write personal statements, identify strengths, and make key decisions about what to study and where.

Since launching my own business, Siddiqui Education, my focus has evolved to helping young people build the **character** and **confidence** they need to succeed, whether they pursue university, apprenticeships, or direct routes into employment. I do this through project-based workshops and competitions that simulate real-life experiences and develop essential life skills.

At the heart of everything I do is a concept I call the 7Cs to Thrive. These are seven character traits that, when nurtured, help young people thrive in education, work, and life. The traits are **Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, Compromise, Community, Courage**, and, crucially, **Curiosity**.



Building confidence through experience

My advice to teachers is simple: help students explore their why. Don't just push the "how to apply" side of things. Encourage discussions around purpose, goals, and growth. A university decision is about much more than a course. It's about who they want to become.

To support this thinking, I've had the honour of working with the **University of Derby** for the past three years on a project called *Getting Ready for Uni*. It's a series of short, engaging videos designed to demystify university life. We cover everything from moving into halls of residence and cooking for the first time, to using the library, referencing properly, and building confidence in new social settings. It's all the stuff we don't talk about enough, but that matters just as much as lectures and seminars.

We also run a **podcast competition** for college students, where they research a topic, write scripts, and create short podcasts. The winners get a chance to visit the university for

a full hands-on experience. They read from a teleprompter, edit their videos, and record in the university's radio suite. This is a working replica of a professional station.

It's always powerful to see students realise that universities, especially applied universities, aren't just about theory. They offer **practical, immersive, work-ready experiences**, and they're built to help young people step confidently into their futures.

What can teachers do right now?

Help your students **ask why**, not just how. Promote **critical thinking**. Create **project-based opportunities** in school that mimic real-world challenges. Encourage your students to visit universities and see for themselves what's possible.

University isn't the right path for everyone, but everyone deserves to feel that *it's an option*. By fostering curiosity, confidence, and criticality, we help our young people not just choose university but truly **thrive** if they do.

“My advice to teachers is simple: help students explore their why. Don't just push the “how to apply” side of things. ”



Reasons to consider university

By Heather Black, Senior Recruitment Officer at the University of Strathclyde

The reasons for going to university can be as varied as the degrees on offer and there are no wrong answers to why it's the right path. These are some common reasons.

Study a favourite subject

University offers the opportunity for your students to develop their knowledge about a subject that interests them. They can study their favourite subject in greater depth and take their learning in a direction that suits them.

Try a new subject

Many students will choose something completely new that can open many doors. Students may have the chance to pick electives alongside their main subjects. It's not uncommon for these to become the focus of their studies. Encourage your students to be open-minded about what they can study at university!

Vocational degrees

Universities offer many pathways into specific professions, providing students with the knowledge of the subject and the workplace. These vocational programmes may have elements of work-based learning that can help students feel confident when they step into the working world. For some careers, a degree is an essential component for getting on the ladder.

Improve career prospects

A degree significantly impacts a student's earning potential. Graduates are more likely to find work, secure high-skilled roles, and earn more than non-graduates. A degree can open doors to many professions that require a degree and prepare students for leadership roles. Degrees teach transferable skills that are invaluable in today's workforce. For these reasons, employability remains an important consideration when choosing a degree.

Student life

University is about more than the classroom. Clubs and societies provide amazing chances to meet like-minded individuals, pursue an interest outside of the classroom, develop transferable skills, and have some fun! Students' unions offer support to students, plus ways to get involved in politics, welfare, and outreach. Sports unions give students a chance to play unfamiliar sports, compete for their institution, or just keep fit and healthy. Students should make the most of their time at university by grabbing as many opportunities as possible.

Experience a new location

For some students, moving away from home is a key factor for going to university. Studying in a different learning environment to school can be appealing. Going somewhere new brings new opportunities, exciting changes, and challenges (page 44).

Meet new people

Students will meet people from all over the world who have chosen to come to their institution. It's a fantastic way to learn about different backgrounds and cultures, broaden their horizons, and perhaps even decide future holiday destinations!





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How universities can help you achieve your teacher goals

By Matt Chesters, Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Assistant at City St George's, University of London

It can be difficult to know how to make the best use of your resources as a school. This article will explain how working with a university can help you achieve your career department goals. You'll learn how to meet benchmarks and ensure your students have the right information to make the best decision for their futures.

Gatsby Benchmark 7

In 2022/23, Benchmark 7 – encounters with higher and further education – was a difficult benchmark, which only 52% of schools were able to fully achieve. Thankfully, the Gatsby guidelines have recently been updated.

Since 2024, the 'meaningful encounters' mentioned in the guidelines can include online interactions, provided these are in conjunction with in-person visits. This presents schools with more flexibility to organise webinars or online talks from universities.

Meaningful encounters

An overlooked feature of the guidance is that encounters don't have to be on university grounds. Inviting university representatives to your own school HE fair will facilitate useful conversations in a setting where students feel comfortable asking questions. Some universities might even send current university students, who can provide highly valuable insights to your own students.

At a school visit to City St George's, we had a sixth former who was interested in civil engineering. They were curious about a degree versus a degree apprenticeship. One of our engineering student ambassadors gave relevant and specific advice to help the sixth former make an informed choice about his post-18 options.

Valuable insights

- **School alumni** – students learn from each other. If you have former students who have gone to university, invite them to share their experiences about their lived experience of higher education.
- **University alumni** – recent graduates are equally valuable. They have the added benefit of experience finding a career post-graduation. Ask universities if their recent graduates will share their journeys.
- **University fairs** – national HE exhibitions and university fairs are a useful resource for students (page 59). They can chat with representatives from hundreds of institutions on the same day, giving them a chance to have specific, meaningful conversations about their future.
- **WP teams** – every university has a strategy for widening participation (WP) – the duty of making university accessible to those from under-represented backgrounds. Contact WP teams about visits, residentials, or events for students who haven't yet considered university as an option. They may also run attainment-raising activities such as mentoring and subject tutoring for free!

University representatives provide a wealth of support to meet the needs of your students and school. Reach out to university teams in your local area or region. See what they can do for you.

“An overlooked feature of the guidance is that encounters don't have to be on university grounds.”

How to build an effective relationship with a university

By Sarah Shingleton, Coordinator in UK Recruitment at Northumbria University

Dedicating time to build and nurture strong relationships between schools/colleges and universities can lead to vastly improved support for students and their understanding of higher education (HE). Holding strong relationships with universities offers numerous mutual benefits beyond enriching the student experience. These include opportunities to enhance and align academic provision, and building valuable professional networks.

A single point of contact

Universities are fortunate to offer a vast range of expertise amongst our staff. You will need to interact with multiple individuals within an institution to provide your students with a rounded understanding of HE. However, the phrase 'too many cooks' exists for a reason!

To build an effective relationship with a university, it is essential to establish a single point of contact (SPOC). Equally, universities need to know their contact within your school or college.

Determining SPOCs allows key contacts to arm themselves with knowledge of the nuances within your institution. They can use this knowledge to deliver more strategic, purposeful, and impactful activity to benefit you and your students. Your contact will draw on expertise from their colleagues within the university to support with this activity. They'll also reduce any disconnect in activity, and the risk of wasted time or resource for both institutions.

A face to a name

Regular and effective communication between you and your SPOC will allow you to maximise the relationship with the university. Busy schedules will likely demand much of this communication to take place over email. This can work very well for established relationships. However, there's an argument for building relationships the old-fashioned way by meeting in person. Meeting on Teams or Zoom is a close second.

Arranging to meet your SPOC allows you to connect with them and put a face to a name. Equally, meetings can act as a springboard to share important information about your institutions, set expectations, and create mutually beneficial goals.

A win-win relationship

It's worth remembering that your school or college isn't the only party benefiting from the relationship. Universities benefit too. With consideration from both sides, these relationships can become 'win-win' situations, which will help your relationship to continually thrive.

Through regular and transparent communication with your SPOC, activity can be delivered that helps both you and the university to achieve your objectives, such as offering a platform for outreach sessions which reach target student demographics for the university. To achieve this win-win scenario, clarity in expectations and objectives from both sides is essential.

A new colleague

Strong relationships are a central pillar for success in education. Those between schools/colleges and universities are no exception. The benefits can be felt widely, with greater opportunities unlocked for both students and staff. In securing strong relationships with HE institutions, there is an opportunity to gain more than a SPOC. You will also gain a new *colleague* in your network with whom you share a drive for supporting students to make the best decisions about their future.



Understanding fair access and widening participation

By Samara Lemon, Widening Participation Facilitator at the University of Derby

You may have heard the term widening participation (WP) when supporting your students with their university options. But what does it mean?

WP ensures everyone has a fair opportunity to access, succeed in, and progress through higher education, regardless of their background or circumstances. It recognises that some young people face additional barriers when considering university and aims to provide the support, information, and opportunities to help them make an informed choice about their future.

Understanding the barriers

Not all students start from the same position. Some young people may be the first in their family to consider university. Others may have concerns about finances, limited access to guidance, caring responsibilities, disabilities, or lower confidence in their academic abilities.

These barriers don't reflect a student's potential, but they can affect how achievable higher education feels. This is where WP plays an important role.

Parents and supporters

Parents and supporters are one of the biggest influences on a young person's decisions. They don't need personal experience of higher education to provide valuable support. Therefore, encourage your students to have conversations about their future with their support network.

Having a family member listen to their goals can make a significant difference. Sometimes, a parent or supporter showing an interest and asking questions can build a young person's confidence to explore opportunities they hadn't previously considered.

More than access

WP is often associated with helping students get into university, but its purpose goes much further. Effective WP helps students access higher education, succeed during their studies, and progress into their chosen careers. This is why many programmes focus on building confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging alongside providing practical information.

Activities may include campus visits, mentoring, summer schools, taster sessions, and information about student finance and support services. These experiences help students develop a clearer understanding of university life and allow them to ask questions in a supportive environment.

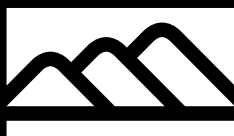
Building confidence

For some students, university can feel unfamiliar or intimidating, particularly if they don't know anyone who has attended before. Meeting current students, hearing real experiences, and spending time on campus can make higher education feel more accessible and achievable. Seeing relatable role models can also have a powerful impact on aspiration and self-belief. WP is about more than accessing university – it's about helping students believe they belong there.

Supporting informed choices

Importantly, WP doesn't encourage every young person to attend university. It's about ensuring that background and circumstance don't limit opportunity. At its heart, WP helps young people make an informed decision about their future. As a teacher or adviser, you can provide the encouragement, information, and support to ensure choices are shaped by ambition and potential rather than barriers.





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Schools and Colleges Open Day – 2 October 2026 & 18 June 2027

Teacher and Adviser Conference – 30 June 2027

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1st
in the East Midlands
for lectures and
teaching quality
(What Uni? 2026)

2nd
for course
quality
(Uni Compare 2027)



Support for first-in-family students

By Jen Barton, Schools Outreach and Widening Participation Manager at Durham University

Starting university is a major milestone. Students who are the first in their family to take this step can find it exciting and daunting. Navigating university life can feel overwhelming without guidance from family members who've been through the experience. Many first-generation students experience imposter syndrome, questioning whether they truly belong. Thankfully, there's a wide range of support available to help your first-in-family students succeed academically, financially, and socially.

Academic support

Universities are increasingly aware of the challenges faced by first-in-family students. They offer tailored academic support, such as:

- **foundation years** - designed to bridge the gap between school/college and university-level study.
- **academic skills workshops** - covering topics like essay writing, time management, and exam preparation.
- **mentoring schemes** - pairing students with peers or staff who can offer guidance and encouragement.
- **contextual offers** - some universities offer lower entry requirements based on their background.
- **transition programmes** - helping students adjust through orientation events and ongoing support.

Financial support

Money worries shouldn't hold your students back. Many universities and external organisations offer:

- **scholarships and bursaries** - these can help cover tuition fees, living expenses, and costs related to extracurricular activities.
- **hardship funds** - emergency financial support for students facing unexpected difficulties (page 90).
- **grants for participation** - funding to help students take part in social, cultural, or sporting opportunities.

Social support

University isn't just about studying. It's also about building connections and finding your community. Many institutions offer:

- **student societies** - including groups for first-generation students or those from similar backgrounds.
- **peer networks** - informal support groups where students can share experiences and advice.
- **events and workshops** - designed to build confidence, foster friendships, and celebrate diversity.

Final tips for your students

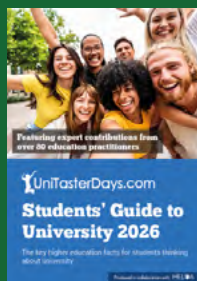
- **Ask for help** - don't be afraid to reach out. Academic advice, financial guidance, and emotional support are always available.
- **Get involved** - join clubs, societies, or sports teams to meet people and try new things.
- **Remember you belong** - everyone feels nervous at first, even if they don't show it. You've earned your place. You're not alone.



Did you know we have two other university guides?

You can download our Students' Guide and Parents' Guide for free. Please share with the students, parents, and carers in your school or college community.

www.UniTasterDays.com/Resources



Support for students on free school meals

By Linda King, Deputy Head of Outreach and Widening Participation at the University of Birmingham

Universities are required to develop Access and Participation Plans. These explain how they support students from under-represented backgrounds to access, succeed in, and progress beyond higher education. Eligibility for free school meals (FSM) is one of the most widely used indicators in these plans. This means students from FSM backgrounds are often prioritised for additional support, outreach opportunities, and financial assistance.

If your students have received FSM during their schooling, they can benefit from a strong range of financial and academic support to help them progress into higher education and succeed once they get there.

UCAS fee waiver

Applying to university normally involves a UCAS application fee. However, this fee is waived for students who received UK government-funded FSM during the last six years, up until the end of their final year at school or college. This ensures that financial circumstances don't limit a student's ability to apply to university.

Contextual admissions

Many UK universities use contextual admissions, which consider a student's academic achievements alongside their personal circumstances. FSM eligibility is one of the clearest indicators used in this process.

Students may benefit from:

- Contextual offers with slightly reduced entry requirements
- Additional consideration during the admissions process
- A fairer assessment that recognises both potential and achievement.

This approach helps create a more level playing field and acknowledges the barriers students may have faced.

Outreach programmes

Universities offer a wide range of outreach, support, and widening participation programmes. Many of these specifically prioritise students who have received FSM, as well as other criteria.

These programmes raise aspirations, help students understand their options, and offer additional support during the application process. They may include:

- Campus visits and university experience days
- Tutoring, mentoring, or academic skills workshops
- Support with UCAS applications, interviews, and personal statements
- Summer schools or residentials, often with travel, accommodation, and food covered
- Reduced or guaranteed offers for students who complete schemes
- Support with the transition to university
- Access to additional scholarships and bursaries through scheme participation.

These opportunities help students explore university life, build academic confidence, and access extra layers of personalised support.

University support

Once at university, students benefit from comprehensive support designed to help them settle in, succeed academically, and prepare for their future. This includes:

- Careers and employability services, offering guidance, employer events, internships, and skills workshops
- Mentoring schemes, such as peer mentoring, alumni mentoring, and industry-linked support
- Wellbeing and pastoral support, including counselling, dedicated wellbeing advisers, and specialist support teams
- Scholarships and bursaries.

This wrap-around support ensures students have the academic and personal guidance they need to thrive.

Research your options

Universities are committed to helping students from all backgrounds access, enjoy, and succeed at university. Exploring university support pages, attending open days, and speaking directly with admissions or student support teams can help you and your students feel confident about the opportunities available.



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Support for mature students, parents, and carers

By Zoe Mason, Head of UK Student Recruitment (Interim) at the University of Wolverhampton

Mature learners are one of the most diverse groups considering higher education. They may be seeking career progression, looking to retrain, returning to education after raising a family, or pursuing an ambition that wasn't possible earlier in life.

As a teacher, adviser, or careers professional, you can play an important role in helping adults recognise that higher education remains an achievable option.

Recognise potential learners

Many adults who could benefit from higher education may not see themselves as prospective students. Some may assume they are too old, have been away from education for too long, or lack the right qualifications. You may encounter individuals who:

- Want to change career or industry
- Have reached a qualification barrier at work
- Are returning to employment after a career break
- Have developed an interest in a subject through work or life experience
- Lack confidence despite possessing valuable transferable skills.

Helping individuals recognise that higher education is still available to them can be the first step in their journey.

Encourage exploration of different routes

Higher education is no longer a one-size-fits-all experience. Mature learners should be advised to explore a range of pathways, including:

- Full-time and part-time study
- Foundation years
- Degree apprenticeships
- Distance and blended learning
- Professional qualifications that can lead to degree-level study.

Different routes can help learners balance study alongside employment, family life, and other commitments.

Discuss practical and financial considerations

For many mature learners, practical factors are just as important as course choice. Family responsibilities, caring commitments, work patterns, travel, and finances can all influence decision-making. Encourage learners to ask universities about flexibility, academic support, wellbeing services, childcare support, and funding opportunities.

Advisers should also be aware of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, which is designed to support adults who wish to upskill, retrain, or return to education throughout their working lives. As the policy develops, learners should review the latest government guidance and seek individual advice, particularly if they have previously studied in higher education.

Promote university events

Open days, campus visits, and online information sessions can help mature learners understand what university study involves and what support is available. Advise learners to prepare questions in advance and focus on issues most relevant to their circumstances. Speaking with current mature students can often provide reassurance and build confidence.

Help learners recognise their potential

Many mature learners underestimate their ability to succeed in higher education. You can help individuals make informed decisions about their future, by providing encouragement, accurate information, and practical guidance. Higher education isn't defined by age. With the right support, mature learners can access opportunities that support personal growth, career development, and lifelong learning.

“Advisers should be aware of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, which is designed to support adults who wish to upskill, retrain, or return to education.”

Support for service children

By Jayme Stevens, Head of Access, Participation and Success at Canterbury Christ Church University

Imagine childhood through the eyes of a service child. Saying goodbye to a parent as they deploy overseas for months at a time becomes normal. You might spend your childhood living on a military base, moving home every few years, changing schools, and never quite knowing how long friends will remain part of your life. Each move means starting over before you've had a chance to settle. For a few service children, the unthinkable also happens: they lose a parent while they are still at school.

These experiences can foster remarkable resilience, independence, and adaptability - qualities that help service children flourish at university and throughout their lives. As a teacher or careers adviser, you play a vital role in helping service children see higher education as somewhere they truly belong.

It can be easy to focus on what service children have missed because of mobility or disruption. Instead, recognise everything they have gained. Many achieve highly at school, thrive at university, and build successful careers. Their experiences often develop confidence, adaptability, and problem-solving skills that universities and employers value.

Service life isn't something to overcome or explain away. It's part of a young person's story and often one of their greatest strengths. Help your students to recognise that too. Encourage them to draw on those experiences in applications, interviews, and conversations about their future. Sometimes, what a young person needs most is someone who helps them recognise those strengths before they do themselves.

Across England, universities are strengthening support for service children through outreach, transition programmes, financial assistance, and wellbeing services. The aim isn't to give service children an advantage, but to ensure talent is never limited by circumstance.

Schools are often the constant in a service child's education. Early conversations about university, encouragement to attend open days, and honest discussions about student finance can build confidence and raise aspirations.

The Thriving Lives Toolkit, developed by the Service Children's Progression Alliance, offers an evidence-informed framework to help schools strengthen the support they provide. The dedicated UCAS toolkit also offers practical guidance for supporting service children as they explore higher education. Research suggests that service children are less likely to ask for help, choosing instead to persevere and 'keep calm and carry on.' Recognising this, and reaching out proactively, can make a lasting difference.

Higher education offers far more than a degree. It is a chance to discover new passions, build lifelong friendships and develop the confidence to shape the future. For service children, whose lives have already demanded courage and adaptability, university can be another step in a journey they are more than ready to take. The question is not whether service children can succeed in higher education. It is whether we will match the resilience they have already shown with the ambition and support they deserve.





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Support for ethnic minority students

By Simone Simmons, Senior Access and Outreach Officer at Southampton Solent University

My son is in the midst of his journey toward university: open days, applications, personal statements, student finance. It's a lot for parents to take in as we try to support our children through the process. It has made me reflect on my own path to higher education and realise just how much has changed.

Studying at university

Growing up as a British child of colour in London, nobody in my family had ever been to university. It felt like something meant for "other people," not for me. Yet I applied anyway, despite having nobody at home who could explore the option with me, attend open days, or feel confident enough to check my UCAS application. I was accepted and moved far from home.

Those first months were daunting. Things I had taken for granted in a culturally diverse city were suddenly missing. I found myself wondering where I could buy my favourite food, where I could socialise with people who understood my cultural references, and (most urgently) where I could find decent 22 inch yaki texture hair in a 1B!

However, Solent University soon became home. I discovered communities that felt like my own through friends, academics, and student societies.

I found shops serving scotch bonnet heavy curry goat and rice. I found salons that transformed my hair from an impressive afro to back length tresses, intricate cornrows, and perfectly crafted box braids.

These communities helped me settle, thrive, and fully embrace the university experience. It gave me the sense of belonging I needed to achieve my first class degree with honours.

Working at university

When I returned to work at the same university, one of my favourite activities was supporting open days. I would watch young prospective students of colour step onto campus wearing the same slightly bewildered expression I must have worn two decades earlier, the look that quietly said, "I'm not sure about this."

I'd notice how their eyes darted around, searching for someone who looked like them. I'd see the subtle but unmistakable relief when they spotted me: another black person, someone who would understand the feeling of being out of place, the imposter syndrome, or the weight of parental expectations.

“I would watch young prospective students of colour step onto campus wearing the same slightly bewildered expression I must have worn two decades earlier. ”



Almost every time, once we got talking, a student or parent would lean in and quietly ask, “Are there any Black people in Southampton?” or “Where can my child get plantain or ackee and saltfish?” I always smiled and reassured them that Southampton is not so different.

Over the years, I've supported many initiatives designed to ensure students of colour feel a genuine sense of belonging: contributing to the university Race Equality Charter, supporting Roots, Rhythm, and Recipe events, and shaping the Not Just Accepted But Welcomed web pages. I also led conversations with applicants from non-white backgrounds and spearheaded a £1,000 scholarship specifically for students of colour.

Each of these efforts aims to bring that “sigh of relief” earlier for prospective students, even before they arrive. It helps them feel confident that university can be a true home away from home.

Supporting my child

As a parent now supporting my own child through this transition, I realise how vital that sense of belonging is when choosing a university. Open days and the way institutions communicate with young people matter just as much as entry requirements or accommodation fees.

The welcoming atmosphere and sense of community at university open days strongly resonates with the next generation. For them, it's not just about league tables, accreditations or awards. It's about identity, representation, having a voice, and feeling like they belong.

On a recent visit, my 17-year-old son stood on the first floor balcony of the impressive Spark Building, looking down at the energy and diversity of students from all walks of life. He turned to me and said, “You know what, Mama? I can see myself here.”

**Simone and
her son**



Support for young adult carers

By Ethan-lee Mackay, Schools, Colleges and Outreach Officer at the University of South Wales

University can be a big step for anyone, let alone when you have the additional responsibility of being a young adult carer (YAC). Juggling work, social life, and education can lead some YACs to believe university isn't an option. In my previous role at Barnardo's, and my current role at a university, I have supported many young adult carers taking their next steps after their level 2 and 3 qualifications. What many don't realise is how much support universities can offer.

As a young carer myself, I understand how getting to university and achieving a degree-level qualification can feel like an impossible task. My caring responsibilities stayed the same, but I found a balance that let me build a career, start a family, and continue supporting the person in my care.

Some universities have tailored support for YACs. Others don't have specific provision, but most have staff who are trained to adapt to each student's needs and support them in whatever way they require. Encourage your students to speak to the student support teams at open

days, or contact them before applying, to understand what support they can offer. This article shares a few examples of support available to YACs.

Flexible study

Universities often offer flexibility in study options. Most courses run full-time over three years or part-time over five to six years. If your student's caring role leaves them with limited time, choosing a part-time degree can ease pressure by spreading their workload over a longer period.

Financial support

Being a young carer can incur extra costs. Financial support is available in the form of bursaries and grants that don't need to be repaid, unlike student loans. This financial aid can make a difference in making university more affordable. Each university offers different bursaries (page 80), and this can help a student decide which institution is best for them. Encourage your students to speak to the student money advice team at open days.

Some universities also offer travel bursaries, which can cover travel costs. Universities understand that attending their open day can be expensive, and not always possible. Therefore, contacting the university before an open day to explain the circumstances could lead to additional support.



Career support

Career support is another key resource. Young adult carers develop many transferable skills, such as time management, empathy, and problem-solving. Most universities have a dedicated careers service, offering CV workshops and support, and support with job applications, even after students graduate. Using these services can help YACs remain competitive in the job market and identify roles that respect their caring commitments.

Wellbeing services

Wellbeing services are provided by all universities. Offerings vary from institution to institution. You may find one-to-one counselling, mentoring schemes, group craft sessions, or external sessions such as therapy dog visits, among other options. It's a good idea to review each university's wellbeing pages and speak to staff to discover which feels most supportive.

Local authority support

Many young adult carers already receive help from their local council or charities. When they are researching universities, advise them to check what support exists in their prospective study area. Local organisations may offer guidance, respite, and assistance with grant applications. These resources can further boost the university support they receive.

Assignment extensions

When caring for someone with a long-term health condition or disability, there can be periods when their conditions are worse or medical emergencies arise. Universities have extenuating circumstances policies when something beyond a student's control affects their ability to meet assignment deadlines. These cannot be used for all assignments, but can act as a safety net when needed.

The subject academic can advise your students on this policy or guide them to the relevant team. Many universities such as the University of South Wales also offer each student a Personal Academic Coach to support them with their studies. Challenges around meeting assignment deadlines can always be discussed with a student's coach, and they should feel supported in developing reasonable adjustments they may require.

University is a realistic and rewarding option for young adult carers, even without support. However, with a wide range of resources available when needed, your students can remain confident in continuing their higher education journey alongside their vital caring responsibilities.

“I have supported many young adult carers taking their next steps after their level 2 and 3 qualifications. What many don't realise is how much support universities can offer. ,,



Support for students with diverse lived experiences

By Steph Rimmer, Widening Access Officer at Edge Hill University

Supporting a whole cohort of students each year can be difficult, especially as each student brings an array of life experiences that have led them to you. The vastness of their lived experiences can be surprising and make you feel inadequately equipped to support them fully.

Widening participation characteristics can affect students in many ways. Some students are oblivious to them, which was the case for me as a first-generation student. Other students, such as some disabled students, live with this at the forefront of their mind almost daily. As practitioners within this space, we must identify where students need extra support and implement it effectively, even when we feel out of our depth. This article is here to help.

Share your vulnerability

Often students will approach us with a very specific question and expect we've encountered it before or will absolutely know the answer. It's important to be honest when you don't have the answer. In my experience, students respect this more than a half-formulated answer or a response to a different question entirely.

Share your vulnerability. Let them know that you don't know. This can often build trust that is far more valuable than a simple answer. However, that can't be the end of the conversation.

Call on the experts

There is a wealth of networks, organisations, and teams who are keen to help. Firstly, contact the Uni Connect team who cover your area. They work in partnership with the universities in your region. They are a brilliant central resource to find useful information from a range of institutions.

Secondly, if you're looking for something more specific, many universities have a team who work with widening participation students. They can triage your query by contacting specific support teams, so you receive comprehensive information on your required topic.

Show you are for them

One of the networks I joined to look for answers was our Multicultural Staff Network. A large part of my role is supporting Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic students. I was worried I wouldn't do them justice as a white woman who hasn't shared their lived experience.

However, at the network, one of the staff members said, "Show that even if you aren't *like* them, you are *for* them." This has stuck with me ever since. It perfectly sums up what we do in our roles: support students, no matter their background, to realise their ambitions and create the future they wish for.



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Support for neurodivergent students

By Jess Martin, Recruitment and Access Officer at Brunel University of London

For many neurodiverse students transitioning from further education to higher education, it can come as a surprise that the support they receive is largely dependent on how much the student seeks out themselves. In further education, the support is based on the school or college's SEND provision, but in higher education it is based on students' individual needs.

As a result, neurodiverse students will usually need to engage with support services themselves to put this in place. Higher education places a larger emphasis on independence, which may feel overwhelming for neurodiverse students. This is why early planning can be beneficial.

Support for neurodiverse students

Universities have dedicated disability and inclusion services where students can access free support and support funded by the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). This can include:

- 1 to 1 study skills tutoring
- Reasonable adjustments for exams, assessments, admissions interviews
- Assistive technology programmes & equipment
- Mental health support
- Accessible accommodation
- Induction tour of campus
- Sensory rooms and quiet study spaces.

How you can help

As a teacher, you can help by encouraging self-advocacy and discussions around support needs, so your students feel comfortable and confident requesting adjustments at university. Students can't take their Education Health Care Plan into higher education, so they should declare their neurodiverse condition on their UCAS application. They should also contact their chosen university's disability and inclusion team to request arrangements before they start the course. The team will contact the student to discuss, so help your students prepare for these conversations to ensure the correct support is given.

Furthermore, advise your students to research universities and attend open days to ease their uncertainties about university. Your students can speak with staff and students and tour the campus. Many universities offer quiet spaces at open days that neurodiverse students can use, and they can receive a copy of the programme before the event to plan their day. Your students may want to consider campus location and layout, exam and coursework split for their course, support services and facilities available, and anything else that is important to them.

Finally, encourage your neurodiverse students to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance. They don't need a confirmed place to apply, so they can start this process once Student Finance opens. This ensures that all consultations can take place and specialist equipment can be delivered before they begin their course, creating a smoother transition.



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Support for students who have English as an additional language

By Hannah Alipoor, Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer at the University of Huddersfield

Your students may feel nervous about university if English isn't their first language, but there is lots of support available. Universities offer a range of support for students who have English as an additional language (EAL).

This support may include English language workshops, academic skills sessions, writing support, conversation classes, and one-to-one appointments with language advisers.

Specialist skills

Many universities provide specialist academic skills services to help students develop their reading, writing, note-taking, and presentation skills – all tools your students will use whilst completing their degree. These services can be particularly helpful when adjusting to the style of academic English expected in higher education.

Depending on where your students study, they might have access to workshops on essay writing, critical thinking, referencing, and avoiding plagiarism, as well as individual feedback on written work.

Conversation classes

Conversation classes and language exchange schemes can also build confidence in speaking English. These sessions provide opportunities to practise language skills in a relaxed environment, and they give your students the opportunity to meet other students from a range of backgrounds. Some universities also run peer mentoring programmes, where new students can receive support from more experienced EAL students.

International opportunities

For international students, universities often provide additional support before and after completing a chosen course. This may include pre-sessional English courses, orientation programmes, and dedicated international student advisers who can help with academic, practical, and cultural adjustments. International student societies also offer valuable opportunities to make friends and settle into university life.

Home students who speak English as an additional language can also access language support. Many university services are open to all students and enable everyone to strengthen their academic communication skills.

The first step

Seeking support will help your students succeed throughout their student journey. Attending open days is the first step, so they can ask students and staff about their own experiences with support. This can give your students a helpful insight into the student experience before they apply. Once enrolled at university, they should access the variety of support available so they have the tools to achieve their goals, both academically and socially.



My advice for teachers

By Reece Buckley, Micro and Molecular Biology graduate, Manchester Metropolitan University



department taster days, and summer schools. I knew that missing a handful of college days was a worthwhile trade-off for shaping the next three years of my life.

I explored subject-specific visits, toured labs, and spoke with current students. It changed everything for me. If you're committing to a course and a lifestyle, it's essential to see it for yourself. Sometimes, you have to prioritise your future. It isn't reckless; it's intentional. It's not an act of defiance; it's an exercise in clarity.

4. What advice will you never forget?

One piece of advice that has stuck with me: "Your direction is more important than your speed." When the pressure mounted with A-level tests and coursework, it was tempting to apply quickly, so I didn't fall behind. However, this advice reminded me to focus on alignment rather than merely rushing through the timeline.

My teachers and mentors encouraged me to slow down, reflect, and make choices based on purpose rather than prestige. This mindset has shaped my university journey and impacted how I approach every significant decision since then. Speed generates noise, but direction creates impact.

5. What advice would you give to teachers?

Take the time to truly understand your students, beyond their predicted grades. Ask about their interests, fears, and aspirations. Help them connect their ideas to real possibilities. Reach out to your connections, if possible, even if their passions seem niche or unclear.

Provide your students with the freedom to explore and support them when they choose to take the lead. Don't prioritise attendance over ambition. Missing a few days for open days or student panels could make the difference between "I guess I'll apply" and "I belong here." You may not always see the immediate impact, but trust me: when students feel seen and supported, it stays with them for life.

1. Which teacher or adviser supported you?

My form tutor and biology teacher played crucial roles in my application process. They offered more than just generic advice; they created an environment for open discussions about my doubts, direction, and ambitions. However, the most transformative support came from a university outreach programme where I was matched with a mentor.

This mentor had first-hand experience navigating university life and building a career. They helped me plan travel for department-specific open days, introduced me to life at university beyond the prospectuses, and made the decision-making process feel tangible. That kind of support transformed distant possibilities into something I could actually envision achieving.

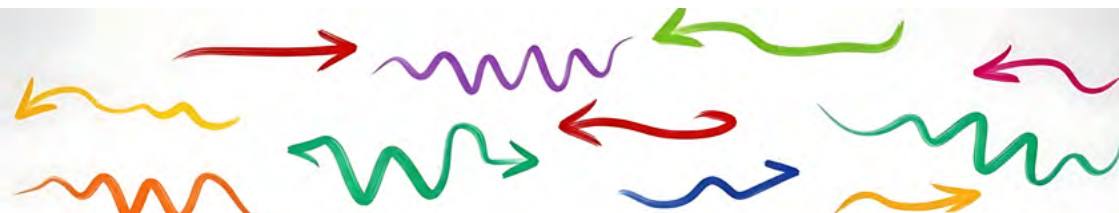
2. How did they support you?

The support I received formed a solid triangle of guidance. My personal tutor outlined timelines and conducted regular check-ins. This grounded me during the chaotic times of exams, deadlines, and decisions. My biology teacher helped me craft my personal statement into an authentic reflection of my passion for biological sciences and their real-world impact.

Meanwhile, my mentor provided practical strategies. They helped me organise my coursework, manage my commitments, and stay on track. They empowered me to take ownership of the process, creating structure without diminishing my individuality.

3. Did they arrange a university visit?

No, my college had a focus on attendance rather than fostering opportunities. Instead, I took the initiative to attend open days, student events,



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How to choose the right university

By Ben Pettitt, Higher Education Adviser at the University of East Anglia

Choosing the right university is one of the most important decisions that your students will make. There are several different factors you should encourage them to consider. The good news: there is no right or wrong answer. It's all subjective!

Rankings

Students tend to look at league table rankings when choosing a university. This is a valid way to determine if an institution is a good fit for them. However, there are lots of rankings to consider. Encourage your students to look at multiple league tables to understand a university's broader performance. For instance, a university may be the top institution in the UK, but how do they perform in subject-specific league tables, or student satisfaction surveys?

Location

Ask your pupils to think about their preferred study location. Do they want to attend a nearby university to stay close to family and friends? Or would they rather move further afield and experience a different part of the country or world?

Similarly, they will need to choose whether to study at a campus or city university. Both types have their merits. At a campus university, students are part of an exclusive community, the teaching and leisure facilities are on one site, and there tends to be 24/7 security.

A city campus university is beneficial in different ways: students live closer to shops, cafés, restaurants and other student amenities. They will also enjoy the hustle and bustle of a living, vibrant city, and they're part of a wider local community.

Extra-curricular activities

Availability of extra-curricular activities should be considered too. Encourage your students to look at the different societies offered by each university. Equally, if your students are keen travellers or practical workers, then suggest they seek a university that excels in their study abroad programme or placement year scheme.

Open days

An in-person open day is the best way for your students to get a measure of a university. They can attend campus tours, visit student accommodation, attend subject-specific talks, visit the nearby town or city, and discover the lifestyle in that region. They can also ask staff and students about higher education. Open days usually act as the final convincer for most pupils. It can be difficult to visit lots of open days in a short amount of time, but please reassure your students that it is definitely worth their while.



How to help your undecided students

By Simon Lovell-Jones, Student Recruitment Officer at Aberystwyth University

There's an old saying in Germany: the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. One teacher even told me, "In this school, the apple trickles down the trunk."

But if students have no experience of higher education, how can they tell if they'd be happy doing it? How can they begin to choose between a range of university courses or eventual careers? And what about children with parents and supporters who aren't in work, or maybe haven't been to university?

It's hardly surprising that students feel undecided about university. Indecision leads to sixth formers kicking the can down the road rather than applying. I've even heard sixth formers being put off by seeing too much information on intimidating websites.

Inevitably, 'undecided' quickly becomes 'no' and students withdraw from the process. Some will steadfastly resist attempts to help, whilst others will pick something on impulse and stick with it.

As a teacher, you might be wondering where to start. How can you show your students that the apple can land pretty much anywhere they want, and then roll further afield?

Start young

Career conversations can start from Year 7. Discussions in tutor groups can follow careers assemblies, spiced up with speakers from parents, supporters, and alumni. Don't forget to invite us university officers too!

Listen and inspire

I have been impressed by the gifted teachers, careers advisers, tutors, and heads of year who spend time understanding and reassuring their students. This can really help them embrace the possibilities and imagine themselves in different roles.

Careers quizzes

There are brilliant online quizzes, which offer powerful insights and valuable information into careers. Some focus on personality traits. Others focus on skills and qualifications. Following these with online research can ratchet up engagement in tutor periods and inform decisions!

Bedazzling fairs

Careers and higher education fairs can really inspire students. Try a few of these bedazzling strategies to help students overcome their shyness.

- **Bingo** - give each child a bingo card. Exhibitors can stamp or initial them to prove they have visited. There could even be a prize.
- **Questionnaires** – give each student a list of questions, ideally workshopped by each year group. This can help get conversations going.
- **Quiet time** - a session with a small number of selected students can make the experience less intimidating.

For me, my apple fell a good distance from the parental trees of advertising and market research. Since then, there's been near constant replanting as my career bounced through publishing, teaching, music, universities, and even construction.

Perhaps students need to know their decision doesn't affect everything. Where that apple falls won't determine their whole lives, and they can watch that apple fall with a little less gravity.



Supporting parents with university decision-making

By Rachel Clenton, Senior Student Recruitment and Engagement Officer at Sheffield Hallam University

Choosing where to go to university is one of the most significant decisions a young person will make. While students are at the centre of the process, parents and carers often play a key role in supporting research, providing reassurance, and helping students weigh up their options. As teachers and careers advisers, you can help families navigate what can often feel like an overwhelming process.

The value of the support network

By the autumn term of Year 13, students are balancing mock examinations, personal statement deadlines, UCAS applications, and university open days. With so many competing priorities, it is natural for them to turn to trusted adults for guidance.

Parents and carers are increasingly engaged in university decision making. They attend information events, join online communities, and research institutions on behalf of their child. However, the sheer volume of information can leave families unsure where to focus their attention. Your role is to help parents identify the factors that are most relevant to their child's individual needs and aspirations.

Key factors for families to consider

When supporting parents and carers, encourage them to focus on finding the right fit rather than simply the highest-ranking institution. Some useful considerations include:

- **Location** – does the student want to stay close to home or move away? Exploring a mix of options can help them make an informed decision.
- **Assessment methods** – families should look at the balance of exams, coursework, and practical assessments to find what suits the student best.
- **Accommodation** – cost, location, and living arrangements can have a significant impact on the student experience.
- **Open days** – encourage families to attend with a list of questions to ask current students, course tutors, and support staff.

Supporting conversations about employability

Employability is an important consideration for students and parents. Higher education is a significant investment, so families often want to understand how a degree will support future career goals. Invite parents and carers to explore:

- Graduate outcomes within the subject area
- Placement and internship opportunities
- Careers and employability support
- Links with employers and industry.

Many universities provide careers support beyond graduation, including assistance with CVs, applications, and interview preparation.

A shared approach

Teachers, careers advisers, parents, and carers all play an important role in helping students make informed decisions. By providing clear, impartial guidance and encouraging families to focus on what is right for the individual student, you can help make the university application process a positive and rewarding experience for everyone involved.



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The different types of university courses

By Katrina Fuschillo-Cozens, Post-16 Outreach Officer at the University of East Anglia

An undergraduate qualification is the next level of study after a Level 3 qualification, such as A-levels, T-levels, and BTECs. Undergraduate courses are usually studied at a university or further education college, ranging from Levels 4 to 6. The most common undergraduate qualification is a bachelor's degree, but there are several other options available to your students.

Bachelor's degree

Bachelor's degrees usually take three years to complete when studied full-time, although some courses can take five or six years, such as medicine and architecture. A bachelor's degree is a Level 6 qualification, typically focused on one subject, although some students choose two. Examples include:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA)
- Bachelor of Science (BSc)
- Bachelor of Education (BEd)
- Bachelor of Engineering (BEng)
- Bachelor of Laws (LLB)
- Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB)

Joint honours degree

Most students study one subject at university, but it's sometimes possible to study two subjects in equal measure with a joint honours degree. Both subjects contribute equally to the final degree classification. Subject combinations vary between universities. For example, a student might choose to study a joint honours degree in Drama and Creative Writing.

Placement year and year abroad

Some degree courses offer a placement year. This gives students the opportunity to gain valuable work experience as part of their degree. Universities may also offer a year abroad, allowing students to study at a university in another country, either for a full academic year or a single semester.

Integrated master's

An integrated master's degree combines undergraduate and postgraduate study into a single course. These programmes usually take four years to complete, with the final year studied at master's level, leading to a master's qualification.

Foundation year

A foundation year is a one-year programme offered by many universities and colleges. Entry requirements are often lower than a bachelor's degree, making it a popular option for students who want additional preparation before starting a full bachelor's degree.

Foundation degree

Foundation degrees are usually two-year Level 5 qualifications, equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree. They focus on practical learning and often combine academic study with workplace experience.

Higher National Certificate/Diploma (HNC/HND)

HNCs are Level 4 qualifications, equivalent to the first year of university study. They are usually completed in one year. They can provide a route into employment or the second year of a bachelor's degree. HNDs are Level 5 qualifications that typically take two years to complete. These vocational courses develop practical skills. They can lead directly to employment or the final year of a bachelor's degree through a top-up course.



Engaging with universities online, on campus, and on demand

By Andrew Cooper, Hybrid Delivery Coordinator at the University of Liverpool

By embracing technology, universities can offer more support and guidance than ever before. This gives teachers and advisers such as yourselves the opportunity to engage with universities in multiple ways. By adopting a hybrid approach, your school or college can offer more university engagements to your students.

On campus

There are so many visiting opportunities at a university, such as campus tours, open days, speaking to current students, and engaging in academic taster sessions. Experiencing a university campus in person allows your students to see beyond the marketing pictures and consider which style of university is best for them. When organising a visit, be open about what you want to experience. It's good to show a campus and a city university to your students, but dictate which activities you like, so both universities don't offer the same talks.

Online

Travelling to a university is expensive. Equally, it can be hard to get a university to offer talks at your school or college. Why not ask if they can deliver an online talk? Live talks allow university staff to offer talks from anywhere in the UK, enabling you to provide a wider range of speakers to inspire your students. Arranging a bespoke talk means universities can tailor their information to your students.

In addition, universities offer a wide range of webinars and online open day-style activities. These happen at set times, not always in class time. However, you can share the promotional details with your students so they can participate in their own time.

On-demand

Most webinars and online activities are recorded. Many students sign up to talks but can't attend, so universities share the recordings with those who have registered so they don't miss out. Why not ask if universities can share some of these recordings with you, so you can show them in your classroom? Other universities may have dedicated on-demand areas, which have student insights and academic talks.

In addition, universities could record a bespoke activity for you. This can be shared during class or on your VLE for students to access in their own time. Again, be open with what you would like from a university, so you get personalised information that doesn't repeat advice students have heard from other providers.

Just ask

Universities are here to offer advice and guidance to support your students to reach the right destination. Look at the activities we offer by searching on UniTasterDays. See if we can offer the activities when visiting in person. Alternatively, request an online or on-demand version.

The best way to support your students is by speaking to as many universities as possible. Meet us on campus, invite us to address your school or college in person or online, and request on-demand content for sharing. Together, this enables your students to have the widest range of opportunities, whilst supporting you to achieve your Gatsby Benchmarks. Best tip, just ask how we can support you.

“By adopting a hybrid approach, your school or college can offer more university engagements to your students. ,,”



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Understanding university league tables

By Andy Long, Head of UK Student Recruitment and Access at Keele University

League tables are often one of the first things students turn to when comparing universities. They're everywhere, on university websites, in prospectuses, at events, and across social media. In the UK, the most common league tables are The Complete University Guide, The Guardian University Guide, and The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. For students considering studying abroad, there are also global rankings such as the QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

But with so many rankings out there, why do we have more than one?

Each league table uses slightly different methods and gives different weightings to key factors like student satisfaction, entry standards (what students typically achieve at Level 3), and graduate outcomes. Because of these differences, a university might be ranked highly in one table but slightly lower in another. This is why it's so important for students to think about what matters most to them and compare those specific factors across multiple tables.

It's also worth remembering that most league tables don't just rank universities overall - they often rank individual subject areas too. This can be incredibly useful when shortlisting universities,

as the top-ranked university overall might not necessarily offer the strongest course in a specific subject.

Beyond the major league tables, there are also other useful tools, like the National Student Survey (NSS), which gathers feedback from final-year students. The NSS covers topics such as teaching quality, academic support, and access to resources. One of the most valuable aspects of the NSS is its honesty. Students don't hold back when sharing their experiences, making it a valuable resource for prospective applicants.

So, are league tables worth looking at?

Absolutely, but they shouldn't be the only thing you consider. Encourage your students to attend open days, sample lectures, and taster events. Seeing a campus in person and talking to staff and students can help your students get a real sense of whether a university is the right fit. After all, universities vary in teaching style, location, facilities, and community. It's about the full picture, not just a number on a website or a glossy banner at an event.

Having spoken to thousands of students, parents, and advisers over more than a decade in the sector, I always leave them with this thought-provoking question: "Is it better to study at the 5th-best university for the 55th-best course? Or is it better to study at the 55th-best university for the 5th-best course?"

If students keep that question in mind, they'll be well on their way to making a well-rounded, informed choice about their future.



Studying a degree apprenticeship

By Sophie Craven, Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer at the University of Huddersfield

A degree apprenticeship provides the opportunity to combine paid work with study, much like any other apprenticeship. However, this specific type of apprenticeship is taught at a higher level, leading to a bachelor's degree or a master's degree. The split between work and study is usually 80% work to 20% study. It takes between 3 to 5 years to complete the programme and gain a degree.

Benefits of degree apprenticeships

Tuition fees – currently £9,790 each year for 2026 entry – are covered by the employer and the Government through the Apprenticeship Levy. Not only that, but apprentices earn a salary throughout their training. The amount varies depending on the employer, role, and sector, with many degree apprentices earning competitive salaries from the start.

Understandably, for your students thinking about university, the idea of gaining a debt-free degree seems extremely appealing. But what's the catch? Is it too good to be true?

Challenges of degree apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships have grown over the last decade, but they are still relatively short in supply. This means they are extremely competitive. Based on the latest Government statistics, only 13% of degree apprenticeship starters were 18-year-old school leavers. More than half of the vacancies go to over 25s. In many cases, employers look for candidates with prior employment experience, often recruiting

from their existing workforce.

Many of your students will see degree apprenticeships on university websites, alongside other courses, and think they can apply direct. However, your students will need to be employed by the company or organisation offering the apprenticeship in the first instance. The company will then release them for study with a university partner.

The field is also dominated by specific sectors, most notably business, administration, and law. Recently there has been a large increase in health and social care degree apprenticeships. However, candidates need to be employed to apply for one of these, such as working in the NHS as a healthcare assistant or similar.

Advising on degree apprenticeships

74,990 students under the age of 19 started a degree apprenticeship in the 2024-25 academic year. They are still an option to consider, despite their limited number and popularity.

As teachers and advisers, you can:

- assist your students with the research and application process
- encourage your students to secure work experience
- visit apprenticeship and careers events
- speak to potential employers.

Thankfully, many universities can support you with a range of workshops and activities, including CV writing and interview skills.

Finally, remember that degree apprenticeships are very competitive. As such, you should advise your students to consider applying for university courses at the same time. They could also consider lower-level apprenticeships, from which they can often progress.



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Studying an online university course

By Becky Timmins, Senior Digital Officer at Falmouth University

Online learning has advanced at pace over the past few years. Studying a degree online is increasingly a first-choice option for students. This is the result of emerging technologies and more awareness of how to make the experience immersive and collaborative.

At undergraduate level, studying online may better suit some students' circumstances and learning styles. For others, the ability to study from home makes higher education more accessible, both physically and financially.

Learn without leaving home

With an online university course, there's no need to relocate or commute. Students can remain living at home, which means studying in a space that's familiar. For many students, learning at home better suits their personal study style and allows them to focus without the distractions of a busy campus environment. This may be particularly appropriate for students with learning differences and mental or physical health conditions.

Online study also removes the geographical barriers of going to university. Students are no longer limited to choosing a university based purely on location. Instead, they can apply to their ideal institution - even if it's across the country, or on the other side of the world - without having to move away from home. They can study with a university that aligns with their ambitions, values, and career goals, all from the familiarity of their own environment.

Stay connected and supported

Online doesn't mean alone. In fact, many online courses are specifically designed to support collaboration and meaningful relationship-building. Seminars, group projects, and dedicated online spaces offer plenty of opportunity for students to connect with peers, share ideas, and build a support network. Tutors are also on hand to offer regular feedback and guidance, ensuring students feel supported every step of the way.

Tailored and inclusive study

Online courses are designed to enable flexible study. They're typically asynchronous, meaning students can dive into the material whenever it works best for them, free from compulsory live elements. Your students may prefer to work in short bursts with breaks in between or to block out longer study sessions. Either way, they can manage their time however they like.

Studying online also means joining a global community of learners in which students' unique perspectives are valued. Course tasks are designed to encourage contributions through collaborative tools and group webinars, all tailored to individual abilities and ambitions.

A more affordable way to study

Studying online can also be more affordable. Students can save significantly without the added expense of campus accommodation, commuting, or frequent travel. Online learners can work alongside their studies too, helping to support themselves financially and reduce reliance on student loans.

Best of both worlds

An online university course offers the best of both worlds for your students. They gain a respected qualification and the flexibility to study in a way that fits around their lives. Studying an online degree is an empowering way for your students to access education if moving to university isn't right for them.



Learn more about the benefits of living at home whilst studying in Episode 29 of The Uni Guide Podcast.





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Studying a creative university course

By Jamie Bradford, Head of Future Students at De Montfort University

Creativity is a hugely valued commodity, both in the artistic sense and as a core transferable skill in the form of creative thinking and problem solving. Many students tell me their heart is pointing them to a creative subject, but their head is driving them to something perceived as more employable. Often, parents are nudging them in this direction too.

However, graduates of creative degrees are employed across a remarkably broad range of sectors. And remember, studying for an undergraduate degree isn't easy. It requires three years of commitment. The best way for your students to succeed is choosing a course they are passionate about, otherwise it becomes a test of endurance.

Creative demand

Demand for the creative portfolio in higher education has softened over the past 15 years. The move to the linear A-level programme has played a role here, due to the loss of the valuable 4th subject. Equally, creative study is no longer compulsory at GCSE-level in many schools. Arts-related A-level students fell by 21% between 2010 and 2023. BTECs and T-levels have also moved away from creative arts. V-levels might allow a resurgence, with Creative and Design subjects due in 2030. Yet, seeing is believing in the ever-changing policy on the 16-18 portfolio.

Creative employability

STEM subjects are incredibly valuable, providing skills required by our economy and our country. However, they shouldn't be championed over wider curriculum areas. Educate your students and their parents that undertaking a dynamic, skills-focused, practical course within the creative industries is worthwhile. It will deliver to their heart's desires and ensure their future self is well-placed to succeed.

Graduates directly enter employment in the UK creative industries sector, worth £120 billion annually. In addition, they find opportunities in tech, health, education, business, consultancy, the public sector, and entrepreneurship.

Creative champions

Academics and technicians across art, design, media, performance and film are incredibly passionate. They love to work with subject leaders in schools and colleges to champion the value of a creative education. We can only start to balance the scales between creative and non-creative subjects if we provide younger learners with a vision of the stimulation, enjoyment, and holistic development found in creativity and its career potential.

Please do reach out to your local creative universities to seek their support. Join us in championing the value of a creative education in your school or college.



My advice for teachers

By Jessica Pieri, Careers Adviser and Founder of The Careers People



Statutory guidance is becoming more complex. Expectations on careers professionals continue to grow, from FSQs to ILRs and countless other acronyms. It's easy to lose sight of a core element of our role: raising aspirations.

I remember my first ever careers role in a school. I was given three key goals: set up the alumni network, increase employer engagement, and raise student aspirations for higher education. By the end of the year, we had aspirations through the roof. Students were aiming higher than they ever had, and guidance on their available pathways was more prominent than ever before.

In this article, I will explore four key questions to help you focus on raising aspirations.

How can we inspire students to consider university?

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." There is nothing more powerful than immersing a student in something new. If you're looking to inspire students, I would start with this approach.

Arrange a university trip for students who are academically able to access degree level education but, for whatever reason, aren't considering it as an option. Once you're there, show them everything: accommodation, students' union, taster lectures. Let them learn from university students, ideally those with a similar background, culture, religion, or shared experiences, so they can relate to their journey. After the trip, work backwards. The involvement has started, so now you can teach them about their options and tell them how to achieve them.

How can we help students gain support from their parents or carers?

The students who lack support from their parents or carers in relation to HE isn't due to a lack of care, but a lack of understanding. If the parents or carers haven't attended university themselves, they can often feel on the back foot when trying to discuss this pathway with their

young people. As such, when considering how you can help, I suggest starting with understanding the gaps in the knowledge of your parents and carers.

Arrange an information session. I suggest running it online, unless you can get a slot at a wider school event aimed at parents and carers. Don't presume that you know what they want to learn about. Instead, allow them to set the agenda by assessing the gaps in their knowledge. If there are any topics you don't feel comfortable or equipped to speak about, ask a university colleague for help by seeking support from the UniTasterDays [event request form](#).

How can I advise students on choosing a course or university?

When this question comes up in my guidance meetings, I like to use a Venn diagram based on ikigai. This is a Japanese concept which basically means "a reason for being" or "the reason you get out of bed in the morning." It encompasses the idea that everyone has a purpose in life, a source of value and joy, that motivates them. It's not just about career or profession, but rather a holistic view of what gives life meaning and fulfilment.

The four circles of the Venn diagram cover what you're good at, what you enjoy, what the world needs, and what you can be paid for. We need to find something that sits in the middle of the diagram. Where we go from here depends on where the student is situated in their application journey.

For example, a Year 12 student may already have a list of potential course options. We can ask them to plot their options across the diagram to see where they fall. This can help them shortlist their favourite options. They can then review these in more detail by attending [university open days](#), watching [subject taster lectures](#), or speaking to current students to get honest opinions on messaging platforms like Unibuddy and The Ambassador Platform.

Raising aspirations isn't always easy, especially in a system full of competing pressures. However, we can make a lasting difference by staying focused on what inspires, informs, and involves students and their families.

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How location can enhance the university experience

**By Amberley Hack, Content Officer
at Falmouth University**

Starting university is often a student's first experience of living away from home. It's a time when they are beginning to discover and embrace their hobbies, interests, and identity. If a student chooses a location that aligns with what they value and who they are, it enriches their experience, sense of wellbeing, and fulfilment at university.

Wellbeing and belonging

When a student lives in a location that's right for them, it can enhance their mental and physical wellbeing while fostering a sense of belonging. It's different for each student. For some, the right location may be one that's remote, has easy access to green spaces and the coast, and exists in a quieter setting. Universities in rural or coastal areas suit this lifestyle better. The student can pursue outdoor activities, feel connected to nature, and enjoy the close-knit community that comes with living in a town or small city.

For others, they thrive in a metropolis while surrounded by a diverse collection of people, events, live music, and culture. These students may be more outgoing and extroverted, and find their sense of connection in a lively, bustling environment.

Many value a location that has a mixture of both: enough quiet spaces to relax and enjoy solitude,

and a variety of inclusive events and social spaces that encourage a varied social life.

Campus vs city

Campus universities offer a close-knit, community atmosphere with buildings, facilities, green areas, and social spaces grouped into one location. Some students prefer this for the convenience it offers when attending classes, seeing friends, and taking part in clubs and societies (page 116). They may also enjoy the respite a campus offers from the hustle of the city.

City-based universities alternatively have their accommodation, lecture halls, and facilities spread across the city. The city almost becomes the campus. This option offers a wider variety of social settings at the student's doorstep, from entertainment to shopping to restaurants. It can encourage students to become more involved with the city, immersing themselves in the options available to connect with the community.

Distance from home

Distance from home is an important factor to consider. They may wish to visit home for the weekend if they are feeling homesick, or perhaps they feel more comfortable leaving home for the first time if they know they can easily return whenever they need.

For others, moving to a location that is new and further away offers an exciting opportunity. It encourages the student to leave their comfort zone, explore a different area, and prioritise the location itself over distance from home.



How location can enhance the learning experience

By Bethan Peace, Schools and Colleges Coordinator at The University of Law

Location is a factor that can have a significant impact on a student's overall success and wellbeing. Encouraging your students to think beyond the campus itself can help them make a more informed decision about their future.

Transport and affordability are among the practical considerations. It's worth asking about these during an open day. How straightforward is the journey to campus? Are there park and ride options if the campus is based in a busy city centre?

A simple, stress-free commute can allow students to focus on their studies rather than travel logistics. With the rising cost of living, many students choose to remain at home while studying. Attending a university within commuting distance can significantly reduce accommodation costs.

At The University of Law, all campuses are in city centres, so they are easily accessible by public transport and close to legal, business, and professional communities. The University's CampuSwitch option also gives students the flexibility to move between campuses if their circumstances change, allowing them to experience life in a different city.

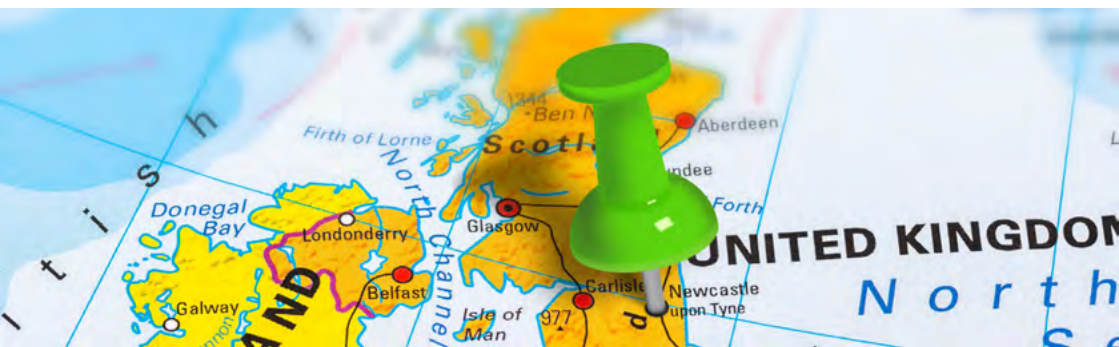
The location of a university can enrich a student's learning experience by placing them closer to environments where their subject comes to life. Aspiring lawyers will benefit

from studying near law firms and courts, while healthcare students will value proximity to hospital settings. History students will gain valuable insights from nearby museums and heritage sites. These local resources complement classroom teaching and help students connect their studies with the real world.

Open days provide the perfect opportunity for students to explore more than just the university buildings. They should spend time in the surrounding area to consider if it feels like somewhere they could live and study. Looking at local amenities is just as important as visiting lecture theatres and accommodation. A city's social scene, clubs, cafés, sports facilities, and community will contribute to a positive student experience, helping students build friendships, maintain their wellbeing, and feel at home.

Location also plays an important role in employability. Universities within major business districts often have strong relationships with local employers. This creates opportunities for work experience, internships, networking events, and graduate employment. This gives students valuable practical experience alongside their studies and helps them build professional networks before they graduate. At The University of Law, we have strong local relationships which allow us to support students in gaining local work experience, including pro bono opportunities for our Law students.

Your students should consider transport, affordability, academic resources, employment opportunities, social life, wellbeing, and lifestyle alongside course content. In doing so, they are more likely to choose a university that supports both their personal and professional ambitions. Sometimes, where a student studies is just as important as what they study.



The benefits of studying in Scotland

By Anna Johnston, Interim UK Recruitment & Access Manager at the University of Aberdeen

Scotland's higher education sector is one of the best in the world. We are home to 19 higher education institutions, 3 of which are in the world Top 200 according to the Times Higher World Rankings 2025. Scotland's universities are proud to welcome students from across the UK and internationally. Choosing where to study is a significant decision. Here are some reasons why a Scottish university might be the right choice for your students.

World-class education

Scotland is home to some of the oldest universities in the world. University of St Andrews was founded in 1413, University of Glasgow in 1451, and the University of Aberdeen in 1495. Alongside ancient universities, Scotland boasts many modern and specialist institutions in arts, creative industries, and the natural economy. Scottish universities rank consistently high in the National Student Survey, particularly in relation to teaching and academic support.

Flexible degree structure

The four-year undergraduate degree provides increased flexibility and depth for students. Typically, the first two years allow students to sample a wider range of subjects, before narrowing down their specialism for the final years.

Studying across disciplines can enrich your perspectives. Your students might even graduate with a degree in a completely new subject!

Many Scottish universities offer an option to start in second year if students perform strongly in their A-levels or Advanced Higher. This allows your students to obtain an honours degree in three years.

Graduate prospects

Many Scottish universities offer placements and internship opportunities integrated in their degree programmes, giving students valuable real-world experience. The four-year degree can allow space for increased flexibility or dual qualification. For example, the LLB Law with English Law offered at University of Aberdeen and the University of Dundee gives students the choice of pursuing professional legal training in any part of the UK.

The latest data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) on Destinations of Leavers show that 73% of Scottish university graduates are in graduate-level jobs 6 months after graduation, which is 4% higher than their peers in the rest of the UK.

Vibrant student life

University life is more than attending lectures. Your students should consider social aspects too. Many Scottish universities dedicate Wednesday afternoons to extracurricular activities or sports. All under 22s in Scotland get free bus travel, and Scotland's major towns and cities are well-connected by public transport. Vibrant cities, historic sites, beautiful countryside, mountains, beaches... Scotland offers something for everyone.



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The benefits of studying in Wales

By Selena Lockett, Student Recruitment Officer at Swansea University

Shwmae, croeso, iechyd da... these are some of the many greetings we extend to your students considering studying at a Welsh university. Wales, famously known as the 'dancing lady' on the UK map, is a culmination of warmth, accessibility, and abundant opportunities. This article explores why choosing to study in Wales can benefit your students and enrich their university experience.

World renowned institutions

There are eight universities across Wales, all of which are globally ranked and contribute to world-leading research. The subject offerings across these institutions are broad and plentiful, with many providing unique courses such as Egyptology or even stained glass craftsmanship. Welsh universities are there to help pave the way to a bright future.

Welsh heritage and culture

The Welsh are notoriously friendly people in a small but mighty country. We welcome students from all over the world as one of their own. Studying in Wales provides the opportunity for a student to immerse themselves in Welsh culture, whether it be through song, history, sport or food!

Welsh universities also offer opportunities for students to learn Welsh, providing free language courses or resources for all proficiency levels. This broadens horizons in terms of employability and networking, whilst allowing them to join a proud community of bilingualism.

Affordability

Wales is one of the most affordable places to live as a student. Accommodation, socialising, and everyday expenses are significantly cheaper than many other parts of the UK. We also have excellent transport links, cycle paths, and accessible walking routes to help students get from A to B on time and within budget.

Best of both worlds

Known for its natural beauty, no matter where you are in Wales, you are never far from a picturesque lake, mountain, or coastline. There are opportunities to bike, hike, swim, or sail in exploration of the bountiful country. There are also ever-developing cosmopolitan areas with endless activities for entertainment: music events, delicious restaurants, or simply shopping. Swansea is a fantastic example of how city life and coastal living come together: a lively hub of nightlife and entertainment sitting adjacent to the seafront.

Financial perks

Many Welsh universities offer scholarships and bursaries for home and international students, whether it be for academic excellence, studying through the medium of Welsh, or studying a specific subject. The NHS Wales Bursary fully funds tuition (and provides maintenance grants) to students on certain healthcare courses, no matter where in the UK or the Republic of Ireland they are from. Students in Wales can also access the free NHS prescriptions scheme which is available to all who reside in Wales.

Cymru am byth!



The benefits of studying in Northern Ireland

By Sarah Joyce, Research Administrator at Queen's University Belfast

Studying in Northern Ireland provided an opportunity for me to experience the best of city living, home life, and picturesque nature spots. Whether your students are studying in Derry/Londonderry, Jordanstown, Belfast, Coleraine or elsewhere, they won't be far from all the amenities a student could need: shops, bars, coffee shops, clubs, social groups, nature excursions, coastlines, and libraries.

Having studied in England previously, I have since developed an appreciation for all that Northern Ireland has to offer as a student and beyond. Each of the universities and colleges have brilliant reputations for student experience, from high teaching standards to students' unions.

Living in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is an affordable place to live, with a range of housing and living options including student halls and private renting in student areas. If you're from Northern Ireland, you can even commute from your own home.

Getting around the cities and rural areas is easily managed, with regular transport routes to the main towns, cities, and coastal areas. There are train stops close to local beaches, so you can easily spend a day relaxing by the water, either on your own or by joining a student social group.

Socialising in Northern Ireland

Social groups are a fun way to explore Northern Ireland. People often organise car-shares to visit the Mourne or Sperrins for a hike, plus the groups will share knowledge on the best local bars, restaurants, or study spots. There are countless opportunities to stay active and enjoy the natural environment throughout the year. This includes hiking, cycling, paddle boarding, coastal walks, and local park runs.

Music and arts are a highlight. You could spend hours in a free museum, musing art installations in local parks, or attending free gigs in local bars. There are plenty of inexpensive options, from the trad music scene to DJ sets. In summer, the festival scene brings international artists to the city parks for an intimate experience. Meanwhile, the nightlife is a welcoming social scene with plenty of student club nights and LGBTQIA+ bars where students can shake off the stresses of their studies.

Upskilling in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is home to a wide range of volunteer organisations, cultural groups, charities, social enterprises, and community initiatives. You might be passionate about sustainability, the arts, entrepreneurship, or social action. Either way, you'll find opportunities to develop new interests, build valuable experiences, and connect with people who share your passions. These experiences foster transferable skills which are invaluable when students become graduates.

Northern Ireland has something for every student, from its outstanding education to its vibrant arts and cultural scene, whilst providing a balance between city life and beautiful natural landscapes. By studying in Northern Ireland, your students will develop their academic skills alongside their sense of self.



The benefits and challenges of studying in London

By Stephanie Willmott, Senior UK Student Recruitment and Outreach Officer at the University of Portsmouth London

London is recognised as one of the most rewarding student destinations for higher education. Studying in London can provide your students with academic achievement, strong employability connections, and a diverse and vibrant community. They will also discover a wide variety of courses taught at a vast range of universities. But there are challenges too. This article highlights the positives and potential barriers to assist your students who are considering higher education in London.

Social life

The capital provides students with a vibrant social life, with activities and social events to suit a range of hobbies, motivations, and interests. As a result, there is a wealth of opportunities to meet new people, make friends, and learn about different cultures and countries. Students will soon build a community in the city and find a sense of belonging.

Career opportunities

London is home to a wide range of industries, which offers an array of opportunities for university students and graduates. Universities provide students with strong professional networks during their time at university. This can help them find work with leading companies in the form of placements and internships, either within their course or during their free time.

Cost of living

Beyond the numerous benefits, there are also a few challenges. London can feel expensive due to its higher living costs, so your students should focus on this area in their research. Many university providers offer financial support in the form of scholarships and bursaries which are advertised on university websites. Also, cultural museums, galleries, and attractions are often free of charge.

Daunting size

Some students may feel daunted by the size and scale of London. They will need to look after their physical and mental wellbeing to avoid isolation. To ease concerns, they should attend open days. These events are a useful and tangible way to visit their universities of interest and see if London is right for them. They can ask questions to settle any doubts about living in the capital.

Capital idea

London's fast-paced landscape offers incredible opportunities for students who undertake a degree in its world-renowned universities. To succeed, your students will need to build strong time management skills, financial planning practices, and self-care strategies. In doing so, they will achieve the most value out of studying and living in the capital!



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The benefits and challenges of commuting to university

By Sarah Jenkins, Kendra Argile, and Clair Fellows, Recruitment, Communications and Marketing at Sheffield Hallam University

A growing number of students choose to experience university while living at home. According to UCAS end-of-cycle data for 2025, a record high of 289,200 UK 18-year-olds accepted a place in higher education. Of these, almost 90,000 planned to live at home while studying, meaning nearly a third (31%) of accepted applicants now intend to commute to university, compared with just over a fifth (22%) a decade ago.

The trend is particularly pronounced among students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (IMD Quintile 1), with more than half (52%) planning to live at home while they study. This marks a significant shift from the traditional image of university life, where students move away from home.

Reasons for commuting

The rising cost of living and tuition fees are increasingly an influence on how and where students study. Equally, there are many personal factors that contribute to the decision to live at home whilst studying. These might include caring responsibilities, cultural expectations to remain at home, environmental or access needs, and local work or family responsibilities.

Commuter students aren't always local to their university of choice either. Some may travel up to 2-3 hours to access their preferred course, making travel availability and affordability key considerations.

Support for commuting

The commuter lifestyle shouldn't be seen as a 'fall back' option. More universities are recognising this change in behaviour. They support students with dedicated study spaces, lockers, social hubs, travel bursaries/discounts, and peer-support schemes to enable students to 'find their tribe' beyond the classroom.

Moreover, students who live at home are celebrated as highly capable and responsible. In managing study, travel, paid work, and possibly caring responsibilities, they develop valuable capabilities such as resilience, time management, and adaptability.

If your students are considering living at home, encourage them to explore universities that recognise this choice. They could look for social media content focusing on the commuter student experience. Also, commuter students can check the advice and information on the university's website to help them visualise their student life.

Encourage your students to consider...

Travel logistics

- The cost of the journey
- Any available discounts
- The length of the journey
- The frequency of transport
- Can they get to university for a 9am lecture?
- Can they get home if staying late to study or socialise?
- Parking spaces.

Campus days

- What could they do between classes?
- What could they eat – bringing vs buying?
- What information is available for commuters?

Socialising

- Joining a student society
- Attending events in Freshers' Week
- Inviting their course mates for coffee.



My advice for teachers

**By Rosie Glover,
Law graduate,
Durham University**



1. Which teacher or adviser supported you?

At my school, we didn't have careers advisers. I was applying to Oxbridge at the time, so I had help from a teacher with experience in Oxbridge applications (who went to Cambridge himself). He supported me with my personal statement and writing my reference. Students who weren't applying for Oxbridge had support from their EPQ course teachers.

2. How did they support you?

I had initial meetings to discuss where I wanted to apply and what I wanted to study. We also discussed any potential preparation I would need for admission tests. From here, I could begin writing my personal statement and study for the admissions test. I received regular feedback by emailing my personal statement to my teacher, who found ways to make it more concise to fit within the character limit!

My teacher offered amazing advice about the UCAS process and provided a shoulder to cry on when it got super stressful running up to the deadline! An admissions officer from Oxford visited my school to deliver a 1-hour session on what they look for in an application. They also ran through a general mock interview for all subjects.

3. What advice will you never forget?

George Orwell's writing rules were a key piece of advice which have stuck with me when writing my law essays at university. The rules help you cut down your word and character count significantly. I was over 10,000 characters outside the limit initially. These rules got me back within the limit!

- Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

4. What advice would you give to teachers?

Be patient and not pushy regarding what your students wish to study or where they hope to apply. I know some of my friends were cornered by teachers to attend certain universities which they really didn't like. Some of these friends ended up dropping out. You should be supportive regardless of their decisions!

Also, do your own research behind the scenes on what admission tests are available. Equally, seek opportunities for university outreach programmes or taster days. These can give your students vital advice and 121 support to maximise their chances. This is especially important for students who will be first-gen students (page 14).



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The different types of university events

By Jack Brown, Student Recruitment Officer at Glasgow Caledonian University

Deciding which university to attend is one of the biggest choices a student will make before leaving school. It's not just about the course. It's about the campus, the location, and whether it feels like the right fit for the next three or more years. But how can your students find out more about a university, the course they're interested in, and what student life is really like?

Fortunately, universities offer a variety of events throughout the year to help answer these questions. These include open days, offer-holder days, virtual information sessions, and subject taster workshops. Here's a breakdown of what each event involves.

Open days

Open days allow prospective students – along with their parents and carers – to visit the campus and get a feel for the university environment. Attendees can tour the teaching and social spaces, see accommodation, and explore the wider campus. It's also a great opportunity to speak with current students and meet academic staff. Many courses will offer sample lectures or course overviews. Some universities run open days several times a year, whilst others may only offer a few. Some universities will offer virtual alternatives to on-campus open days. Dates can be found on university websites, [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com), or through the UCAS website.

Offer-holder days

Offer-holder days - also known as applicant days or discovery days - are for students who have already applied and received an offer from

a university. These events are more focused than general open days. They give applicants another opportunity to explore the course before making a final decision. Applicants will attend course-specific taster activities, meet staff and current students, find out more on student life, and revisit the campus and facilities.

Virtual information sessions

Not everyone can easily travel to university events, especially those applying to institutions far from home. To help, universities run virtual sessions that cover a range of topics. These might include a general overview of the university, student life, the UCAS application process, how to write a personal statement, subject selection advice, or information on Clearing. These sessions are often run by staff or current students. They offer a convenient way to access important information from home.

Subject taster workshops

These events offer an in-depth look at a specific subject area, often through workshops or sample lectures. They are designed to give prospective students a better understanding of the content and teaching style of a degree. Subject tasters may take place online or on campus, often making use of specialist equipment or facilities to bring the subject to life. These events can be found on [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com) and on university websites, along with details on how to book.

Remember...

Engaging with these university-hosted events throughout the year will allow your students to gather more information than simply reading a prospectus or a webpage. They will get a better understanding of a university and the culture, which will help them make the best possible decision on which university to attend.





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The benefits of attending a university event

By Claire Parkinson, Schools and Colleges Liaison Manager at Royal Holloway, University of London

Organising a trip to a university is not an easy feat: booking the coaches, getting the permission slips in, finding volunteers to support... But if you can find the time (and patience!) to take the reins, attending a university event will have a hugely positive impact on your school, your own career, and your students.

Your school

Bringing students to a university event is a strong addition to your careers provision. A trip to a university campus hits Gatsby Benchmark 7: encounters with further and higher education. The opportunities for students to interact with undergraduates and university staff will satisfy the criteria to provide two-way interaction. If it becomes an annual trip, you're also hitting Gatsby Benchmark 1: a stable careers programme. When Ofsted visit, they love to see clear evidence of a strategic careers plan. Attending a university event is a crucial part of that.

Your career

Organising a trip is a useful tool for your own professional development too. A trip is a complicated project that demonstrates many of the skills that senior leadership teams value when promoting staff to head or SLT

roles. Securing funding and managing trip finances will give you financial management experience. Conducting the risk assessments and ensuring the wellbeing of students during the visit develops your safeguarding skills.

During the trip, you'll assign roles and delegate to other teachers, giving you valuable experience in line management. And you'll gain stakeholder management expertise from talking to the university about your visit. These skills will help you stand out in interviews. As such, a university trip could help you get to the next step of your career.

Your students

Most importantly, visiting a university can be pivotal to a young person facing the overwhelming decision of their next steps. Confronting post-18 options is challenging for students, particularly those who might be first generation students navigating the world of higher education for the first time. Exploring a university environment can open their eyes to the possibility of studying at degree level.

Additionally, many students struggle to attend university open days because they work weekends, don't have a parent or carer to take them, or cannot afford the cost of travel. Visiting a university during the school day removes these barriers and ensures all students get the chance to explore higher education.

Organising a school trip is a big ask. But if you give it your all, you will benefit your school, yourself, and your students. And you'll have fun doing it!



The benefits of attending a university teacher conference

By Ed Fisher, School and College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter

Students often turn to their teachers and careers advisers when thinking about their next steps after school or college. However, higher education is constantly evolving, so keeping up to date with the latest developments can be challenging.

Thankfully, university teacher conferences offer a valuable opportunity to hear directly from universities, connect with colleagues, and gather insights to support your students with their decision-making.

Stay informed

Admissions policies, support services, funding arrangements, and courses can change each year. Attending a teacher conference allows you to hear about these changes from university staff, admissions teams, academics, and student support specialists. You could discover:

- Updates to admissions requirements
- Contextual admissions and widening participation initiatives
- Student finance and support services
- New and developing courses
- Current trends across the higher education sector.

Build your confidence

Students often have questions about university applications, student life, course choices, and future career opportunities. Conferences can help build your confidence in discussing these topics and answering their questions.

By hearing directly from universities and sector experts, you'll gain a clearer understanding of what students can expect and the challenges they may face. This knowledge can make a real difference when supporting students at key stages of their journey.

Learn from other educators

You will meet colleagues from schools and colleges facing many of the same opportunities and challenges as you. Talking to other professionals can provide:

- Fresh ideas and new approaches
- Examples of successful initiatives
- Opportunities for collaboration
- An expanded professional network.

Explore useful resources

Many conferences introduce new resources to support your work with students. These new tools and programmes might include:

- Classroom resources
- Subject-specific guidance
- Outreach and enrichment opportunities
- Information for parents and carers
- Application and skills development materials.

Understand the student experience

Hearing directly from current students or recent graduates is a highlight of teacher conferences. They provide a valuable perspective on university life, transitioning to higher education, and balancing study, finances, and personal development. These are especially valuable insights when supporting first-in-family students.

Invest in your development

Attending a conference is also an opportunity to step back from day-to-day responsibilities and focus on your own learning. You might discover a new initiative, make a useful contact, or gain a fresh perspective on student progression. The knowledge and connections you build can support you and your students long afterwards.

A valuable opportunity

Attending a university teacher conference is a worthwhile investment for you and your institution. They provide a dedicated space to learn, connect, and exchange ideas. As a result, you will stay informed about sector developments, build new professional relationships, and enhance the guidance you give students.

Supporting your CPD by attending open days

By Sophia Basi, Senior Student Recruitment Officer at Southampton Solent University

As a teacher or adviser, you play a pivotal role in helping young people make an informed choice about their future. If they are considering higher education, you will need a good understanding of universities yourself so you can guide your students effectively. Happily, there is a very simple way to build your own knowledge about the university experience: attend an open day.

Booking your place

University open days are held throughout the year. They are advertised widely on university websites, social media channels, and platforms like UniTasterDays.com. At the open day, you can attend a variety of sessions to support your CPD about higher education, such as:

- Subject talks
- Campus tours
- Taster activities
- Accommodation tours
- Teaching facilities tours.

Open day advice

Arrive early so you have time to see everything the university can offer your students. Read the programme beforehand, then prepare your own schedule of priorities. Attend the welcome talk to gain valuable information about the university's unique selling points. These top-level takeaways will help you distinguish between universities when your students ask for your professional advice and guidance.

There are also several general talks to support your CPD: admissions, apprenticeships, careers, accommodation, the students' union, and sports. Your students are likely to have questions about these areas. Equally, identify which subjects you know the least about, or would like to explore further, by attending those subject talks and taster sessions. You'll receive the full student experience!

Supporting your CPD

There are many opportunities to support your CPD by attending an open day, many of which will help you achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks. For instance, you will...

- Observe how courses are delivered at Level 4. You'll see which skills your students will need prior to starting at university, which you could begin to introduce into your lessons.
- Gain knowledge of the qualifications and pathways available to Level 3 students, including less traditional options: apprenticeships, HNDs, flexible learning.
- Gather insights from university students about the UCAS application process, personal statements, and student finance, which you can share with your own students and their parents.
- Build your awareness of commercial partnerships linked to each course, the accreditation bodies that validate them, and labour market expectations of graduates.
- Create stronger links with academics and their recruitment teams. They may support your Level 3 curriculum by hosting additional events for your students off campus or in your school.
- Network with other post-16 teachers and advisers to exchange your new-found CPD insights and possibly collaborate on future visits.

Teacher conferences

Finally, in addition to open days, you may wish to attend the annual teachers and advisers conference at your local university. This is another strong CPD opportunity to learn about higher education, including new courses, facilities, and recruitment strategies in your region.



How to prepare for a university fair

By George Johnson, Undergraduate Student Recruitment and Access Officer at Keele University

University fairs are a critical part of a student's university planning. Whether it's a large exhibition or your school's own event, students should value this opportunity to explore different courses and university experiences. However, these events can be overwhelming, leaving students unsure where to start. As university recruitment staff, we see hundreds of students at these events, yet only a small proportion engage in a way that is truly effective for their research. This article offers suggestions to help your students capitalise on this opportunity and make a strong start to their research.

Researching exhibitors

Your students should research their university options beforehand. If available, provide students with the exhibitor list, so they can research exhibitors in detail. Students can browse university websites and league tables for more information on their courses of interest. Encourage students to search for entry requirements and academic modules, so they can ask more in-depth questions on the day.

Preparing questions

Students often ask for a general overview of the university. While this can be useful, we often discuss the institution in such a broad way that students don't draw any meaningful information from our conversation.

The students who come prepared with questions will always leave with a much clearer idea of whether our university is suitable for them. As a teacher, providing students with a list of useful questions can kickstart their preparation.

Comparing answers

These events are a perfect opportunity for students to compare different universities. A standard list of questions to ask all universities can enable students to directly compare answers. They can organise the answers into a table to provide a visual comparison.

Of course, not all universities are the same, and students will likely have questions that are specific to one place. As such, a mix of standard and specific questions gives students the best chance of a satisfying and well-informed day.

Developing teachers

Major exhibitions aren't just for students! Teachers can benefit from these events by speaking to university staff. You could seek a new university partner to deliver sessions in your school or college. Equally, you could collect a range of prospectuses and mini-guides to add to your collection.

Exhibitors are equally keen to meet teachers, so ask as many questions as you like. If you're more informed about each university, then you'll become a reliable source for students and able to signpost them to the university that suits them best.



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Top questions to ask at a university fair

By Helena Hampson, Senior Marketing and Recruitment Officer at the University of Greater Manchester

For some students, a university fair may be the first interaction they have with a higher education provider. Knowing how to approach the conversation in advance will put some of the uncertainty at bay, especially if they are still making their mind up about university.

A higher education or careers fair is an ideal place to introduce the world of university to students. It's usually under one roof at their school or college, where they hopefully feel comfortable, and have supportive peers and tutors around them.

Understandably, speaking to each university in this limited time can add pressure. To help, this article offers five fundamental questions your students could ask to inform their further research.

1. Does your university offer the course I want to study?

Not all students know which course they want to study. At university, subject areas can be more specific than the broader topics taught in school. However, university staff will guide the conversation with students. For instance, your students could ask, "Do you offer courses in Arts-related fields?" and we'll explore their interests further.

2. What are your entry requirements like?

Entry requirements vary from institution to institution: GCSEs, UCAS points, subjects studied at Level 3. Your students might not know their predicted grades at this stage, but they should gain an early idea of what each university requires to help their decision-making.

3. How are your courses taught and assessed?

Unlike Level 2 and Level 3, each university course has its own curriculum and approach to exams, assessments, and contact time. Some of your students may prefer assessment-led subjects, whilst others prioritise smaller class sizes. Encourage your students to dig deeper into the potential differences when speaking to representatives at fairs.

4. When are your open days?

Speaking to a university is just the beginning. Your students should visit them in person to get a real feel for life at that university. As such, gathering open day dates is an important part of a higher education fair.

5. Why should I choose you?

Now it's time to put the provider to work! This will help your students learn the USPs of each university and what makes them stand out from the crowd. This could be their student life, student support services, accommodation, the courses, and much more.



How to prepare for a university open day

By George Kenyon, Student Recruitment Manager at The University of Law

Open days may seem daunting at first. With lots of information on offer, your students may be unsure how to prepare for an open day. **Please share this article with your students to help them get the most out of the event.**

Research the institution

Research the university before attending the open day. Visit their website and explore their course pages. Check their entry requirements to see if they are a realistic option for you. Look at study modules too.

Some university websites also include information on accommodation, employability, and student life. This will give you a clear understanding of what the university has to offer and manage your expectations for the open day.

Plan your day

Forward planning is essential: plan your route, choose your transport, and consider an overnight stay. By thinking ahead, you can better manage your schedule to maximise your day. List the activities you would like to complete during the day, such as your talks of interest.

Course talks may be essential, but you could also attend a student finance talk and employability talk. A campus and accommodation tour may also be valuable. Set aside some time to explore the local area or city too.

List your questions

Make a list of questions you would like to ask. The open day is the perfect opportunity to get answers and clarification. You may like to ask a lecturer about the course, ask the admissions team about what they look for in an applicant, or ask a current student about the student social experience.

By thinking about your questions beforehand, you can tailor conversations to your interests.

Bring the essentials

Bring a notebook with you. This is where you can keep a list of your questions and write down useful information and answers. Take a pen for this purpose (although most universities will provide these at the open day).

Wear comfy footwear and suitable clothing, such as a raincoat, because there is often lots of walking. Also, remember to bring water and refreshments with you, especially if you are travelling quite far to the university.

We hope these suggestions help you get the most out of your university visits. Enjoy the open days!



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Making the most of a university open day

By Jordan Richardson, UK Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Surrey

For many students, a university open day is when the idea of higher education begins to take shape. The prospectus they've flicked through, the course they've researched, and the campus they've seen online suddenly come to life. It's no longer just about choosing a university. It's about imagining where they might spend the next few years of their life.

As teachers and careers advisers, you can help students make the most of these visits. A little preparation can make a huge difference to their confidence and the decisions they make afterwards.

Start with the right event

Not every university visit needs to be a large-scale open day. Many institutions offer a range of events throughout the year, each providing students with a different way to experience university life and explore their options. Campus tours and subject taster days, for example, can provide a more focused experience, helping students gain a deeper understanding of the university and their chosen subject. Your students can identify suitable events by using [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com) and build a shortlist.

Check for travel support

The cost of visiting universities can quickly add up, particularly for families travelling longer distances. Many universities now offer travel bursaries, discounted rail fares, free parking, or complimentary refreshments to help make events more accessible for students. The [UniTasterDays](https://www.unitasterdays.com) event incentives platform makes it easy to compare incentives offered by universities across the UK.

Ask the questions that matter

It's natural to be impressed by modern facilities and attractive campuses, but the course itself should remain the priority. Encourage your students to ask about teaching styles, assessment methods, placement opportunities, contact hours, and career outcomes.

Current students can provide valuable insights. Ask what surprised them most, what they enjoy about their course, and what advice they would give to new applicants. This often leads to the most honest and memorable conversations.

Advise your students to trust their first impressions. Do they feel comfortable on campus? Can they imagine themselves studying there? Does the environment feel supportive and welcoming?

These personal impressions are just as important as statistics when comparing courses. A university might look perfect on paper, but visiting in person helps students discover where they genuinely feel they belong.

Reflect afterwards

After the event, your students should capture their thoughts while everything is still fresh. Comparing notes after visiting several universities can make it much easier to remember what stood out and which institution felt like the best fit.

An open day isn't about finding the university with the newest accommodation, the biggest gym, or the best free tote bag. It's about helping students discover where they'll thrive academically, personally, and professionally.

With thoughtful preparation, meaningful conversations, and time to reflect afterwards, every visit becomes more than a campus tour. It gives students the chance to ask questions, challenge their expectations, and make an informed choice about their next steps.

“Advise your students to trust their first impressions. Do they feel comfortable on campus? Can they imagine themselves studying there? ,,

What to do immediately after an open day

By Jim Calcutt, Head of UK Student Recruitment at the University of Winchester

Open days are an integral part of the student decision-making process, with universities spending thousands of pounds each year to attract students to their campuses. As a result, open days are a fundamental rite of passage for all students considering their next steps.

However, beyond the glitz, glamour, and free ice cream, what should your students do immediately after attending an open day to make the most of the experience?

Make notes

Open days are busy, with limited time to see as much as possible. Students are forgiven for not jotting down every detail, question, or thought they have on the day. However, they should record their thoughts and opinions as they are travelling home to help digest the event. This doesn't need to be a formal written report, but it does need to reflect the students' thoughts, feelings, and prompts for further research.

A scoring system can help compare universities on key components, such as the gut feeling of the place or the quality of the academic facilities. Likewise, a 'brain dump' of everything they remember from the day will aid this process, especially the most positive or negative pieces of information.

Reflect on findings

Your students should reflect on the key points from the visit and what they mean to them personally. People process information differently. Some might prefer to reflect directly after an event, whereas others require a bit more time. Either way, your students should ask themselves:

- What was my initial impression of the university?
- What were the highlights and lowlights of the event?
- Can I see myself there?

Speak with supporters

Most of your students will attend an open day with a guest. This could be yourself as their teacher or adviser, or their whole family, including the dog! Other opinions shouldn't be the deciding factor, but it's beneficial to have multiple eyes and ears at the event.

As a supporter, remember to keep an open mind. Set aside any preconceived ideas to avoid clouding a student's judgement. Your role is to look for additional information, give a balanced opinion, and highlight areas that may otherwise be dismissed or ignored. You are gold dust at these events.

Why stop there?

Your students should book further open days, rather than stop after one. To help with costs, they can visit the UniTasterDays event incentive platform to find financial support for attending these events.

Open days are only helpful with due consideration and reflection, either during or after the event. By following the above guidance, your students will gain much more from these events than just a free tote bag and a cup of coffee!





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The benefits of attending a summer school

By Shay Jordan, Outreach Officer at the University of East Anglia

Summer schools are an opportunity for your students to spend time on a university campus to develop their knowledge and understanding of higher education. Research shows that participation in summer schools leads to higher attainment and progression to university. This article looks at two types of summer school and how each can benefit your students.

Subject summer schools

Many universities run summer schools centred around a specific subject. These events aim to spark interests and provide an insight into studying that subject at a higher level. Students leave with greater confidence and excitement about their educational journey. They may also develop a deeper understanding of how the learning on their current course applies beyond the classroom.

For example, a pharmacy or medicine summer school may allow participants to spend time in GP surgeries or other medical settings. A creative writing summer school might help participants develop their portfolios, guided by experienced writers. An engineering summer school might allow participants to use industry-standard equipment, and work collaboratively to develop practical solutions to real-world problems.

Non-subject summer schools

Several universities run summer schools which aren't subject-specific. These allow participants to develop a sense of place and belonging, making higher education feel more familiar, accessible, and achievable. They also allow students to develop the skills for success in education.

These events could involve sessions exploring different aspects of student life, including students' union activities, representation, societies, wellbeing, course choices, study abroad opportunities, and placements. These summer schools often task students with a project throughout the event. This allows them to develop essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Someone like me

Students often leave summer schools with a stronger sense that university is for "someone like me" and a greater understanding of how their skills and behaviours will support their transition into higher education.

There are hundreds of summer schools offered by institutions across the UK and beyond. Many are aimed at Year 12 students, but there are also opportunities for Key Stages 3 and 4, where early interventions can have a lasting impact. You can search for summer schools on [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com).

As with many university outreach programmes, the greatest benefits are found in the feelings they evoke. Your students will gain confidence from trying something new, friendships with other participants, first-hand insight shared by student ambassadors, and the opportunity to spend time in a university environment.

Ultimately, a successful summer school does more than inform students about university. It helps them begin to imagine themselves there. It is that shift in confidence, aspiration, and self-belief that often proves to be the most enduring benefit of all.



The benefits of attending a campus tour afternoon

By Madeeha Aminuddin, Taster Course and Outreach Engagement Officer at the University of London

Choosing a university is one of the biggest decisions your students will make. A campus tour afternoon gives them the opportunity to explore the university environment, meet staff and students, and decide whether it feels like the right place for them.

Experience the campus

Photographs and virtual tours can only show so much. Visiting in person allows your students to get a genuine feel for the campus, facilities, and atmosphere. Many students find that visiting a campus helps them picture themselves there in a way that online information cannot.

Campus tours often include visits to lecture theatres, libraries, laboratories, study areas, and specialist facilities. This can help your students understand whether the university has the resources they need to succeed. They may also discover facilities that aren't heavily featured in prospectuses, such as wellbeing centres, social spaces, or sports facilities.

Meet staff and students

A campus tour afternoon provides valuable opportunities to speak directly with university staff and students. They can offer insights into course content, support services, and extracurricular opportunities. Current students can provide perspectives on what it's really like to study and live at the university.

Ask questions

Your students should prepare questions about topics that are important to them, such as:

- Course structure and assessment methods
- Accommodation options
- Student support services
- Placement and work experience
- Commuting and transport links
- Societies, clubs, campus life.

Discover the local area

University life extends beyond the campus itself. During a tour afternoon, your students can explore the surrounding town or city, visit local shops and cafés, and get a sense of the community. This is particularly important if your students are moving away from home to an unfamiliar area.

Understand support

Campus tours are an excellent opportunity to learn about the support available for different student needs. For instance, your students can find out what assistance is available for international students, commuters, first-generation students, or students with a disability. Similarly, if your students have specific access needs, they should contact the university so arrangements can be made for their visit.

Bring someone

Many students attend with a parent, carer, family member, or friend. They might notice different things, think of additional questions to ask, or help your students reflect on the experience afterwards.

Compare universities

Campus tours can highlight the differences between institutions. Factors such as campus size, atmosphere, facilities, and location become clearer when seen in person. Your students can discuss campus tour opportunities by searching on [UniTasterDays.com](https://universityoflondon.org.uk/tasterdays).



The benefits of visiting a university when an event isn't happening

By Lucy Parkinson, Student Recruitment Assistant at the University of Hull

Open days are an exciting opportunity, but they're also carefully designed so your students see the university at its very best. Equally, your students may have work, family, and other commitments which prevent them from attending an organised event. As such, they may wish to visit outside of an organised event to decide which university is right for them.

Experience real campus life

If they visit during term time, they'll experience the university on a normal teaching day and get a sense of everyday student life. They'll see how busy study spaces are, where students spend time between lectures, and what the atmosphere feels like on a typical day.

Explore the neighbourhood

They'll have the opportunity to explore the surrounding area and get a realistic idea of the housing, cafés, shopping, amenities, and pace of life around the university.

Tour at their own pace

Without the structure of an open day, students can focus on what matters most to them. They might choose to visit academic departments, check the distance between lecture buildings, or simply get a feel for the scale and layout of the campus.

Test their commute

Travelling to campus on a normal day will provide an accurate idea of journey times and local transport links. Some places like the University of Hull have short stay accommodation offers too. This gives commuter students the freedom to dip in and out of campus life as and when they need it.

Advice for your students

- **Ask about campus tours** - many universities, including Hull, offer quiet guided campus tours or self-guided maps. Contact the admissions or events team for information.
- **Check department availability** - advise your students to make contact before they visit. They might be able to meet academic staff if they make an appointment.
- **Use the opportunity** - your students should walk around campus, spend time in the students' union and cafés, and get an authentic feel for everyday university life.
- **Take a virtual tour** – if they can't visit, your students can try virtual open days and online tours. These will offer insights into accommodation, teaching facilities, and campus grounds.

Part of the picture

Open days remain one of the best ways for students to explore a university, but they're only part of the picture. Other planned visits, such as bespoke taster days and enhanced campus visits, can showcase the university. However, if your students can't attend a planned event, encourage them to visit on a normal day following the advice in this article. A visit combined with online resources will help them make the right decision about their future.





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Accessing university events on a budget

By Sarah White, Regional Student Recruitment Manager at the University of Gloucestershire

University events like open days, offer holder days, exhibitions, subject tasters, and residential are a valuable way to explore options and get a real feel for student life. Best of all, there are plenty of ways to take part without breaking the bank. Here are some simple, budget-friendly tips to help your students make the most of every opportunity.

Say yes to school-organised trips

Encourage your students to sign up for any university visits organised through your school or college. These trips often include subject tasters and a chance to look around campus, many at little to no cost. Many universities help cover coach travel too, so it's an easy and affordable way to visit.

The University of Gloucestershire host students on campus for a wide variety of events: crime scene taster days, backstage performing arts experiences, immersive health tasters in our wards, and mock trials in our moot court. Why not take advantage of these to help bring your curriculum to life?

If your school is hosting a careers fair or higher education event, encourage your students to attend. These events are also a convenient way for you to network with universities and learn more about the free opportunities they have available.

Explore your local options

Visiting a nearby university can save time and money. Even if your students are planning to move away, exploring local campuses offers a

helpful comparison and could open up options they hadn't considered. With the rising cost of living, more students are choosing to stay closer to home, and they might be surprised by what their local university has to offer.

Lift share, travel smart

Sharing lifts is an effective way to keep costs down, regardless of whether parents are doing the driving or your students are heading off with friends. Why not introduce a car share board in your school or college common room? It's a simple way to help your students spread the cost and make the journey more fun.

Some universities offer travel bursaries for open days and offer holder days. You can find these gathered in a single place on the [UniTasterDays event incentive platform](#). Tell your students to check each university website, hold onto any receipts, and ask about support. Many universities have funding set aside to help students who might otherwise miss out.

Save on snacks

Open days can be long, so it's important to stay fuelled. Your students should check ahead to see if the university offers free refreshments or lunch on the day. If not, campus cafés and the students' union are usually great spots for affordable food. Student ambassadors will be happy to point you to their favourite budget-friendly places. Your students could even bring their own food. It saves money, avoids queues, and gives you more time to explore.

Try a virtual visit

Nothing beats being there in person, but online experiences are better than ever. Many universities offer virtual tours, online open days, and real student stories through social media. Signing up to mailing lists is a good way to stay in the loop and access everything from video walk-throughs to subject Q&As.

“Sharing lifts is an effective way to keep costs down, regardless of whether parents are doing the driving or your students are heading off with friends. ”

Advice for attending an online university event

By Lois King, Marketing Officer at the University of Brighton

Encouraging your students to explore their options after school or college is brilliant, but where should they begin?

Whilst in-person events have their merit, online events are particularly useful for busy students. Accessed from home, they'll provide information, inspiration, and a chance to ask questions to current students, staff, and academics all from the comfort of their home.

Online events are easier to fit around existing commitments. They avoid the time and cost associated with travelling to campus, meaning your students can explore university options further afield than their local area, opening-up new opportunities.

Types of online events

Universities offer a range of online events, from subject taster sessions to information events and summer schools. Students can explore different subjects, discover new areas of interest, and gain a better understanding of university life and support.

Many online sessions are interactive with the opportunity to ask questions to academics, students, and university staff. Students learn about subject topics, course content, career paths, support services, accommodation, finance, and more.

At Brighton, we also offer specific online events for parents throughout the year, like general university advice and Clearing Q&As.

Online summer schools

Lots of universities run summer schools for Year 12 students to explore their options. At Brighton, we run a free multi-day online summer school where students learn about university life, watch subject taster sessions, take part in interactive activities and access useful resources.

Students also complete a subject-specific project and receive feedback that can be used to support their university application. Applications for the online summer schools typically open in spring and take place in July.

Advice for online events

Events are usually free, so you should encourage your students to attend as many as possible that match their interests and aspirations. We recommend them to:

- Register using a frequently-used email address.
- Note the date and time of the event in their calendar.
- Prepare questions about student life, course content, and career outcomes
- Speak to current students: the best way to know the real student experience is by asking the students living it.
- Take notes and reflect on these afterwards. Questions asked by other students may also be relevant to you.
- Attend a variety of events to compare different universities and courses.

Search for online events, such as subject taster sessions and webinars, by selecting the relevant filters listed under "Event type" on [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.uni-taster-days.com).



How to invite a university to speak to your students

By David Metcalfe, Student Recruitment Coordinator at Newcastle University

As a teacher or adviser, you will likely want to invite several universities to speak to your students. However, it can be unclear where to start. Here are three tools and methods which you can use to invite a university to speak.

UniTasterDays

The UniTasterDays Support for Schools service lists opportunities for your school provided by local and national universities. Best of all, there is a one-stop-shop event [request form](#) which you can complete to seek university event support for your school or college. You might wish to attend a subject-specific event, invite universities to your own careers fair, or visit a university to explore. Simply complete the form and UniTasterDays will put you in touch with your universities of choice. The universities will reply directly if they can help.

UCAS Outreach Connection Service

The Outreach Connection Service is a free tool offered by UCAS in their adviser portal. It can help teachers and careers advisers access support from universities, colleges, charities, and employers. The support is for students who are from disadvantaged and under-represented groups. It lists opportunities such as summer schools, supported entry schemes, and in-school workshops.

Directly to universities

Another way to invite a university to speak to your students is to contact them directly. Most universities have dedicated recruitment or outreach teams. Their role is to deliver talks and workshops in schools and colleges. They often have dedicated web pages for schools and colleges, with contact details for these teams. Most offer enquiry or booking forms for visits which can be submitted online. They also explain what their outreach team can offer you and invite you to sign up to teacher mailing lists.

“ Best of all, there is a one-stop-shop event request form which you can complete to seek university event support for your school or college. ”



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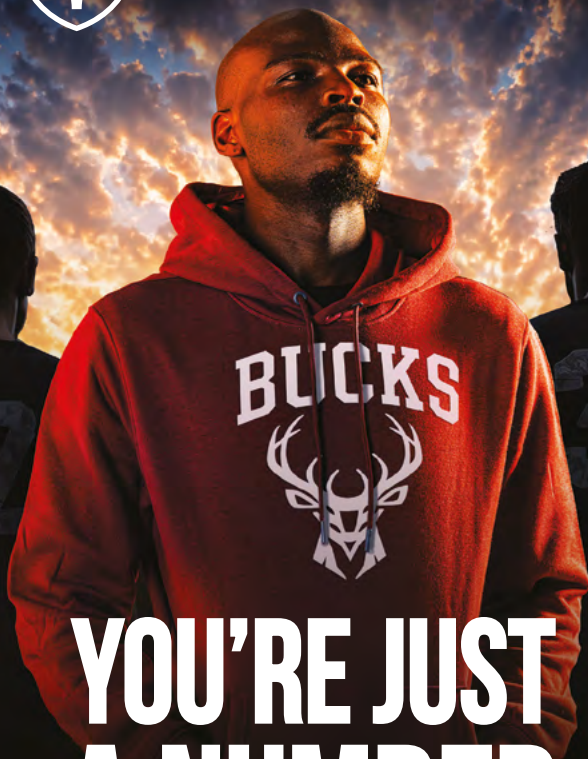


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How to arrange a university visit for your students

By Eleanor Krawczyk, Outreach Project Lead at the University of Greenwich

University visits are essential introductions to higher education. Being there in-person helps your students to visualise the future. Visits are compulsory for schools and colleges striving to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks (page 10). But how do you arrange a visit?

This article offers an easy step-by-step guide to organising a campus visit with universities.

Step 1 - Discover

It can be puzzling who to contact at a university to get the ball rolling. Most universities have dedicated outreach teams to facilitate visits with schools and colleges. You can find this information on university outreach webpages, or you can visit UniTasterDays where the details are collated for member universities.

Step 2 - Contact

Next, send an email with your request. Include your school or college name, year group, number of students, required content of the visit, and possible dates. For ease, you could use the UniTasterDays event request form, which allows you to contact multiple universities with a single form.

Give the university about 8 weeks' notice to allow them time to respond and arrange the visit. It works well to have a Teams meeting or phone call with the university to iron out the details.

Step 3 - Confirm

If the university can help, they will book rooms and arrange academics if required. They will create a provisional schedule and risk assessment for you to review. If they don't have capacity, they may invite you to an existing event that has space on another date. Confirm the number of students you are bringing, any alterations to the schedule you wish to make, and maintain good communication in case anything changes.

Step 4 - Plan

Universities can help with logistics. Do you need a coach to get the students to campus? Are the students bringing packed lunches? Is the weather likely to be hot or cold? Do any of your students have accessibility needs?

We can help book coaches, provide lunch vouchers, and plan contingencies in certain circumstances. For the day itself, exchange contact details with someone at the university so you can stay in touch.

Step 5 - Enjoy!

Finally, to get the most out of the day, ask your students prepare questions and encourage them to engage as much as possible. We hope you enjoy your visit!



My advice for teachers by Tami Okubote



**Co-host of
The Uni Guide Podcast**

1. Which teacher or adviser supported you?

I was fortunate enough to have a form tutor who supported me with my UCAS application. This included 1-to-1 sessions to inform me on the process. This helped me to keep on track with my application and not fall behind, which I heavily recommend you do with your students too.

2. How did they support you?

My subject teachers advocated for different bursaries and scholarships. These funding opportunities are overlooked yet provide great benefits for applicants. My teachers sent newsletters and personally advised me on how to apply and sell myself in the application process. This is an action to take with your own students to reduce fiscal worries about university debt and accommodation costs.

3. Did they arrange a university visit?

My sixth form hosted a careers fair near the end of Year 12, which included companies and universities. A fair is a smart move because it allows multiple universities to visit at the same time. It allowed me to gain unfiltered insights into universities, often from current university students.

4. What advice will you never forget?

"Whatever happens has happened, and whatever you get from it, make the very best of it."

I received this advice after failing to apply for a course in time. Hearing this advice allowed me to pick myself up. Instead, I focused on the courses to which I had applied. I formed my decisions on the courses in front of me, not the one I missed out on.

5. What advice would you give to teachers?

Start helping early. Organise consistent 121s with your students to keep track of their progress to prevent any late or sudden scares.

You could also host a virtual masterclass early in Year 13, before mock exams and before your students start applying. A presentation could outline the process and then space could be left for Q&A.

Furthermore, keep them informed of scholarships and bursaries, so that they can apply to those of interest. If successful, they will start university with a financial advantage, allowing them to focus on their course rather than searching for a part-time job.



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Student finance in England 2026/27

By Tom Allingham, Communications Director at Save the Student

At a time when a university education has never been more expensive, it's vital that students and applicants receive comprehensive and accurate guidance on the available funding.

Much of the media discussion tends to distort the facts or focus on the very worst aspects of Student Finance. But, despite its flaws, the system is still the best way for most young people to fund a degree. It's our responsibility to share this message.

With that in mind, these are the five things that every prospective student needs to know as you help them apply for university. And please note that this information is only for prospective students currently living in England. The guidance will vary for current students, graduates, and those elsewhere in the UK.

1. Tuition fee loans cover the cost of tuition in full

Assuming they meet the residency requirements, almost all young people applying to university will be eligible for a tuition fee loan. In most cases, this will cover the cost upfront and in full, even with the scheduled fee increases. The money will be paid directly to each student's university, so they needn't worry about sorting it themselves.

2. Maintenance loans are rarely enough

Similarly, most first-time university applicants who meet the residency criteria are eligible for a maintenance loan to help towards their living expenses.

In 2026/27 (the latest figures at the time of writing), students can receive a maximum of £9,118 if they live at home while at university, £10,830 if they study away from home, or £14,135 if they study away from home and in London.

But the emphasis should be on 'maximum' – these amounts are only paid to students with a household of £25,000 per year or less. The higher their household income, the less funding they receive, down to a minimum amount of about 45-50% of the maximum.

Sadly, unlike tuition fee loans, maintenance loans very rarely cover costs in full. Indeed, our National Student Money Survey 2025 found that loans fall short of living costs by an average of £502 per month.

If a student's household income has led to a student receiving less than the maximum loan, it's because the government expects their parents to make up the difference. Whether or not that's reasonable or possible is for each family to decide. But you should try to make sure that applicants and their parents are aware of the financial realities of university life.

3. Grants are returning, but there are catches

The government has confirmed that maintenance grants will return in England. However, the devil is in the detail, and many students will miss out.

Firstly, the grants won't be available until the 2028/29 academic year. Crucially, they will be available to current students at the time, not just new starters. So, anyone starting a three-year degree from September 2026 onwards could be eligible, but only if they satisfy the other criteria.



Only students studying subjects that “support the government’s missions and the Industrial Strategy” will be able to apply. These courses haven’t been specified, but we can be confident that most subjects won’t be included.

Finally, the amounts on offer will be fairly small. A maximum of £1,000 per year will be available if a student’s household income is £25,000 per year or less. This tapers down to a minimum of £500 for household incomes up to £30,000, with nothing available for households earning more than that.

For context, by the time the bursaries are reintroduced, a full-time minimum wage job will earn more than £25,000. So, while it’s good news that grants are returning, applicants should be aware of the limitations.

4. The Lifelong Learning Entitlement is coming

The long-promised Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) is set to launch in 2027. Despite a fundamental change in the way learners can access funding throughout their lives, the reality is that very little will change for most young students.

School leavers pursuing their first degree can still apply for tuition and maintenance loans, both for roughly the same amount, barring the usual annual increases. The application process will be the same, as will the repayments.

The shift is more pronounced for returning students, or those who wish to study multiple short courses. For them, the new per-module funding system will allow greater flexibility. But school-age applicants who wish to study a standard degree should be reassured that, in practice, the system isn’t really changing for them.

5. Repayments are a mixed bag

Student loan repayments have come under scrutiny in recent times, but it’s worth noting that almost all of the coverage has focused on Plan 2 loans.

Since 2023, new students from England have been on Plan 5. Compared to Plan 2, this has a lower repayment threshold (£25,000 per year), a lower interest rate (RPI only), and a longer repayment term (40 years).

Although Plan 5 loans accrue less interest, borrowers will repay more each month and for longer, meaning they’re more likely to repay their loans in full.

At the time of writing, it’s unclear what – if any – changes will be made to student loan repayments. But applicants need to know that their repayments will only be based on their earnings, not their debt. In other words, whether their debt is £1,000 or £100,000, only their salary affects their monthly contribution (9% of earnings over the threshold).

What’s more, the debt won’t affect their credit score, and it will be cancelled at the end of the repayment term regardless of their outstanding balance.

Other funding is available, including extra cash from Student Finance, plus bursaries from universities and other third parties. It’s a financially challenging time to attend university, but there’s always work we can do to help young people fund their degrees.



University scholarships and bursaries

By Huw Peters, Student Recruitment and Marketing Officer at the University of Manchester

Students are increasingly worried about the cost of going to university. Thankfully, there's lots of support available to remove financial barriers to study. This should be an integral part of your students' research into universities and courses to ensure they're maximising their chances to gain financial support.

The terms scholarships, bursaries, and grants are sometimes used interchangeably, but each is a form of non-repayable financial support. They are awarded in addition to the tuition fee loan and maintenance loan that students typically access to help them afford to enjoy their time at university.

How much is it?

Scholarships or bursaries rarely would cover a student's entire expenditure. Most offer specific smaller amounts. As such, students should think about applying for a few different opportunities, where eligible, to ensure they have the best chance of increasing their income.

Where to look?

In the first instance, look at different university websites to see what they offer. Look on the course pages because certain subjects might have course-specific opportunities that students can access. Also, there are other organisations and charities who offer funding, so research externally too.

Who's eligible?

Eligibility varies for each scholarship. Universities and other organisations will typically target financial support where it can have the greatest impact. For instance, there are often opportunities for students from low-income backgrounds, or those with specific personal circumstances: disabled students, care-leavers, students from under-represented groups.

Alternatively, there may be financial awards for excellence in academia, sports, or music.

How do I apply?

The process is different for every scholarship or bursary. Some university schemes are based on household income, so they will take the assessment made when applying for student finance and allocate from there.

Other schemes will seek to verify information provided by students about their circumstances, such as those leaving care, before they approve funding.

Many schemes are competitive with very specific deadlines and eligibility criteria. Students should make a list of those of these deadlines to ensure they apply on time. Applications sometimes involve extra steps, such as essays, portfolios, or interviews, so planning ahead is critical.



The NHS Learning Support Fund

By Jack Ridleigh, Senior Student Recruitment Engagement Officer (Health, Wellbeing & Life Sciences) at Sheffield Hallam University

The NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) provides additional funding to eligible healthcare students in England. It's a non-repayable grant, which means students don't have to pay it back, unlike their tuition fee and maintenance loans.

LSF eligibility

To be eligible, your students must be actively in study, ordinarily resident in the UK, and eligible for tuition fee and maintenance support from the Student Loans Company. Students must also be studying one of the following courses at a university in England:

- Dental therapy or dental hygiene - Level 5 or 6
- Dietetics
- Midwifery
- Nursing - adult, child, mental health, learning disability, joint nursing, social work
- Occupational therapy
- Operating department practitioner
- Orthoptics
- Orthotics and prosthetics
- Paramedics - except DipHE and foundation years
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry or chiropody
- Radiography - diagnostic and therapeutic
- Speech and language therapy.

Foundation years aren't eligible, as they don't have the same placement requirements.

LSF funding

The LSF comprises four main funding streams.

Training Grant - £5,000 each academic year for eligible new and continuing students, plus an additional £1,000 a year for students studying specific specialties. These specialties currently

include mental health nursing, learning disability nursing, radiography (diagnostic and therapeutic), prosthetics and orthotics, and orthoptics and podiatry.

Parental Support - £2,000 each year for students with parental responsibility for a child who is under the age of 15 years, or under 17 years if the child is registered with special educational needs. Parental Support doesn't affect a student's access to child support or other funding sources such as the Childcare Grant available through the Student Loans Company.

Travel and Dual Accommodate Expenses (TDAE)

- healthcare students are required to undertake practice placements throughout their course. Some placements require students to pay for excess travel (compared to their usual commute) or temporary accommodation. Students can claim this money back through TDAE.

Exceptional Support Fund (ESF) - a means-tested, non-repayable grant up to £3,000, available to eligible healthcare students experiencing unforeseen financial hardship during their studies.

LSF exceptions

Students who aren't eligible include:

- Students who are eligible for an NHS Bursary (typically medical or dental students) or Social Work Bursary
- Students given time off by an employer to study and still receive a wage or salary for the duration of their course
- Students who receive salary support from an NHS Trust or other NHS entity during any part of their course, such as those studying degree apprenticeships.

LSF applications

Students should apply for the LSF within 6 months of the start of the academic year. Most students will need proof of their Student Loan Award to prove their eligibility, so applying for student finance should be your students' first step.



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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Opening a student bank account

By Jahnvi Acharya, Recruitment and Access Officer (Schools & Colleges) at Brunel University London

A student bank account is designed for those in further or higher education. The account allows students to pay money in and out with added benefits such as an interest-free overdraft. Students can open a student account once they have their results and have confirmed their place at university.

Financial independence

As your students prepare for university, they should develop good financial habits. Opening their own bank account is a step towards fostering financial responsibility. Many students can experience large sums of money for the first time through student finance or wages. Having their own account allows them to track income, expenditure, and develop budgeting skills.

Unlike other bank accounts, student accounts include features to match the needs of young adults. Examples include fee-free banking, budgeting tools, and interest-free overdrafts.

Student bank accounts offer a safer way to manage money, such as depositing cash and using mobile banking apps. Many of these apps provide spending alerts and notifications so students stay aware of their financial activity. These features provide valuable support as students learn to manage their finances independently.

Supporting students

Encourage your students to research bank features, such as customer service, ease of mobile banking, overdraft terms, fees, promotional offers, and accessibility. Comparing different banks will ensure your students identify the account which meets their individual needs.

By supporting students, you can help them develop a strong understanding of key financial concepts, including credit scores, borrowing responsibly, and saving money. This gives them the tools they need to make informed financial decisions throughout their lives.

Opening a student bank account

Eligibility varies between banks. Generally, students must be:

- Aged 18, although some accounts are available from 17
- Holding an offer for a university, college, or higher education course
- Enrolled on a qualifying full-time course
- Resident in the UK resident - requirements may differ for international students.

Most banks require documents as evidence, such as:

- Proof of identity - passport, driving licence
- Proof of address - utility bill, bank statement, council tax letter, official correspondence
- Proof of student status - UCAS offer letter, university acceptance letter, confirmation of enrolment document.

Lifelong financial wellbeing

Ultimately, a student bank account is more than just a place to keep money. It is a practical tool that supports financial education, independence, and confidence. By advising your students to take this step, you can help lay the foundations for lifelong financial wellbeing and responsible money management.



Budgeting at university

By Sheryl Kemp, Student Money Adviser at Anglia Ruskin University

As a Student Money Adviser for many years, I have seen lots of students make mistakes when it comes to budgeting at university. The good news is that students often learn from their mistakes and consider it a valuable life lesson!

However, a lack of budgeting can cause worry and anxiety, so it's always better if we help them start their university years on a good budgeting path. The internet is full of suggestions and advice. There are several budget planning tools out there too.

Your students can choose their preferred method – app, spreadsheet, old-fashioned pen and paper – but my topmost tip is to actually have a budget plan. Once in place, they can start crunching the numbers.

Income vs expenditure

Next, your students must calculate their income correctly. If a student is funded by Student Finance, they will be paid in 3 termly lump sums. This can make budgeting awkward as most expenditure is going to be weekly or mostly monthly.

I suggest students calculate their funding income on a monthly basis, and whether this needs to be for the academic year, or a whole calendar year if their situation requires this. For example, a

student who doesn't go home for the summer holiday will continue to have rent costs throughout that period.

I also suggest having two bank accounts, preferably student bank accounts. Students can put their funding into one account (such as savings) and draw over their calculated monthly amount each month.

Food planning

Food planning is critical to making a budget work efficiently. We all fall for the trap of “just popping to the shops for milk” and leaving with a whole basket of items. My tip is to plan the meals for the week. That way, your students will know exactly what they need to buy. Even better, they'll have meals planned out, so they'll always know what to cook at the end of a hard day. It also avoids eating out for breakfasts and lunches, which can quickly add up and devour their budget.

Student discounts

My last tip is taking advantage of their student status. There are student discounts galore so take advantage of any discounts cards and apps (page 88). I try to discourage multiple TV streaming subscriptions, but make sure any subscriptions are on a student rate. Many websites offer online student discounts for shopping, museums, food outlets, and more.

Advisers like myself exist at all universities. We're there to support and navigate your students during their university journey, and that includes all things budgeting!



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Part-time work opportunities at university

By Lynne Simpkin, Head of Recruitment & Outreach at Norwich University of the Arts

The idea of juggling lectures, coursework, and a job can sound like a recipe for stress. In reality, part-time work has become the norm for undergraduates rather than the exception, and universities have built genuine infrastructure to make it manageable. 68% of students work during term time according to the 2025 Student Academic Experience Survey by Advance HE and the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), which surveyed more than 10,000 full-time undergraduates across the UK. The average working student works 13 hours a week.

Working at the university

One of the most accessible options is a job on campus. Universities are large employers, and many actively prioritise current students for roles in areas such as:

- Student ambassador and open day work
- Library and IT help desks
- Students' union bars, cafés, shops
- Sports centres and reception desks
- Administrative and marketing assistant roles.

University jobs have a big advantage: they understand the academic calendar. Shifts are built around timetables, exam periods are respected, and there's rarely a commute involved! Many universities also run their own temp staffing bank specifically for students, making it simple to pick up occasional shifts without committing to a fixed weekly rota.

Working in the city

University towns and cities have thriving part-time job markets geared towards the student population. Retail, hospitality, and customer service roles are everywhere, and many local employers will build shift patterns around term-time timetables. For instance, Norwich is a compact city with a large, student population across its universities. As such, it has a dense concentration of cafés, shops, restaurants, and cultural venues within easy walking or cycling distance of student accommodation. This means students rarely need a car or a long commute to find flexible local work.

Working in the holidays

The holidays offer another route for students who prefer to focus on their studies during term time. Christmas, Easter, and the long summer break are natural windows for:

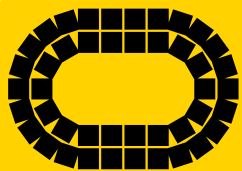
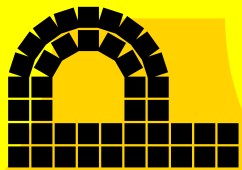
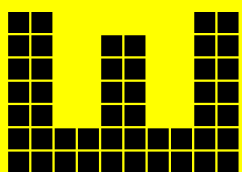
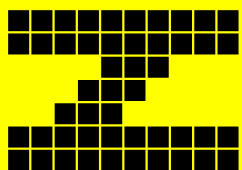
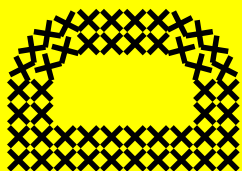
- Full-time temporary retail or hospitality work
- Paid internships and work placements relevant to their course
- Seasonal roles in events, tourism, agriculture, retail, and hospitality
- Returning to a part-time job back home.

Why this matters

As teachers and advisers, help your students think ahead to university life and offer a few reassurances.

- **Choose carefully** - whether it's an on-campus role, a local job in the city, or holiday work, students can choose an option that fits their course workload and personal circumstances.
- **Find balance** - most universities recommend keeping term-time work to a modest number of hours a week so study time is protected.
- **Gain skills** - time management, customer service, and workplace experience all strengthen a CV alongside the degree itself.
- **Seek support** - careers services, job hubs, and students' unions help students find and manage part-time work. The opportunities are more available and supportive than ever before.





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- Saturday 24 October
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- Saturday 21 November
- Friday 11 December

2027

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The benefits of becoming a student ambassador

By Chantelle Lee, Student Recruitment and Outreach Officer at London South Bank University

Student ambassadors have important roles in their universities. They are responsible for representing their institution to prospective students, which helps future students to see themselves in their shoes. This article offers several reasons why you should encourage your students to become student ambassadors at university, including flexible shifts and the opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally.

Flexible employment

Many students need some sort of paid employment to support themselves at university. You may have already encountered students who are worried about finding a part-time job during their studies. Joining their university's student ambassador scheme is an excellent opportunity to earn money while studying, in a way that works around their course commitments. These roles usually run on a zero-hours contract, meaning your students are free to choose the shifts that are best for them. This gives them more flexibility to adapt their work pattern at different points in the year, depending on their schedules.

Developing skills

Student ambassadors can work a variety of different shifts, such as speaking to prospective students at careers and HE fairs, leading engaging campus tours, and giving

inspiring presentations. Ambassadors develop a range of transferable skills as a result, including communication, teamwork, and time management. This skillset is highly sought after by employers in every industry.

Similarly, employers value graduates who can think on their feet, showing initiative and leadership. The student ambassador role will offer plenty of chances to do so. Above all, many ambassadors grow significantly in confidence throughout their time in the role, which is a huge personal and professional benefit.

Making friends

Becoming a student ambassador allows students to meet and make friends with students from across their university. They will find themselves on shift with learners from different subjects and years, expanding their social circle beyond those they would typically meet.

Furthermore, ambassador schemes may run training events and socials, encouraging students to meet and mix with each other. If you have students who are worried about making friends at university, referring them to the student ambassador scheme could be an easy way to meet lots of people. Some wonderful friendships are formed amongst ambassadors!

Sense of belonging

Many students say becoming a student ambassador is one of the most valuable and enjoyable parts of their university experience. It boosts their sense of belonging, increases their employability, and grows their confidence. Please encourage your students to apply to join the student ambassador scheme when they start at university. They might even return to your school to deliver a university talk in the near future!



Saving money at university

By Jessica Page, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Officer at Aberystwyth University

University is an exciting stage in a student's life, but it can feel financially overwhelming. Your students must think about tuition fees, maintenance loans, student accommodation prices, and budgeting for the first time. Luckily, there are many ways to save money when going to university.

Accommodation

The largest expenditure for students is accommodation, so the most impactful way to save money is choosing a university with lower accommodation costs. Students can research accommodation prices on university websites and draw comparisons. StudentCrowd lists the cheapest UK cities for student accommodation, with weekly prices varying from £93 to £520.

Students can also save money by choosing more affordable accommodation at the same university, such as accommodation without an en-suite, self-catered, or shorter contracts. Choosing lower-priced accommodation means they will spend less of their maintenance loan, so they have more money for other things, such as their social life.

Food

According to Save the Student, the second biggest expenditure for students is food shopping, with the average cost being £146 a month. Meal planning will prevent students popping to the shop too frequently or getting takeaways. Planning 5 to 6 days of meals each week can really help students stick to a budget and not over-buy when in the supermarket.

Your students could choose to shop at Aldi and Lidl, always amongst the cheapest supermarkets in the UK. Location of the nearest supermarket is also important.

At open days, see what shops are local and accessible. Loyalty cards can also save money, such as Tesco Clubcard, Sainsbury's Nectar, Morrisons More Card, and Lidl Plus.

Budgeting

Students should work out their income and compare this with their expenditure. Income might include the maintenance loan, scholarships, and part-time work.

Expenditure might include accommodation, transport, food, and social costs. Save the Student gives a detailed overview of average student living costs. Some extra tips to boost income or lower expenditure:

- Work part-time to boost your income, such as being a student ambassador
- Check university websites to see which scholarships and bursaries are available
- Use student discount cards and apps, such as TOTUM and UNiDAYS
- Apply for a 16-25 Railcard to save 1/3 on train prices
- Apply for a National Express Young Persons Coachcard to save on coach travel
- Join Spotify which offers students a Premium account for £5.99 a month
- Subscribe to Amazon Prime Student which offers a 50% discount and 6-month free trial.



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Accessing a hardship fund

By Harry McCallum, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Liverpool

The hardship fund can be the difference between a student thriving in their course versus potentially dropping out. With the cost of living continually rising, it's more important than ever to support students where we can.

Understanding hardship funds

Hardship funds are non-repayable grants available to university students, paid by the university to relieve students in financial difficulties. This money is there to support students, so their financial situation doesn't impact their participation at university. It could be used to pay rent, or to cover their expenditure until their next payday.

It's expected that students are already accessing a maintenance loan from Student Finance. The hardship fund is separate to the maintenance loan. It's specifically for students in unexpected financial crisis who are unable to cover crucial expenses with their income. The amount and criteria required to access the fund will differ between universities, although most UK universities will offer some form of support.

Standard vs non-standard

There are two types of hardship fund awards:

- **Standard award** - for the everyday costs of studying and living. The team will look at the student's finances to see if expenditure exceeds income.
- **Non-standard** - for emergency and unforeseen financial crises. The team will focus on the needs of the student, rather than calculations and formulae.

Applying for hardship funds

The funds are not infinite. Some universities may close their applications midway through the year due to insufficient funding or an overwhelming number of applications. If a student is struggling, or knows they have upcoming payments they can't afford, then encourage them to apply as soon as possible once they enrol at university.

Explain there are multiple sources of support, including the team that runs the hardship fund, often called the money advice team. These teams review the hardship fund applications. If your student makes themselves known to this team, they will provide advice and confirm if your student is eligible to apply for the fund.

Thriving vs surviving

Whilst at university, I received the minimum maintenance loan to support my living. My parents didn't support my finances, and I had to work three part-time jobs on zero-hours contracts. Accessing the hardship fund was the difference between thriving within my studies and potentially dropping out.

My advice to teachers is to make your students aware of the hardship fund. If your students think they'll need support, they should make themselves known to the money advice team at their chosen university. At the very least, the team will provide advice and support. At best, they will assist in relieving financial burdens and emergencies for your students.



Cost-of-living support

By Kate Smith, Student Recruitment Engagement Manager at Sheffield Hallam University

Rising living costs are one of the biggest concerns when considering higher education. While the headlines can be daunting, higher education remains a viable and beneficial option for many students. This article explains how you can help your students find and maximise financial support.

School and college outreach

Understanding university costs and student finance is an important first step. Contact universities to access outreach opportunities including:

- Student finance talks and budgeting workshops
- Talks for parents and carers
- CPD for teachers and advisers
- Subsidised travel to open days
- Additional pre-applicant support.

University financial support

All universities offer financial support, but the type and format will vary. Encourage students to explore university websites for information on:

- **Scholarships and bursaries** – non-repayable pots of money for eligible students. They can be awarded to students with exceptional grades, participation in high-level sport, or additional barriers to higher education.
- **Course grants** – non-repayable support for certain courses, placements, or study abroad opportunities.
- **Hardship funds** – emergency support for students facing unexpected financial difficulties. Ask your students to learn how to access this in advance to reduce “what if...” anxiety.
- **Student support** – financial worries can affect wellbeing and academic performance. University support services are available to help with these wider issues.

Each student and their support needs are different. Your students should contact universities directly to discuss their personal circumstances and their available options.

Affordable student life

Many universities offer practical support to help manage everyday costs, such as:

- **Affordable food** – food pantries and low-cost meals on campus.
- **Accommodation** – affordable locations and bills-inclusive options.
- **Lifestyle** – free or discounted travel passes, gym memberships, and digital devices.
- **Socialising** – students’ unions provide affordable clubs, societies, events, and social spaces.
- **Student discounts** – a student card unlocks discounts at a range of retailers and restaurants.

Many student discount schemes are also available to sixth-form and college students, apprentices, and even teachers!

Earn while you learn

Part-time work can help students supplement their income and build key skills too. Student Ambassador roles are convenient, well paid, and offer flexibility around studies. Advise students to explore on-campus work opportunities when researching universities.

How you can help

As a teacher or adviser, you can reassure and support your students in several ways:

- **Start early** – Year 12 is the perfect time to begin conversations and signpost to resources. Involve parents and carers where you can.
- **Draw on university expertise** – speak to universities about the support available for you, your students, and their families.
- **Remove the stigma** – normalise discussions about finance and university costs. Seeking financial aid isn’t a negative, it can help many students to succeed.

“Your students should contact universities directly to discuss their personal circumstances and options.”

The Disabled Students' Allowance

**By Ruth Brown, Student Support Manager
- Disability, Finance and Inclusion at the
University of Sunderland**

For many students with disabilities, the transition to higher education can feel daunting. However, a range of support is available to ensure students can access their studies on an equal basis with their peers. One of the most valuable sources of support is the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

DSA is a government-funded grant designed to help students meet the additional study-related costs they may face because of a physical or learning disability, mental health condition, sensory disability, or long-term health condition. Unlike a student loan, **DSA doesn't need to be repaid** and isn't based on household income. It's intended to remove barriers that may otherwise impact academic success.

Students may be eligible for DSA if they are studying an undergraduate or postgraduate course for one year or more and are eligible for both a tuition fee and maintenance loan. Further eligibility criteria is available on the DSA website.

Students must apply through their relevant funding body and provide appropriate supporting evidence. For medical conditions, evidence should come from a doctor or consultant and include confirmation of the diagnosis, details that the condition is long term, and an explanation of how it affects day-to-day study activities. Students with a learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, or dyscalculia, will need to provide a full diagnostic assessment report completed by a qualified psychologist or specialist.

If you are eligible for DSA, you will be asked to attend a Needs Assessment. Rest assured, this isn't a test or examination, despite the name. The assessor will talk to the student and make recommendations for support. The assessor will then submit their findings to the funding body and the funding body will confirm with the student what they will fund.

DSA support varies depending on individual requirements but generally falls into several key areas:

- **Specialist non-medical helper support** - including specialist mentoring, specialist study skills tuition, or British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation.
- **Specialist equipment** - such as assistive software, ergonomic furniture, or other technology designed to facilitate learning.
- **Additional travel allowances** - if a disability makes public transport difficult to use.
- **Other disability-related costs** - including printing allowances and study resources.

As a teacher or adviser, you play a crucial role in helping students understand the importance of applying for DSA as early as possible. The process takes time, particularly when support workers, specialist equipment, or software needs to be arranged. Early applications allow support to be in place from the start of the academic year, helping students make a confident transition into university life.

For students who aren't eligible for DSA but still require support, please reach out to the university's dedicated team of disability advisers who will be on hand to explore other options.



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My advice for teachers

By Sarra Jenkins, Director of Future Pathways at Loughborough Grammar School



Students thinking about going to university have access to an ever-increasing bank of information, but such volume can be overwhelming. For many students, this is the first major decision they will take over which they have substantial personal agency. Therefore, it's not surprising that they often need support and guidance through the informational avalanche.

Classroom teachers such as yourself can be a significant source of support and advice for students. They have relationships with you, you have subject expertise, and they see you frequently. But with the post-18 landscape so different to when you went to university, how can you best support them?

Inspiring students to consider university

Not all students will consider university. Those that do will often have preconceptions and stereotypes that they have accumulated. There are still wide gaps between different demographic groups and their attendance and achievement at university. These have remained stubbornly difficult to address despite university targeted outreach.

In the classroom, visual markers can offer inspiration, such as having the university you attended on your classroom door. Equally, you could have displays of famous people who studied the subject you teach, and share what they do now, ideally across a range of fields.

Within lessons, draw links between topics studied and the opportunity to study them in more depth at university. This can encourage students to explore the modules on offer within a course, rather than just the course title.

Finally, leverage your relationships. If you've built trusting relationships with students who enjoy your subject, your advice probably carries a lot of importance. If you are unsure, signpost students to staff who can help them. The trust they have in your recommendation might mean they seek out the advice they need from the right people.

Advising students on their choices

Students may have preconceptions about university, ranging from spurious rankings to believing university isn't for people like them. With large numbers of students applying to university each year, some can feel pressured into "doing UCAS" and picking choices that seem reasonable without always considering why.

As subject experts, if your students are considering a degree in your field, you can help them navigate the modules on offer. Uncover the differences between compulsory modules and optional modules.



Explain how they could assemble a degree that really excites them. Two degrees titled Economics may look very different at module level.

They also need to consider what kind of campus they want, how far from home they want to be, what work opportunities are available near a university, and more. Ultimately, where will they be happy and thrive?

Nearly 80% of graduates gain a 2:1 or a 1st. As such, being at a university where they can thrive will help them succeed in a competitive job market after graduation.

Assisting students with personal statements

Subject teachers are invaluable when it comes to personal statements. You can provide feedback on content and structure. Many students simply write a list of their projects and what they gained, for instance, "I did the EPQ which shows I have research skills and organisation." Does it though? The mantra for personal statements is "show, don't tell." Students should recognise they are applying for an academic course, so they should showcase academic skills. Some useful questions for students to answer when reflecting on super-curricular reading:

- What surprised you? Why?
- Did it challenge what you already knew, or other reading you have done?
- What did it lead you to do next?

Some additional questions for students when reflecting on projects, including EPQ:

- What problems did you encounter?
- How did you overcome them?
- What did you conclude? Why?

Supporting students through the process

UCAS deadlines give the impression of a process within which students must make binary and final decisions. However, the system is much more flexible than that. UCAS Extra opens in February and Clearing opens in July. Students might apply, then later change their mind about their course, university, or both. 15,000 students did this last year. Other students might not apply initially, then later decide they want to apply. 21,000 students did this last year.

As a classroom teacher, a little knowledge goes a long way. If one of your students has a change of heart, they may feel like the die has already been cast. But reassure them: submission of the UCAS form isn't the end of the process. Tell them it's okay to change their mind. This can go a long way to alleviating their worries.

Ultimately, the time that classroom teachers spend with their students builds relationships that most students won't have with careers advisers, UCAS co-ordinators, or similar. But leveraging your relationships and personal knowledge together makes for a powerful combination to support the very best outcomes for your students.



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Understanding the university admissions process

By Susie Kilburn, UK Student Recruitment and Schools Liaison Manager at City St George's, University of London

Each year, thousands of students take the next step in their education by applying to university through UCAS. Whether you are experienced or supporting applicants for the first time, understanding the key stages can make a real difference to both your confidence and your students' success.

This guide provides a concise overview of the UCAS admissions journey. If you are ever unsure about an application, course requirements, or admissions decisions, you can contact university admissions offices or schools and college liaison teams. They are there to help and can offer clear, up-to-date advice.

Application timeline

Students often begin researching courses and drafting personal statements in Year 12. UCAS applications can be submitted from September of Year 13. Some courses have earlier deadlines. Applications to Oxford or Cambridge, or for Medicine, Dentistry, and Veterinary Science, must be submitted by mid-October.

For most other courses, the equal consideration deadline falls in mid-January. Applications submitted by this date are given equal consideration by universities. After this point, applications may still be considered, but places on some courses may already be filled.

Most schools and colleges set earlier internal deadlines. These are essential, as they allow time for references to be written, applications to be reviewed, and any issues to be resolved before submission. Encouraging students to treat these internal deadlines as final will benefit both them and you, particularly if there are many applications to review!

What universities receive

Once submitted, applications provide universities with a full picture of each student.

- **From the student** - universities receive personal details, educational history, and the personal statement. Students can also indicate if they meet certain widening access criteria, which may enable contextual offers or additional support. For example, they might be care-experienced or from a UK armed forces family.
- **From the school or college** - universities receive predicted grades and references. The reference helps admissions staff understand the student's achievements and potential in context.



Additional requirements

For some courses, the UCAS personal statement is only part of the process. Universities may also require admissions tests, interviews, or portfolios depending on the course. These requirements will be outlined on course web pages and contribute to final decisions.

Your students should make themselves aware of any additional steps before applying so they can prepare effectively. Some elements, such as admissions tests like the UCAT, must be completed before submitting the UCAS application so the results can be included.

How applications are considered

Admissions tutors assess whether a student is likely to meet the academic entry requirements, shows genuine interest in the subject, and has the skills needed to succeed on the course. Reassure your students that universities aren't told where else they have applied, and applications are considered independently.

University decisions and offers

The response time will vary from university to university. However, they must reply to students with their decision by a deadline which falls in the third week of May. Typical decisions are:

- **Conditional offer** - the student must meet certain requirements, usually their final grades.
- **Unconditional offer** - a place is offered with no requirements.
- **Alternative offer** - a place is offered on a different course than originally applied for.
- **Unsuccessful** - no offer is made.

Student choices

After receiving decisions, your students need to select two options:

- **Firm choice** - their first-choice university.
- **Insurance choice** – their second-choice university. This is a back-up option where they would be happy to study, usually with lower entry requirements.

If plans change

Students who receive no offers, or decide not to accept any, can continue exploring their options through UCAS Extra. Clearing is also available after students receive their results in the summer. This allows them to find a place if they haven't secured one or if they decide to change where or what they want to study.

By understanding each stage of the process and encouraging students to meet deadlines and prepare thoroughly, you can play a key role in helping them submit strong, competitive applications.



The 2026 changes to personal statements

By Morgan Cassie, Student Recruitment Officer at Anglia Ruskin University

For the 2026 admissions cycle, UCAS have replaced the traditional personal statement with a new, structured format. Instead of one open-ended essay, students will respond to three specific questions. The changes are designed to reduce stress and create a fairer, more accessible process for all applicants.

Why the change?

In 2022, UCAS surveyed students and found that 83% found the personal statement stressful, with many relying heavily on others to complete it. The new format offers clearer prompts. This can make it easier for your students to present themselves effectively, especially those with less support or confidence in writing.

The new format

From 2026, students will answer three short-form questions, replacing the free-text essay. Each section must be at least 350 characters long with a combined character limit of 4,000, including spaces. The UCAS platform will show a character count for each question, and an overall total to help your students keep on track. The new structure encourages reflection and focus, rather than long lists of activities.

The new questions

1. Why do you want to study this course or subject?

Your students should explain why they are interested in the course or subject, and how it aligns with their future ambitions.

2. How have your qualifications and studies helped you prepare?

This section requires your students to highlight academic experience, key subjects,

or transferable skills that will help them succeed at university.

3. What have you done outside education to prepare, and why is it useful?

Your students can discuss extracurricular activities, work experience, and other achievements relevant to their chosen course that have contributed to their development and readiness for university study.

Supporting your students

Although the format is changing, the role of teachers and advisers remains critical:

- **Start early** - encourage your students to draft responses in a separate document for easy editing. Allow time for this task.
- **Focus on depth** - emphasise meaningful, well-explained experiences rather than long lists.
- **Proof-read and refine** - help check spelling, grammar, and clarity.
- **Plan for feedback** - ensure your students allow time for reviewing and revising their responses.
- **Share resources supplied by universities** - there will be advice and guides on university websites to support your students with their statement.

Looking ahead

This new format is intended to make the process more transparent and less daunting, particularly for students who have found the previous format overwhelming. It also aligns more closely with what admissions teams need to know. By helping your students approach each section with thought and care, you can continue to play a vital role in shaping strong, authentic applications within the new structure.



Learn how to make your personal statement stand out in Episode 36 of The Uni Guide Podcast.



Writing an outstanding personal statement

By Ailsa Mackay, Student Recruitment Officer at Heriot-Watt University

The best personal statements are just that – personal. They should clearly express why a student wants to study a particular course and highlight the qualities, experiences, and motivations that make them a strong candidate.

With the recent changes to the personal statement format, students now have more guidance in structuring their content. However, deciding what to include can still feel overwhelming.

Here are some top tips to help a personal statement stand out:

1. Plan before you write

Your students should start by listing experiences, achievements, and key strengths. This will help them identify what's most relevant and give their statement direction.

2. Show understanding of the course

Your students should demonstrate genuine interest in the course content. They should include what inspired their choice, long-term goals, and why the subject matters to them personally.

3. Use personal examples

Your students should draw on experiences from school, work placements, and extracurricular activities. What did they learn? How does it link to the course? How will these experiences be useful at university?

4. Highlight achievements and challenges

Your students should focus on positive qualities and accomplishments, no matter how big or small. If your students have experienced difficulties or challenges, the personal statement can be used to highlight the steps taken to overcome these. They should focus on resilience and lessons learned, rather than dwelling on negatives. As a teacher, you can provide further context in their academic reference, if needed.

5. Keep it clear and concise

Clarity is key. Your students should use straightforward language and avoid jargon. Equally, spelling and grammatical errors can detract from the message. Advise your students to read the statement aloud, ask someone else to review it, and make sure it flows well.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Quoting famous people – universities want to hear from your students, not historical figures.
- Humour – what your students find funny may not translate.
- Copying – plagiarism detection software is used widely and could result in rejection.
- Exaggerating or lying – be truthful. Admissions staff can spot inconsistencies.
- Naming specific universities – remember, the same personal statement goes to all five choices.

AI tools

Most universities are open to students using AI for brainstorming or structuring ideas. However, the final personal statement must reflect the student's voice and thinking. Copying content directly could work against the student.

Relevant work experience

Your students may worry if their skills and experience are “good enough.” Universities understand that access to work experience and extracurricular activities can vary depending on personal circumstances. Don't worry. Universities value curiosity, independent learning, and self-motivation.

For example, a student can show how they were inspired by reading an article, attending a webinar, or watching a TED talk. There are lots of free resources available online. University web pages are a great starting point as many list online webinars and taster sessions.

Starting and ending

Starting can be the hardest part, so your students should begin by brainstorming their ideas. The rest will follow. Finally, they should end their personal statement with a sentence or two summarising the key points to ensure a strong and memorable finish.



Christy forged her career path at Heriot-Watt

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Writing an outstanding academic reference

By Emily-Jane Gardiner, UK Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Glasgow

"You will absolutely regret it if you don't offer this student a place at your university."

I worked as an undergraduate admissions officer at the University of Glasgow for three years. I read thousands of school references, yet this is the line that still sticks in my mind. The teacher who wrote this line was truly advocating for their student. Brilliant!

Not every reference needs a bold statement to be successful, but this is your chance to advocate for your student and tell us how brilliant they are. It's also your chance to provide reasons why they might struggle to meet the standard entry requirements of their chosen universities. This insight helps us make an informed decision about whether to make them an offer.

Establishment details

This section is usually identical for all students within a school. You might even use a consistent template throughout your school, which includes socio-economic statistics, ASN percentages, pupil numbers, and gender ratios, plus other general information.

Extenuating circumstances

This section helps the university decide whether to make a contextual offer which reflects a difficulty experienced by the student. We understand this is confidential information, but we don't need detailed accounts of the circumstances. Instead, we are interested in how those circumstances have impacted on the student's studies. Have they missed school? Have they struggled to concentrate in lessons?

The university is unlikely to adjust offer grades on long-term circumstances that have already been mitigated through adjusted exam conditions. For example, a student receiving additional support for exams due to dyslexia is unlikely to receive an adjusted university offer in addition.

Other supportive information

This is where we really want to know about the student personally, and how they've impressed you in their journey towards university. Don't replicate what a student has written in their personal statement. For example, if a student has won a maths award, then delve into more detail. Tell us why this impressed you as their teacher. Did you watch them complete multiple practice papers? Has their achievement inspired other students?

More information

This article offers best practice, but each university may look for different things in a school reference. If unsure, you can contact a university for extra guidance. We love hearing from passionate teachers!





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Creating a strong portfolio for a creative industries course

By Elizabeth Noble, Associate Head for the Creative Industries Institute at Sheffield Hallam University

Creative degrees often request a portfolio of work as part of their application process. The exact requirements vary from university to university, and even course to course. It can seem overwhelming but your students shouldn't get disheartened. **Please share this article with your creative students to help them craft a strong portfolio for their university applications.**

Prepare

Gather everything you have. Sketchbooks, notebooks, doodles, research notes, links, photographs, visits, visual tests, experiments, and the glorious outcomes. The good, the bad, the ugly. At this stage don't be critical. Your portfolio may include personal projects and works in progress too. If your school or college work is sent away for assessment, remember to keep copies to include in your portfolio.

Reflect

Once gathered, take over the front room and lay everything out. What stands out? Where are your strengths? What are you most proud of? What aren't you showing about your creative ability? Ask friends and family for constructive feedback. Don't take it personally. You must learn how others view your work. The academics reviewing your portfolio will recognise your strengths.

Select

Take time with your selection. Check what each application requires. Are there gaps? Can pieces

fill multiple criteria? Don't include everything. Assemble a good, clear, lively collection that represents your abilities. Show the breadth and depth of your work.

Present

Start with a title page to introduce yourself. Place your strongest pieces at the start of your portfolio, then take us on a visual journey. We love to see final outcomes, but we also love how you got there. This shows your determination, your ability to try new things, and your passion to be creative.

Layout

Having a set layout throughout your portfolio allows consistency for the viewer, so they can focus on enjoying the content rather than navigating each page. You could see each page as steps: introduction, research, visual experiments, outcome, summary.

Commentary

Consider answering some of the following questions. This will ensure your portfolio is understood in the way you want it to be.

- Where did the project start? With a brief, a question, a theme?
- What did you do next? Take photos, research artists?
- Where do you find inspiration? What is your work and what is the influence of others?
- What visual experimentation did you do? Which techniques, materials, processes? Digital analogue, 2D, 3D, motion? How many versions or attempts were there?
- How did you arrive at your outcome or solution?
- What worked well? What could be improved?



Top tips for a successful teacher education interview

By Dr Andrew Morrison, Dr Sarah Williams, and Dr Marie Helks, Sheffield Institute of Education at Sheffield Hallam University

Teaching is an exciting and rewarding profession. It will allow your students to make a real difference to young people's lives. At Sheffield Hallam University, your students can train to be a teacher for any age-phase from early years to post-16. For entry to our courses, students will do an interview and a short teaching task. If this makes your students feel anxious, please do share this advice with them. It will help them stand out as confident and committed candidates.

The interview

The interview is an important part of the application process for a teacher education course. You'll be interviewed by experienced lecturers. They'll understand that you'll feel nervous, and they'll aim to put you at ease. The purpose of the interview isn't to catch you out. It's to find your potential for teaching.

1. Reflect on your motivation

Interviewers often ask why you want to teach. Avoid answers like "I enjoy working with children." Instead, share personal experiences that have inspired you, such as moments where you helped someone learn or overcome challenges.

2. Show awareness of current issues

Education is always changing. Be ready to discuss topics like:

- Inclusive teaching
- The curriculum relevant to your chosen age-phase
- Technology in the classroom

You don't need to be an expert, but awareness shows you're engaged and interested.

3. Demonstrate good communication skills

Teaching is about communication. You'll naturally be nervous but try to communicate clearly with the interviewer and pay close attention to the questions.

4. Highlight relevant experience

Draw on your personal experiences: volunteering, tutoring, working with children. Explain what you've learned and how it will help you as a trainee teacher. Even non-teaching roles, such as retail or hospitality work, can demonstrate transferable skills like teamwork and resilience.

5. Ask thoughtful questions

Prepare one or two questions for the end of the interview, such as:

- What support do trainees receive during placements?
- Are we supported for teaching in diverse classrooms?

The teaching task

The second part of the application process is the teaching task. This usually lasts 4-5 minutes. The requirements vary depending on the age-phase and/or subject specialism you've applied for. You may be asked to teach your interviewer a skill.

You should:

- Use clear instructions
- Let your interviewer know what they will be learning
- Involve them in the learning.

Previous examples have included teaching some words from a foreign language, how to serve a tennis ball, how to use sign language, and how to juggle.

We'll consider your potential to be a good teacher, so we'll evaluate your communication skills, how you deliver the learning, and the preparation that you've undertaken. And remember, we want you to succeed. So, go for it!

“Teaching is about communication. You'll naturally be nervous but try to communicate clearly. ,,

Contextual university admissions

By Dominic Mayhew, School and College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter

Contextual admissions are an important part of a university's commitment to widening access to higher education. For teachers and careers advisers, understanding contextual offers can help students make informed decisions about their university applications.

What are contextual admissions?

Contextual admissions recognise that students have different educational opportunities and experiences. Alongside academic achievement, universities consider information about an applicant's circumstances when assessing eligibility for a contextual offer.

Factors that may be considered include:

- Living in an area with low progression to higher education
- Living in an area of social and economic disadvantage
- Attendance at a non-selective state school or college identified by the University
- Experience of local authority care, or estrangement from parents
- Participation in specific widening participation programmes.

Contextual admissions don't lower academic standards. Instead, they recognise achievement within the context in which it has been attained.

How contextual offers work

Eligible applicants may receive an offer below the standard published entry requirements for their chosen course. For instance, eligible applicants at Exeter can receive a reduction of up to two grades. Students are still expected to demonstrate the academic potential required to succeed on their chosen programme, and all applications continue to be assessed on an individual basis.

Eligibility criteria

Many students are unaware they qualify for a contextual offer. Teachers and careers advisers can support students by encouraging them to:

- Research entry requirements before applying
- Check whether they meet any contextual criteria
- Ensure their application information is accurate and up to date
- Ensure any qualifying circumstances are included in their UCAS application
- Engage with outreach and widening participation opportunities
- Seek advice if they have experienced educational disruption or challenging personal circumstances.

Common misconceptions

A contextual offer doesn't guarantee admission. Students must still meet the conditions of their reduced offer. Applications remain competitive. Equally, contextual offers aren't solely based on academic grades. Eligibility is based on a range of factors relating to a student's educational and social circumstances.

There is also a misconception that very few applicants qualify. In reality, many students meet the contextual offer criteria without realising it. This is why we need you to raise awareness of contextual offers amongst your students.

Identifying potential

Contextual admissions recognise that academic achievement does not occur in isolation. By taking account of the circumstances in which students have studied, contextual admissions aim to identify potential as well as attainment.

For teachers and careers advisers, understanding a university's contextual admissions policy can ensure that eligible students are aware of the opportunity and approach the application process with confidence.

“ Many students meet the contextual offer criteria without realising it. This is why we need you to raise awareness of contextual offers. ”



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- Academic competitions to strengthen supercurricular activities
- Subject Q&A panels
- Higher Education Jargon Buster
- Advice on applications and personal statements
- Advice and insights from our current students



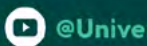
Visit our website to find out more: exeter.ac.uk/study/discover-university

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* Top 15 in the Complete University Guide 2026 and The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026 155th in the QS World University Rankings 2026. Top 15 most targeted by leading employers according to "The Graduate Market in 2026" report by High Fliers Research.



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What happens after receiving an offer

**By Katie Taylor, Admissions Team
Manager at the University of Lancashire**

Supporting your students through the UCAS application process takes time and understanding of the whole process, which can seem quite daunting at first. This article outlines the essentials, so you can be confident in guiding your students with their applications for 2027.

Decision deadlines

When students apply through UCAS, they are required to meet specific application deadlines. Similarly, universities are also obligated to adhere to UCAS deadlines to ensure that application decisions are returned in good time. Students who apply by the January UCAS deadline will have a decision made on their UCAS Track by no later than mid-May. Any student that applies by the end of June will have a decision on their UCAS Track no later than mid-July.

Receiving offers

Once your student has received an offer, they should wait until they've heard back from their other university choices before making any decisions. This gives them the opportunity to compare their options and make an informed choice about which university to select as their firm and insurance choice.

Making choices

Your students should research the course and the university to make sure both are the right fit for them. Most universities run dedicated offer-holder days. Encourage your applicants to attend, especially if they missed the open days earlier in the year. These events are an opportunity to learn more about the course, meet academic staff, explore the campus, and get a real feel for the university. They can make a big difference in helping applicants choose their firm and insurance choices.

Meeting conditions

Applicants should read their offer conditions carefully, so they know exactly what's required and when it needs to be completed. This will make the confirmation process as smooth as possible and avoid any unnecessary last-minute stress. Once done, it's time to focus on achieving those conditions through hard work and study. Rest assured, the Clearing process is available if they don't achieve their conditions, or if they change their mind about what or where to study.

Final preparations

Throughout the summer period, your students will receive lots of information from their firm choice and insurance choice universities. Remind them to check their emails and take advantage of the many opportunities to engage with the university. Through being prepared, they'll be more able to hit the ground running when they start their course. After all, university is just around the corner!



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How to choose your university accommodation

By Caitlin McEllenborough and Dominic Kehoe, Student Recruitment Officers at Manchester Metropolitan University

Cost of living is an increasingly important factor for students when deciding where to apply. However, the financial aspect is just one element to consider when advising your students about where to live.

Accommodation options

Choosing student accommodation is an exciting part of the university journey, and there are plenty of options to explore. University-owned halls are a popular choice for first-year students, offering an excellent way to make friends and settle into university life, while private accommodation can provide more independence and flexibility. Students may also choose between catered accommodation, where some meals are provided, and self-catered options, which offer more freedom over food choices and budgeting.

Accommodation costs

There are also different styles of accommodation, including en-suite rooms, shared bathrooms, and studio flats, and the number of people sharing a flat can vary. Each option comes with its own varying levels of privacy, cost, and social opportunities, which can also be impacted by how many people are sharing the halls.

When comparing accommodation, your students should consider what's included in the rent, such as Wi-Fi, utility bills, and insurance. They should also consider additional costs, like deposits, laundry, parking, and travel. Creating a simple budget and using the student finance calculator can help students find an option that suits their lifestyle and their finances.

Accommodation support

Encourage your students to learn more about the support and social life provided as a resident of their accommodation. They should also research its location when attending an open day or applicant visit day. Accommodation blocks are usually spread out across a campus or city, so some options may be closer to their course building than others.

The social activities and support provided by their accommodation can be crucial. Your students should research the support for students living on campus. Universities provide services such as co-living advice, assistance during financial hardship, and more general support. Finally, many institutions, including Manchester Metropolitan University, have residential life teams that host events throughout the year, such as quiz nights, to help students make new friends.

Encourage your students to...

- Visit accommodation before deciding - virtual tours are often available too.
- Look at lifestyle options - students can request quiet halls or an alcohol-free living space.
- Read reviews – current students will offer honest opinions at events, and through online platforms like Unibuddy.



Understanding and preparing for Clearing

By Rachel Stanley, UK Schools and Colleges Recruitment Manager at St Mary's University, Twickenham

Universities advertise the remaining spaces on their courses during Clearing. This gives your students the opportunity to explore the degree programmes still available for the upcoming academic year.

People often think Clearing starts on A-level results day, but it typically starts in early July and finishes in October. This means your students can start exploring courses in Clearing over a month before results day, and even speak to universities before they receive their grades!

Clearing eligibility

Most students looking for a place at university will be eligible to apply through Clearing. Clearing is available to students who:

- haven't applied to university through UCAS in the main cycle
- applied but didn't receive any university offers in the main cycle
- didn't meet the entry requirements for their firm or insurance choice universities
- have changed their mind about the university or course they originally applied to.

Clearing preparation

Results day can be nerve-wracking, but there are lots of things your students can do to prepare, which will hopefully put their minds at ease.

- **Research options** – if your students are worried about meeting the conditions of their offers, or are looking to change course or university, they can research alternative options before results day. They can explore courses available in Clearing that align with their interests

and career goals, discover the support services available, and consider how far the university is from home or if there is student accommodation available.

- **Gather numbers** – encourage your students to make a list of university choices with their Clearing hotline number, so they can call them quickly on results day. Places can fill up quickly, so this will help your students get in touch with universities as soon as they receive their grades. Some universities offer pre-registration for Clearing, where students will receive a call from the universities on results day.
- **Prepare questions** – your students should prepare some questions to ask universities. For instance, they might wish to ask whether student accommodation is available. To further support their decision-making, they should ask if the university is hosting a Clearing open day where they can tour the facilities, meet academics that teach on the course, and speak to current students.

Clearing process

Your students can contact universities once they receive their results, and an adviser will guide them through the process. Before contacting universities on results day, your students should have their qualifications and UCAS ID number to hand, as they'll need to provide these.

If your students find a course they like, they can contact the university directly by phone or live chat. Universities will need to speak directly to the applicant to process their application.

If your student appears to meet the entry requirements based on their grades, they'll be made an informal offer over the phone. Next, they will be sent an email with further instructions to follow to accept their offer.

Students can call universities back at any time to ask follow-up questions. As always, we're here to help.

St Mary's University, London



**St Mary's
University
London**

Teacher and Adviser Conference 2027

Wednesday 7 July | 10am-3pm

St Mary's annual Teacher and Adviser's Conference is perfect for colleagues who support or advise students considering their next steps after school or college. Colleagues in any position at a school or college are welcome, and the Conference is free to attend.

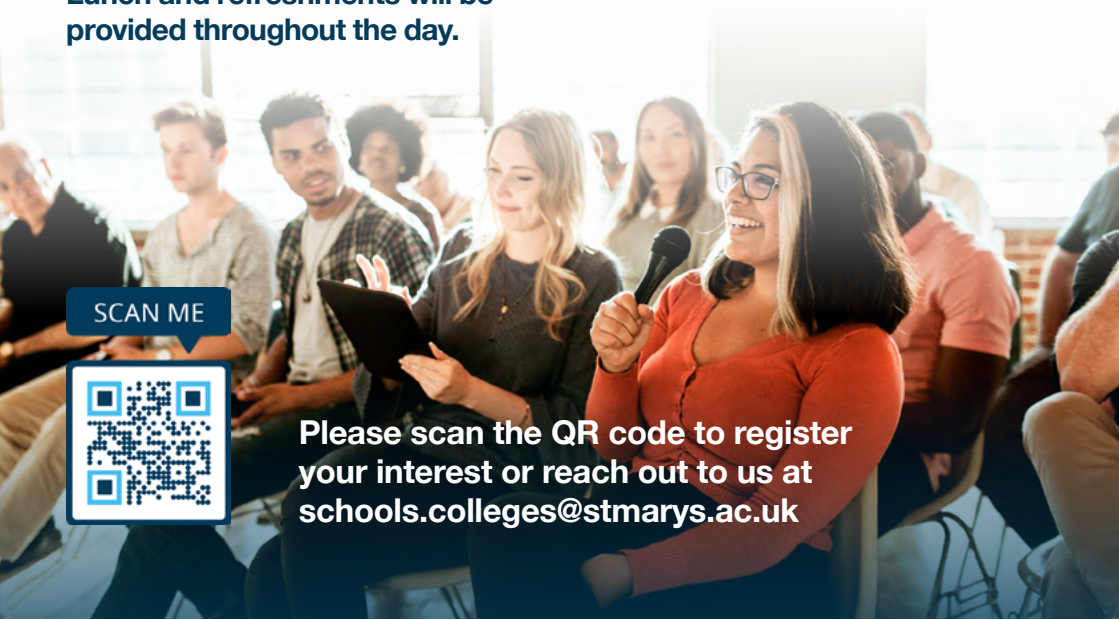
Our Conference aims to provide you with the latest information, advice and guidance to help you support your students as they research their options post sixth-form or college. Sessions will include presentations and workshops delivered by St Mary's staff and external speakers.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided throughout the day.

SCAN ME



Please scan the QR code to register your interest or reach out to us at schools.colleges@stmarys.ac.uk



My advice for teachers by Jerry Ndi

International Economics and Finance student at Queen Mary University of London, Compliance Associate Intern and host of The Jerry Exclusive Podcast



living in halls?" to "How do you make friends when everyone's new?" That access made university feel like a place that could be a reality, and not some distant, elite world.

I didn't get the luxury of being taken to many open days. My family were busy, and public transport isn't always your friend. But I remember taking the leap and visiting Queen Mary University of London on my own. That trip changed everything. It gave me a more tangible vision.

1. Which teacher or adviser supported you?

When I think back to my university application journey, it wasn't just a one-man mission. I was lucky to have a supportive 'village' of people. For me, that included my Head of Year, a few brilliant teachers, and my older brother who had gone through the process a couple of years before me.

2. How did they support you?

They weren't just random people ticking boxes or pushing UCAS deadlines. They genuinely cared. My Head of Year helped me narrow down my choices, listened to my long list of ambitions, and didn't shut any of them down - even the wild ones. She even considered me as an Oxbridge-level applicant. Sheeshh, the prestige!

One teacher went above and beyond by reading my personal statement multiple times, always saying, "Make it sound like you." That stuck with me. In a system where everyone's trying to sound clever, being authentic made me stand out.

3. Did they arrange a university visit?

One thing I appreciated most was when our sixth form arranged for a few university reps to visit. I asked everything from "What's it really like

4. What advice will you never forget?

There's one piece of advice I'll never forget. My teacher said: "You're not trying to impress them with big words. You're showing them what's already inside you." That turned my whole personal statement around. I stopped writing what I thought they wanted to hear and started writing what I needed to say.

5. What advice would you give to teachers?

To the teachers reading this: first off, thank you. You don't hear that enough. But more importantly: never underestimate your influence. Your encouragement can be the reason someone even applies. Your advice can shape the way they see their future. And your belief, even on their off days, can become the foundation for the confidence they'll carry into interviews, lectures, and life beyond education.

I'm currently interning as a Compliance Associate in the financial sector and running a small podcast on the side. I wouldn't have thought either possible just a few years ago. But that's the beauty of good guidance. It doesn't just help you apply. It helps you believe you belong.



What happens after results day

By Teslimah Bello, Campaigns and Conversion Officer at the University of Kent

Results day is one of the biggest moments of the year. As teachers and advisers, you play a key role in helping your sixth-form students through it. Some will gain a university place, whilst others will need Clearing. Both routes need practical support.

Route A: confirming a place

For students who meet their offer conditions, Route A means confirming their place, whether this is their firm or insurance choice. Once they have confirmed on UCAS, they usually begin to receive pre-arrival information and actions from the university.

Communication is crucial. Students should check their emails, read messages carefully, and act promptly, as important updates often arrive during the summer. Timely reminders from teachers and advisers can make a real difference, especially for those students who are the first in their family to attend university or find the process daunting.

Route B: using Clearing

Route B is the Clearing pathway. It gives students another way forward when plans change, which can happen for many reasons. Some may have applied after the UCAS deadline, not received the grades required for their first choice, achieved higher grades than expected, or want a different course or university.

Clearing is a flexible way to search for courses, compare options, and contact universities directly. UCAS offers a search tool, and its Clearing pages help unplaced students find courses with available spaces. Help your students stay calm, act quickly, and use the information each university makes available. You can find advice at [UnitasterDays.com/Clearing](https://www.unitasterdays.com/clearing)

How you can help

As a teacher or adviser, you can make the process manageable through steady support. Explain the difference between the main UCAS cycle and Clearing. Highlight key dates and deadlines so students and families know what to do.

If your students apply through your school or college, check they know any internal deadlines alongside the UCAS deadline, as the two may not align.

Encourage your students and their parents to create a results day checklist, including:

- Results
- Course choices
- Contact details
- Deadlines
- Questions to ask.

The best form of contact is usually by phone. Speaking to admissions staff will enable your students to know if a course still has places, if their qualifications are suitable, and their next steps. Check the university's website for its Clearing page and any upcoming events.

In-person visits can be especially useful, while virtual sessions offer a flexible alternative. With consent, you can also help students prepare for their Clearing phone calls or contact universities on their behalf.

Results day is a step forward in the university journey. With the right support, students can move ahead with confidence as they make decisions on their future university path.



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How to prepare your students for university

By Zoe Coles, Campaigns and Conversion Officer at the University of Kent

The summer before university marks a significant transitional period, bringing both excitement and anxiety for many students. It is when students move from accepting a place to preparing to start, and teachers and advisers can help them stay organised, informed, and confident along the way.

Enrolment comes first

Students will need to enrol. The university will tell them how and when to do so. This is the step that starts formal registration, which usually includes confirming personal and contact details, uploading a photograph for their student ID card, and completing any required course or financial steps.

Remind your students that this is part of becoming an official student and preparing for the next stage. It is very important to read each section of the enrolment process carefully before moving on, but reassure them they shouldn't feel pressured to figure things out alone. If anything is unclear, always ask. Universities understand this is an important transition period and have teams available to support.

Keep checking emails

Over the summer, universities send compulsory actions, practical updates, and welcome information. These emails may cover IT setup, accommodation, arrival arrangements, welcome week, module choices, reading lists, pre-arrival webinars, and links to relevant information. A missed email can mean a missed deadline, so your students should check their inbox regularly and respond promptly.

Get ready for arrival

Once the main tasks are underway, students can begin thinking about the practical side of moving or commuting to university. This includes travel, documents, and arrival instructions, including where to go, when to arrive, and what to bring.

Campus maps and welcome information will help them know what to expect and where to find their community before teaching begins. Welcome events, the students' union, and student activities will help them settle in, meet people, and feel connected. Virtual events, campus tours, and online chats with students on the university website are useful at this stage, as they allow new students to connect with current students and ask questions.

Make support visible early

As a teacher or adviser, encourage your students to think about support before they arrive. They might need disability, learning, medical, wellbeing, or accessibility support. This is worth disclosing early to give the university time to make relevant adjustments. If a student is moving away from home, they should register with a local GP upon arrival.

Early conversations can help your students feel more settled, supported, and confident about what lies ahead. For some students, that early reassurance can make a real difference, especially to those who are the first in their family to attend university or find the process overwhelming. With the right preparation, students will arrive informed and ready for the next stage of their journey.



An introduction to student life

By Lucas Allington, Student Recruitment and Marketing Assistant at the University of Essex

University is a significant milestone for many young people. As they approach this transition, understanding what student life involves can help you guide your students with confidence. This new chapter brings exciting experiences and responsibilities, from managing a budget and living with new people to balancing study with extracurricular activities or part-time work. These changes can feel challenging at first, so reassure students that settling in takes time and help them develop organisational and self-management skills before they arrive.

Academic expectations

The step-up to university from school or college is often the biggest adjustment. With an emphasis on independent study, students are expected to take more responsibility for managing their own learning. Teaching is typically delivered through lectures, seminars, and practical sessions, meaning students often have less direct contact time. They are expected to take a more active role in their learning. To prepare them, build opportunities for research and wider reading into your lessons. An Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) is another valuable way for students to develop the research, organisation, and time management skills they'll draw on throughout their university studies.

Getting involved

Alongside their studies, students are settling into unfamiliar surroundings, meeting new people, and establishing routines. At the start of the autumn term, universities often run welcome weeks before teaching begins, with events designed to help students make connections, find their way around campus, and develop a sense of belonging.

At the University of Essex, this includes the Freshers' Fair, where students can explore societies, sports clubs, volunteering opportunities, and support services.

Encourage your students to research the welcome activities offered by the universities they are considering, so they understand what's available before they arrive. It's also worth reminding them to step outside their comfort zone and explore interests beyond their degree.

Support and guidance

Accessing support is a normal part of university life. Students are encouraged to make use of the services available throughout their studies. Universities offer a wide range of academic and personal support.

At Essex, for example, the Skills for Success team provides group and one-to-one sessions covering academic writing, research, referencing, statistics, and study skills.

Students can also access wellbeing, financial, and other specialist services. Reassure your students that asking for help is a positive step and can play an important role in making the most of their university experience.

Helping students thrive

Starting university is a period of change. It's important to remind students they don't need to have everything figured out from day one. With time, support, and a willingness to embrace new experiences, they'll build confidence, develop independence, and find their place within the university community.



How to make friends at university

By Sid, Student Ambassador at the University of Reading

Your students might feel anxious about making friends at university. However, university is all about making new friendships. Universities provide support services and friendship-building activities to help students settle into university life. This article offers my top tips for making friends at university.

1. Join clubs and societies

These are the best way to make friends at university. You'll meet others with similar interests or try something new. The Students' Union will list their clubs and societies and share information at Welcome Week. Many universities have hundreds of societies, so there's something for everyone. Wednesday afternoons are typically lecture-free, so students have time to take part.

I have joined the Photography, Law, Model UN, Film, and Golf societies. They are a perfect way to unwind after a long day of lectures. I am Vice-President of the Photography Society, so there are leadership opportunities which allow you to shape your society.

2. Visit the Students' Union

The Students' Union will run lots of events, day and night, many of which are free or cheap. Daytime events are usually low key, designed for making friendships in a relaxed environment. At Reading, you can do anything from arts and crafts to trying a new sport. Evening events include quizzes, socials, themed nights, and more.

3. Study together

Attending classes is a brilliant way to make friends because this is where students regularly see the same people. Students work together for their academic success in group projects or study together for an upcoming test. This builds trust and communication. Simple conversation starters like "how well did you understand the class?" can nurture long-term friendships.

4. Attend meet-ups

Student meet-ups are organised by universities to help students find others with the same course, year of study, or shared experience. Meet-ups can help bring together commuter students, disabled students, students from an under-represented background, and more. This allows students to feel part of their university community within the first few weeks.

5. Keep your door open

Flatmates are often the first social group that students meet and see the most often. In my first week, we organised a flat meal: we cooked together and watched a movie. Keeping your door open during arrival week can also break the ice and spark conversations. Students can also venture outside for fresh air and to explore the campus or local town together. This builds a sense of community early on.

Reach out

Finally, encourage your students to reach out to student ambassadors at open days to gain advice about student life. Equally, most universities have a safe online portal where students can connect with current students and fellow applicants before they even arrive at university.



A collage of four young adults of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, all smiling and looking towards the camera. From left to right: a Black woman with curly hair, a young man with a goatee and a chain necklace, a young woman with a nose ring and a patterned sweater, and a young woman with red curly hair wearing a floral top.

**“I feel confident
and ready to take
the next step.”**

Open Days

Friday 19 June

Saturday 20 June

Saturday 10 October

Saturday 7 November

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This page is updated with events
regularly.



Making the most of the students' union

Lucy Dixon, Schools and Colleges Co-Ordinator at the University of Winchester and former Student Trustee for Winchester Students' Union

Students' unions (SUs) are an important part of a student's journey, no matter what degree they study. When I was an undergraduate student, I didn't realise the SU existed until midway through my second year. Now, I love talking to students, teachers, advisers, parents, and supporters about everything the SU has to offer!

What is an SU?

An SU is a student-led and student-delivered organisation. Its prime function is to represent the voice of students and support the student body through democratic processes. For instance, the sabbatical and part-time officer teams – which have different formations at different institutions – are elected by the student population. The SU can also help your students settle in, make friends, and find new interests.

In UK universities, SUs were given constitutional form under section two of the 1994 Education Act. Most SUs are affiliated with the National Union of Students (NUS), and some have been running since the 1870s. Almost all SUs are registered charities, independent from their associated university.

What do they offer?

University life is more than just lectures, studying, and assignments. A large part of a student's experience is the social experience, such as day activities, nights out, sports teams, societies, representational networks, recharge days, and much more. At most institutions, you'll find a variety of sports teams and societies to explore. There is a place for all students, whether you are into rugby or Doctor Who, academic interests or shared identities.

SUs also provide integral independent advice services. Dedicated staff offer free, confidential advice on areas such as academic, wellbeing, housing and money. Just like their university counterpart, the SU will usually provide part-time work for students, plus volunteering projects to help students build their skillsets and CVs.

How to get involved

Students automatically become a member of their university students' union. This means your students are part of a student-led community from day one. Here are some top tips I collated from people who have worked at Winchester Students' Union:

- Go to Freshers Fayre to explore what the Union has to offer
- Email your SU officers with ideas and campaigns so they can represent your interests
- Think about running for an SU officer role, or a committee role on a sport or society
- Use SU spaces to work and relax, such as study zones, cafés, and venues.



The benefits of undertaking a study abroad placement

By Philippa Dobree-Carey, Author of *From High School to Uni and The Essential Job Search Guide for Students*

Studying abroad is more than just an academic exercise. It's a transformative experience that will shape your students in ways that cannot be replicated in a classroom. For modern language students in particular, an immersion period in a foreign culture is essential for achieving fluency, confidence, and a deeper cultural understanding.

My daughter experienced this first-hand during six-month placements in Paris and Barcelona. She improved her French and Spanish and learned to live in different cultures, reaping the rewards of a truly international education.

Academic and language benefits

There is no substitute for linguistic immersion. Language learning apps don't do a thorough job. Studying in a country where the target language is spoken accelerates proficiency. It helps students develop a natural fluency and an understanding of cultural nuances, such as the use of tone and gestures. Exposure to different teaching methods also broadens perspectives and sharpens critical thinking skills.

As a teacher or adviser, you can:

- encourage your students to explore exchange programmes relevant to their field of study
- integrate case studies and international perspectives into lessons
- connect students with alumni who have undertaken overseas placements to share insights and advice.

Personal growth and independence

Living in another country encourages your students to adapt to new situations, solve problems, and navigate unfamiliar situations. These experiences help to build resilience, confidence, and appreciation for diverse cultures. Managing day-to-day life equips students with practical skills that will last a lifetime, from mastering public transport to social interaction with locals.

As a teacher or adviser, you can:

- facilitate discussions on cultural adaptation and managing change
- offer guidance on practical matters, such as accommodation, budgeting, and scholarships
- maintain a repository of resources, including trusted agencies that can facilitate applications for student and work visas, and advice on health insurance and part-time work opportunities.



Career advantages

Global experience is a valuable asset in today's job market. Employers seek individuals with cross-cultural awareness, adaptability, and language proficiency. They might need employees who can engage with international clients, translate documents, or contribute to global partnerships. As such, global experience widens job-seeking opportunities.

After returning to the UK, your students will need your help. As teachers or advisers, you can:

- help students present their experiences in a way that will benefit their future careers. Reflective exercises, such as journaling, can help students to articulate their experiences in preparation for job interviews or university applications.
- encourage students to create and maintain a LinkedIn profile that highlights their international studies, using hashtags such as #StudyAbroad or #Erasmus to strengthen their professional presence and expand their network.

Global mindsets in the classroom

Even if overseas placements are not immediately accessible, there are plenty of ways you can embed international thinking into the curriculum at your school or college. You can:

- arrange virtual exchanges with overseas schools
- screen foreign-language media in class
- invite guest speakers with global experience.

Such activities can be highly effective in promoting awareness and the opportunities of studying abroad.

Life-changing opportunities

Studying abroad fosters independence, resilience, financial management skills, and self-confidence, as well as academic knowledge. My daughter's experiences studying abroad significantly helped her develop and improve the soft skills she now demonstrates today, building her career in Paris. With the right support from teachers and advisers such as yourself, your students can be empowered to make the most of such life-changing opportunities.



The benefits of undertaking a year in industry

**By Stephanie Chamberlain, Associate Head
- Student Outreach at Sheffield Business
School, Sheffield Hallam University**

We often get asked by prospective students and parents about the benefits and challenges of undertaking a year in industry, commonly referred to as a placement year.

What is a placement?

A placement year is when an undergraduate spends their third year working in industry, before returning to university for their fourth year of study. It forms part of the degree course. Sometimes they are chosen by the students and sometimes they are required by the course. Placements are approved by the university, and students are supported by the university and employer throughout.

Placement lengths can differ, but they are typically 48 weeks. Not every university offers placement years, so this is an important area to research when applying to university. Placements should not be confused with internships, which are paid or unpaid work-experience opportunities, usually lasting between 4 weeks and 4 months over the summer.

The benefits

- **Skills development** – students develop professional and technical skills, gaining confidence and independence in the workplace alongside industry awareness. They expand their professional networks and strengthen their communication, teamwork, and problem-solving capabilities, with access to employer training and mentoring opportunities.
- **Standing out** – employers consider placements as succession planning to help recruit their future graduates. As such, successful placement students are a step ahead in a competitive employment landscape.

- **Income generation** – placements are financially beneficial. Students are paid at industry rate.
- **Academic success** – placement students return highly motivated, so there is a strong correlation between placements and higher degree classifications.
- **Future employment** - graduate employers may favour students who have completed placements as they already have significant, demonstrable work experience, which gives them the edge in the employment market.

The challenges

- **Competitive** – applying to placements is a competitive process and requires perseverance, but this is realistic preparation for the future.
- **Daunting** – securing a placement can feel daunting, but universities often have a designated employer partnerships team who develop new placements and opportunities to meet employers. Careers and employability advisers also assist with application support, CV checking, LinkedIn profile development, and mock interview or assessment centre practice.
- **Pressure from others** - there can be peer or family pressure to get university 'out of the way' rather than add an extra year to your degree. However, the extra year has a tangible impact on employability and career earnings, as reflected in alumni experiences and employer feedback.

How you can help

As a teacher, you can inspire students to consider industry placements by helping them to make connections between academic study and their future employability. You can also underscore the skills, confidence, and resilience needed for their future career success.

“Placement students return highly motivated, so there is a strong correlation between placements and higher degree classifications.”

Starting a business at university

By Asif Majid, Associate Head - Student Experience & Enterprise at Sheffield Hallam University

University isn't just about lectures, assignments, and exams. It can also be the perfect time for your students to start their own business. If they are interested, please do share this advice with them.

Many students arrive with an idea they want to explore, while others discover opportunities during their course. Whether you're interested in launching a clothing brand, starting a fitness business, building an app or working as a freelancer, university gives you the time and flexibility to try something new.

You don't need to have everything figured out at the start. What matters most is being willing to take that first step and learn as you go.

Support for new businesses

Starting a business might feel overwhelming, but most universities offer support to help you get started and grow. You can usually access:

- One-to-one advice tailored to your idea
- Workshops on starting and running a business
- Guidance on funding and managing money
- Help with branding, marketing, and promotion
- Connections to experts, mentors, and academics

This support is designed to help you build confidence, develop your idea, and avoid mistakes.

Meet other student entrepreneurs

One of the biggest advantages of starting a business at university is being surrounded by other motivated students. Many universities provide shared spaces, such as a student enterprise hub or co-working area. These spaces allow you to work alongside others who are developing ideas, making it easier to:

- Share ideas and get feedback
- Meet potential collaborators or business partners
- Stay motivated and inspired
- Learn from other students' experiences
- Being part of a community can make a big difference, especially in the early stages.

Work on your business during your degree

If your course includes a placement year, you may have the option to spend that time developing your own business instead of working for an employer. This opportunity allows you to:

- Focus fully on your idea
- Gain real business experience
- Build confidence and independence
- Develop skills that employers value.

These placements are usually competitive and may require an application, but they are a valuable way to take your idea further.

What you'll gain

Starting a business at university isn't just about making money. It's about developing skills and experience that will benefit you in the future. You'll have the chance to:

- Build confidence and independence
- Develop communication and problem-solving skills
- Gain real-world experience alongside your studies
- Strengthen your CV or personal statement
- Create opportunities for yourself after graduation.

Why start at university?

University provides a supportive environment where you can test ideas, take risks, and learn from mistakes without the pressure of going it alone. With access to advice, facilities, and a network of like-minded people, it's one of the best times to explore entrepreneurship.

“ I wanted to start my own business, not only to challenge myself, but to use it as a platform to support the sustainability movement. ”

- Becky Malkin, Inshore Designs

How a degree opens up employability

By Hannah Vincent, Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer at the University of Staffordshire

In today's competitive job market, it's natural for your students to question whether a university degree is the right route into employment. With the cost of living currently rising, and more alternative options becoming available, there isn't a one-size-fits-all option. However, going to university remains a powerful tool for students to access a fantastic career.

Skills development

A university degree used to set you apart from the rest. This is still the case, but employers are looking for more from their employees, with a big emphasis on transferable skills. At university, students develop their critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, communication, and research abilities. Graduates will come away from university with the ability to synthesize information, present ideas clearly, and collaborate effectively.

Transferable skills

No matter what course you study, the University of Staffordshire places strong emphasis on developing skills valued by workplaces across all sectors. This includes:

- **communication** – writing and speaking clearly, presenting ideas, and listening effectively
- **problem-solving** – approaching challenges logically and creatively
- **teamwork** – collaborating with others in diverse, fast-paced environments
- **adaptability** – being flexible in the face of new tools, ideas, or roles
- **digital literacy** – using digital tools confidently for work, research, and collaboration
- **leadership and initiative** – taking ownership of projects and decisions.

Placement options

Another way for your students to become more employable is to undertake a placement year. This integrates practical employment skills into the curriculum by bridging the gap between theory and practice. Students take the knowledge learnt in lectures and apply it to real life situations in the workplace. This reinforces their learning and increases confidence.

Placement opportunities are also fantastic for networking. Working for a company for a year will highlight the transferable skills offered by the student. This can lead to employment straight after graduation because the company can see how well they work.

The University of Staffordshire offers placement opportunities for most of our courses. 97% of our graduates who take part in a placement have progressed into graduate-level work, self-employment, or postgraduate study. This shows how crucial placements are for student progression. Placement options include:

- 6-week placement blocks
- course-based placements, such as nursing or paramedics
- placement years or sandwich years
- international placements.

Careers support

Universities also support your students after they have graduated. At the University of Staffordshire, students have lifelong support. Our careers team can help with:

- CV writing
- interview preparation
- job application support
- employer events.

Remember, university is much more than a qualification. Degrees are gateways to the careers that your students hope to secure in the years ahead.



Thank you to our readers

We appreciate you taking the time to delve into these articles to enhance and advance your knowledge about the higher education sector. We doubly appreciate you sharing this newfound knowledge with your students and their supporters to help them understand university and find the confidence to apply.



Thank you to our writers

We are forever grateful to our 80+ writers for sharing their words of wisdom about university life. Every writer featured in this guide is a volunteer. They kindly found the time amidst (and beyond) their bustling day jobs to produce their articles. Writers, you put the HE in heroes!



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