



**Featuring expert articles written
by over 80 education practitioners**

 **UniTasterDays.com**

Teachers' Guide to University 2026

The key higher education facts for school and college staff

Produced in collaboration with **HELOA**

Contents

University for everyone

- 4 | Welcome to the UniTasterDays Teachers' Guide 2026
- 5 | My advice for teachers by Baasit Siddiqui
- 7 | Reasons to consider university
- 8 | How universities can help you achieve your goal as teachers
- 9 | Understanding fair access and widening participation
- 11 | Support for first-in-family students
- 12 | Support for males on Free School Meals
- 13 | Support for mature students, parents, and carers
- 14 | Support for service children
- 15 | Support for ethnic minorities
- 18 | Support for young adult carers
- 20 | Support for students with diverse lived experiences
- 21 | Support for care-experienced and estranged students
- 22 | Support for students with special educational needs and disabilities
- 24 | Support for international students
- 25 | English language support at university
- 26 | Opportunities offered by Uni Connect
- 27 | My advice for teachers by Reece Buckley

Researching university options

- 28 | How to build an effective relationship with a university
- 29 | How to research universities and courses
- 30 | How to choose the right university
- 32 | How to choose the right university for you
- 33 | The different types of university courses
- 34 | Engaging with universities online, on campus, and on demand
- 35 | Understanding university league tables
- 37 | Studying higher education at a further education college
- 38 | Studying a degree apprenticeship
- 40 | My advice for teachers by Rosie Glover
- 41 | Studying a solicitor apprenticeship
- 42 | Studying an online university course
- 43 | Studying a part-time university course
- 44 | Studying a creative university course
- 46 | Studying a creative university course in the age of AI
- 47 | Studying medicine at university
- 48 | Studying graduate-entry medicine at university
- 50 | How location can enhance the university experience
- 51 | The benefits of studying in Scotland
- 53 | The benefits of studying in Wales
- 54 | The benefits of studying in Northern Ireland
- 55 | My advice for teachers by Sarra Jenkins

University events

- 57 | The benefits of attending a university event
- 58 | The different types of university events
- 59 | How to prepare for a university fair
- 60 | How to prepare for a university open day
- 62 | Accessing university events on a budget
- 63 | Advice for attending an online university event
- 64 | How to organise an event at your school or college
- 67 | Top questions to ask at university fairs

Contents

- 68 | The benefits of attending a teacher conference
- 69 | How you can help universities evaluate their events
- 70 | How to invite a university to speak to your students
- 72 | How to arrange a university visit for your students
- 74 | My advice for teachers by Jerry Ndi

University finance

- 75 | Student finance in England: 3 must-know facts for supporting your students
- 77 | University bursaries and scholarships
- 79 | Scholarships: finding opportunities and standing out
- 82 | The NHS Learning Support Fund
- 83 | The Disabled Students' Allowance
- 84 | Applying for hardship funding
- 85 | Budgeting at university
- 86 | Part-time work opportunities at university
- 87 | Saving money with student discount cards
- 88 | My advice for teachers by Jessica Pieri

Applying to university

- 89 | Understanding the university admissions process and offer-making
- 90 | The 2026 changes to personal statements
- 91 | Writing an outstanding personal statement
- 93 | Qualifications accepted by universities
- 94 | Preparing a portfolio for a creative course
- 95 | Understanding the solicitors qualifying exam (SQE)
- 96 | Contextual university admissions
- 97 | What happens after receiving an offer
- 98 | How to choose university accommodation
- 99 | Understanding and preparing for Clearing
- 101 | My advice for teachers by Robin Schieferstein

Getting ready for university

- 102 | What happens after results day
- 103 | An introduction to student life
- 104 | Exploring unexpected opportunities at university
- 105 | How to shape the university experience that's right for you
- 106 | The benefits of joining a student society
- 107 | The benefits of joining a sports team
- 109 | The benefits of volunteering at university
- 110 | Making the most of the students' union
- 111 | The benefits of undertaking a study abroad placement
- 113 | Accessing career support at university
- 114 | How a degree opens up employability
- 116 | Preparing students for their future careers

In collaboration with



Supported by



careersEngland>>>>



Welcome to the UniTasterDays Teachers' Guide to University 2026

University is a big decision. Right now, the students in your classrooms probably have lots of questions. Is university right for them? What should they study? Where should they study? How do they pay for it?

This is understandable. University is a significant change. It introduces your students to new ways of studying, living, and socialising. Spoiler alert: university is worth the disruption. It offers an unrivalled opportunity for them to secure the skills, relationships, and career they've always wanted.

But it's not the right path for everyone. That's why we produce this guide every year, brimming with information and insights. We want to help you support your students in making the best possible decision for their future.

These pages are packed with articles. They are written by over 80 university practitioners, including contributors from all four countries in the UK. You'll also discover a suite of "My advice for teachers" articles written by teachers, advisers, and students on how to support your own students. Each contains a wealth of actionable suggestions.

We're forever thankful for their words of wisdom, now more than ever, because this is our most important Teachers' Guide yet. Let's address the elephant in the room, the Zoom, and the classroom. The UK is facing a cost-of-living crisis. The decision to attend university is less clear-cut than ever, despite our empowering (and often misunderstood) student finance system (page 75).

The cost-of-living crisis echoes throughout this guide. Several of the articles are designed to help your students overcome financial difficulty. They'll learn how to secure "free money" to fund their student experience (page 77), apply for hardship funding (page 84), and manage their money at university (page 85).

And we'll continue to support you at UniTasterDays. We began as an event platform back in 2012 where you could search for university events. Over the years, we have created new ways to share university insights with you, such as our subject videos, leading podcast (page 80), and this handy guide. Last year, the cost-of-living crisis inspired us to create an events incentive search tool (page 85). This allows you to find every university offering financial support to attend their open days.

Next year, and every other year, we'll continue to guide you, your students, their parents, and their supporters through the university application journey.

Yes, it's a difficult time of change and challenge and crisis. But we know your students will have your support. And you will have our support.

Simon Fairbanks

Head of Community Engagement



Helping you support your students with university



Search university events:
www.UniTasterDays.com/Search



Watch subject guide videos:
www.UniTasterDays.com/SubjectVideos



Read university advice:
www.UniTasterDays.com/TeacherBlog



Listen to our podcasts:
www.UniTasterDays.com/Podcasts

My advice for teachers by Baasit Siddiqui



Director of Siddiqui Education

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**.

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 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.



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 50).

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!



How universities can help you achieve your goal as teachers

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 valuable 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. "

Understanding fair access and widening participation

By Liz Bailey, Widening Participation Senior Officer at the University of Derby

Widening participation (WP) is about removing barriers and creating equal access to higher education. For teachers and careers leaders, supporting your students from underrepresented backgrounds will ensure they explore and achieve their full potential. Yet, WP support can sometimes feel unclear.

Identify barriers

Barriers to access aren't always visible. Students might be care-experienced, young carers, estranged from their families, from low participation neighbourhoods, or the first in their family to consider university. They may have disabilities, learning differences, or limited financial means. These students often lack the social networks or knowledge to navigate higher education pathways.

Engage early

Begin conversations from Year 9 or 10 where possible. The University of Derby, for example, offers targeted programmes like Rise High for younger students in rural areas. We also provide specific support for care-experienced learners, which introduces university life in a supportive way, with relatable role models to represent their shared experiences.

Raise awareness

Some students don't know they are eligible for extra support. Encourage them to ask what's in place for someone like them. This can unlock tailored opportunities. The University of Derby's dedicated WP team delivers bespoke campus visits, mentoring, summer schools, and outreach to eligible groups. This extends beyond university entry, with enrolment support including study skills tutors, mental health specialists, and help accessing the Disabled Students' Allowance (page 83).

Embed WP

For teachers, embedding WP activities into your careers programme can significantly enhance the support you offer to students. Encourage learners to reflect on their experiences when writing personal statements to strengthen their applications. Look for ways to integrate WP themes into your Gatsby Benchmark activities, ensuring students are aware of the tailored support available to them.

Share real-life stories of social mobility to inspire and motivate your students. Use your school's WP alumni as examples. Take advantage of free CPD opportunities offered by university WP teams, such as the University of Derby's webinars on admissions, and support addressing subject-specific barriers such as medicine.

Track knowledge

Tracking WP knowledge is essential. Create a simple spreadsheet to record university contacts, outreach schemes, and eligibility criteria. This becomes a vital reference point when staff change roles or when students express new interests.

Partner with universities

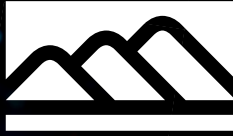
Working in partnership with universities will strengthen outcomes. WP teams want to collaborate, co-deliver, and innovate with schools. Strong community partnerships support consistent messaging to families and carers. This helps overcome cultural or generational misconceptions about higher education.

Evaluate impact

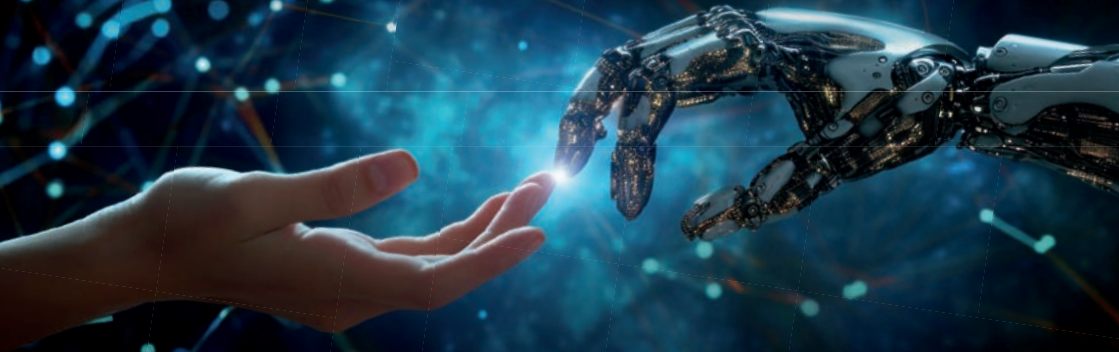
Sharing feedback with universities will help improve programmes and ensure they remain relevant. Schools can collect student reflections, progression data, and case studies to demonstrate impact and inform future strategy.

Unlock potential

WP is about unlocking potential. With the right information, relationships, and structures in place, you can allow every student to see university as a realistic possibility. You could be the difference that helps a student take their next step with confidence.



UNIVERSITY OF
DERBY



PARTNERING FOR **IMPACT**

The University of Derby delivers a high-quality education in an immersive learning environment where students can develop the practical skills needed for a successful career.

Through our wide range of undergraduate degrees and degree apprenticeship programmes, students have opportunities to engage with industry leaders such as Rolls-Royce, Toyota, and the NHS, as well as research experts to help build a better future for everyone.

Our exciting programme of activities for schools and colleges includes:

Get Ready for Uni – online and on-demand resources to support student transition

Academic masterclasses – immersive experiences to inspire and empower

Degree Apprenticeship Fair – 11 February 2026

UK Uni Search Exhibition and Taster Day – 17 April 2026

Schools and Colleges Open Day – 19 June 2026

Teacher and Adviser Conference – 7 July 2026

2nd
for employability
and course quality

(Uni Compare Student
Review Rankings 2026)

Top 25
in the UK for overall
student satisfaction

(Complete University
Guide 2026)

96%
of our UK graduates
are in employment
or further study

(HESA graduate outcomes 21/22)

TEF
2023

Gold

derby.ac.uk/scl

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 84).
- **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

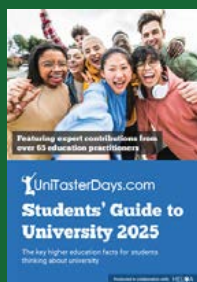
- **Ask for help** - don't be afraid to reach out. Academic advice, financial guidance, and emotional support are always available.
- **Get involved** - join clubs, societies, or sports teams to meet people and try new things.
- **Remember you belong** - everyone feels nervous at first, even if they 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 males on Free School Meals

By Will France, Higher Education Outreach Officer at Go Higher West Yorkshire

The barriers to higher education are well known and persistent, particularly for boys in receipt of free school meals (FSM). National data shows that only 13% of boys who received FSM at age 15 progressed to higher education by age 19, compared to over 40% of their non-FSM peers. This gap highlights the need for targeted support. HE providers are responding with initiatives designed to raise aspirations and improve access.

Contextual admissions are a powerful tool for addressing inequality. They consider a student's background, rather than judging their potential solely on exam results. Contextual admissions might apply to students who are from a low-income household, the first in their family to attend university, or living in an area with low HE participation.

The Access to Leeds programme at the University of Leeds is a leading example. Eligible students, including those on FSM, can receive a lower offer. This is typically two A-level grades below the standard offer, provided they complete a short online module and attend skills workshops. This allows students to demonstrate their potential beyond predicted grades.

At Leeds Beckett University, contextual admissions form part of their Widening Access strategy. Applicants from underrepresented groups, such as those on FSM or from low-participation neighbourhoods, are flagged during the application process. They may receive additional consideration or alternative offers.

The University of Bradford also takes a contextualised approach through its Progression Scheme. This supports

students from disadvantaged backgrounds with application guidance, interview preparation, and tailored offers. Male students on FSM who meet the eligibility criteria are encouraged to apply and engage with the scheme.

Early engagement is critical. Outreach programmes across West Yorkshire are working to build confidence and raise aspirations among FSM learners, especially boys.

The Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) partnership brings together HE providers across the region to deliver strategic outreach in schools and colleges. Their males on FSM programme – Speak Up, Your Voice Matters – provides opportunities for learners to visit campuses, whilst signposting post-16 pathways and destinations. The programme also aims to explore themes like identity, communication, and confidence, which can prevent boys from accessing university.

Similarly, the University of Huddersfield's Future Focus programme offers school visits, taster days, and progression support with an emphasis on disadvantaged male learners. By helping students connect their interests with degree options, these sessions demystify university life and the application process.

As a teacher or adviser, you can play a vital role by:

- encouraging FSM students to take part in outreach activities as early as Year 9.
- highlighting contextual admissions routes and helping students write strong personal statements.
- supporting applications to programmes like Access to Leeds or university-run summer schools.

Universities are committed to supporting male learners from low-income backgrounds, but they rely on schools to help identify and encourage them. With the right support, these young men can see higher education as a real and achievable next step.

Support for mature students, parents and carers

By Alexandra Roberts, Senior Welsh-medium and Widening Participation Outreach Officer at the University of South Wales

For many mature students, parents and carers, the decision to enter or return to higher education can be exciting and daunting. Balancing academic study with family life, work commitments, and caring responsibilities will present unique challenges that require targeted support. Universities respond by offering a range of practical, financial, and wellbeing-focused initiatives designed to help all students thrive.

Valuing diversity

Mature students are typically defined as those aged 21 or over at the start of their undergraduate degree. Each year, universities welcome large cohorts of students from non-traditional backgrounds, including those with caring responsibilities, those returning to education after a significant break, and career-changers seeking new opportunities. Institutions such as the University of South Wales value the life experience these students bring and work hard to ensure they feel included and supported.

Tailored advice

Before students enrol, many universities offer one-to-one advice through dedicated outreach programmes led by Widening Access or Student Support teams. These teams provide tailored information about entry routes, financial support, and flexible learning options.

Flexible study

Flexibility is a key consideration for students managing other responsibilities. Many universities offer part-time study

(page 43), blended learning, and distance learning options to help students balance education with work or family life. Courses are designed to be accessible, with recorded lectures and online resources available through virtual learning environments.

Financial support

Universities understand the financial pressures faced by students supporting dependants. Eligible students can access a range of financial support, including childcare grants, the Parents' Learning Allowance, the Adult Dependants' Grant, and institution-specific scholarships and bursaries. Most of these are accessed through the student finance application and are awarded based on household income. Student Finance Wales and England also offer additional childcare and dependant financial support.

Wellbeing support

Emotional wellbeing is essential to academic success. Universities offer a range of services tailored to students' individual needs. Wellbeing services provide mental health support, counselling, and disability services, while student support teams help with time management, stress, and workload strategies.

Many students find a sense of community through their students' union, peer networks, and online forums. These spaces reduce feelings of isolation. They allow students to share experiences, advice, and encouragement.

A supportive environment

At university, inclusivity is more than a policy. It is embedded in the culture. Teachers and advisers can be confident that mature students, parents, and carers will find a welcoming environment equipped to support their academic and personal needs. By removing barriers and offering targeted support, universities will help students from all backgrounds to succeed and thrive.

Support for service children

By Natalie Bracher, Access & Success Officer at the University of Exeter

Do you have service children studying at your school?

I'm sure that you do. The Service Children's Progression Alliance is a partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children from Armed Forces families. The alliance recognises that over 80% of secondary schools in England have service children on their school roll.

A service child is a person whose parent or carer serves in the Regular armed forces, or as a Reservist, or has served at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life.

Service children have many abilities. They are resilient, able to self-advocate, confident communicators, and culturally aware. These qualities can equip students with the skills required to succeed academically in higher education.



Barriers faced by service children

In 2020, the Office for Students (OfS) identified that children from military families are underrepresented in higher education. The participation rate was estimated to be 24% compared to a national average of 43%.

Service children can face unique challenges when it comes to their education. They have a high degree of social mobility with frequent moves to different schools and often at short notice. This disruption of learning can

understandably impact their education, such as their attainment or pastoral needs. It also increases the potential of missing important information, advice, and guidance regarding their post-16 choices.

Service children experiencing separation from a serving parent can impact negatively on their educational engagement, mental health, and wellbeing. Some might pick up caring responsibilities for their siblings or a parent.

Identifying service children can be tricky. The service pupil premium available to schools ends after year 11. This leaves sixth forms and FE colleges reliant on reaching out individually to identify this cohort of students.

The OfS have included this group in their Equality of Opportunity Risk Register. This identifies risk regarding access to higher education, specifically issues around gaining the appropriate information, knowledge, and skills to make informed choices.

Supporting service children

Identify how many service children you have in your school. Ensure those students have received the appropriate information about their post-16 and post-18 choices. Nominate a point of contact, so your service children and their families know who to contact for support and information.

Make links with your local Uni Connect and higher education providers. Many will offer targeted outreach provision and can advise on available funding options. Furthermore, advise your students to do their research. Support for service children can vary between higher education providers. Encourage students to tick the 'service child' box on the UCAS application to start the support process early.

" Service children have many abilities. They are resilient, able to self-advocate, confident communicators, and culturally aware. "

Support for ethnic minority students

By Immy Lawlor, Student Recruitment and Access Officer (Reading Scholars) at the University of Reading

Providing robust support to your students applying to university is undoubtedly important, but the impact of this support can be affected by characteristics such as race. Together, we should focus on tackling barriers that prevent ethnic minority students from participating in higher education and meet their specific needs.

Whole-school racial literacy training is a good start, but targeted interventions are likely to be more effective. Admittedly, many schools are struggling with funding cuts, unreasonable workloads, and a teacher recruitment and retention crisis. However, targeted interventions don't need to be expensive or time intensive.

From stereotypes to insights

Your school's unique context and ecosystem should inform strategies for supporting your ethnic minority students. Ethnicity data can help you spot trends using specific terminology (such as Black African, Chinese, Pakistani), rather than grouping all ethnic minorities into BAME. Some of my best work has been with schools who know the attainment, HE progression, and attendance data for ethnic minority groups in detail. An in-depth analysis may not be feasible, but a data-informed approach is a strong foundation.

For instance, you may wish to support your Bangladeshi male students to access university. Maybe they aren't attaining high enough. They might need extra support researching courses. Perhaps this group have historically pursued apprenticeships. Maybe they

begin writing UCAS applications, but don't finish their personal statements. There could be cultural factors at play. You won't know until you consult with the data, colleagues, students, parents, and carers. This avoids generalisations and outdated assumptions.

When I worked in a school, we had a high population of second-generation Indian students, whose families were less familiar with applying to UK universities. Students had lots of questions, which required staff time. To help, we created a handbook on completing the UCAS application, with annotations for tricky sections like A-level modules and music exams. Once created, we could tweak the guidance each year. It became a valuable resource.

From the group to the individual

Data can inform interventions, but knowing individual needs will go further. Josiah Ogada, Diversity Lead at The Bulmershe School, advocates for not being swayed by assumptions. Not all Black students are working class. Not all Chinese students are naturally good at maths.

Also, it might not be necessary to target every ethnic group. Race is a lens for understanding a student's perspective, but other characteristics form an intersectional identity. An empathetic approach, review of your offering, and extra signposting could be enough. In anti-racism work, solutions aren't always explicitly "race" related, but involve analysing data, reviewing processes, or inclusion by design.

I recently worked with an Irish Traveller student who lacked confidence and initially didn't engage with me. I did some research into this community to better understand her cultural context. In doing so, I formed a better relationship with her over 6 months. I gave her additional 1:1 support in workshops and used confidence-boosting language in written feedback. This is similar to how you might support SEND students in your classroom.

"Your school's unique context and ecosystem should inform strategies for supporting your ethnic minority students."

Josiah advises to consider a racist mindset and do the opposite. If I were a racist, I wouldn't offer university application support to Black students, because I would assume they aren't attaining highly enough. An anti-racist would monitor their attainment, provide pre-16 enrichment opportunities, encourage those interested in university, and support with their application.

From isolation to collaboration

Universities and external partners can support your school. They could provide BAME students with information on university life, such as Seetal Jutla's BAME Students Hub at Sheffield. I've created bespoke activity that supports specific needs, such as personal statement workshops focusing on assertiveness for a girls' school with a large Pakistani population.

One of my biggest success stories has been with Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School on my KS4 attainment-raising programme. I tailored the programme with extra critical thinking content and activities on race and gender using research from my master's.

The girls grew tremendously in confidence over 6 months. In their final projects, the school attained the highest on the programme, prompting improvements in their predicted grades. This was possible because their teachers understood their needs and realised an external university partner could address them.

Schools don't have to do this work alone. If your school can identify the areas of greatest need for ethnic minority groups, external university partners can create bespoke and impactful interventions to help them progress to higher education.

" Race is a lens for understanding a student's perspective, but other characteristics form an intersectional identity. An empathetic approach, review of your offering, and extra signposting could be enough. "





UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Built in Birmingham. Forged for the future.

At the most targeted UK university by top graduate employers, we support students to build skills and connect with opportunities which align with their career goals.

With work experience, internships and placements, our students gain real-world insight and hands-on experience.



Find out more
[birmingham.ac.uk/
builtinbirmingham](https://birmingham.ac.uk/builtinbirmingham)

We progress
We activate

birmingham.ac.uk



Elle Picton

PepsiCo

E. Picton

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 77), 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, and offer CV workshops, 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 are 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.



Support for care-experienced and estranged students

By Rob Scott, Training Delivery Officer at Go Higher West Yorkshire

For care-experienced or estranged students, the journey to higher education is often complicated. Understanding the obstacles they face and the support on offer is crucial to improving outcomes for these groups.

Care-experienced students

UCAS adopts a broad, inclusive definition to ensure as many students as possible can access support: "Being care-experienced means you will have spent time living with foster carers under local authority care, in residential care (e.g. a children's home), looked after at home under a supervision order, or in kinship care with relatives or friends, either officially (e.g. a special guardianship order) or informally without local authority support"

This definition aims to capture a variety of different circumstances and reduce uncertainty for young people about whether they qualify for support.

Estranged students

Care-experienced and estranged students are distinct groups, despite sharing many challenges. UCAS defines estranged students as, "Young people aged 25 or below, studying without the support and approval of either parent due to a breakdown in their relationship."

Challenges

Compared to their peers, these learners often face extra pressures, such as:

- limited access to financial support
- lack of stable accommodation
- poor emotional or mental health
- difficult or non-existent family relationships
- disengagement with education.

Fortunately, a wide range of support is available. Educators play a vital role in helping these young people make informed choices with clarity and support.

Support

When applying through UCAS, students are asked if they wish to declare their care-experienced or estranged status. This information is only shared with the relevant support teams at the institutions where they are applying. The support teams will then contact the student to advise them on what support they can offer. Encourage your students to declare their status. It makes a huge difference to their education by ensuring they get the support they need.

The specific support available will vary from provider to provider. It's always best to contact the provider's widening participation team or visit the relevant section on their website. Common types of support include:

- contextual admissions – lower entry tariffs that consider individual circumstances
- financial support, such as scholarships and bursaries
- year-round accommodation
- free mental health support or counselling
- academic support

Go Higher West Yorkshire have developed our Care Leaver Covenant, which outlines the support offered by each of our 13 partners. It's a useful starting point for understanding what support is available.

How can you help?

As educators, you can take impactful, practical steps by:

- encouraging learners to explore their options
- gently challenging any misconceptions
- supporting learners in visiting a campus
- encouraging learners to declare their status through UCAS

Sometimes, all it takes is one trusted adult to shift a student's perspective. By taking the time to learn more, you're already halfway there.

Support for students with special educational needs and disabilities

By Michael Tomkinson, Head of Student Accessibility, Disability, and Inclusion, and Dr Clare Dickens MBE, Director of Student Life and University Designated Safeguarding Lead, at the University of Wolverhampton

Did you know that 17.3% of UK home students have a disability?

If your students have a disability – or receive special educational needs and disability (SEND) support - then they may see this as a barrier to studying at higher education. However, lots of support is available to them.

If your students declare a disability, they'll be protected under the Equality Act 2010. They'll receive reasonable adjustments during their time at university, while ensuring their application isn't discriminated against throughout the admissions process or their studies.

Any condition over a sustained period of 12 months is considered a disability and will receive reasonable adjustments at university in line with the Equality Act.

Disability support

The two levels of support for students at university are:

- reasonable adjustments
- the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

When your students declare a disability, the university will produce a reasonable adjustment plan. This ensures that they, and their academic lecturers, are aware of how they can best be supported. Remember, it's in the university's best interest to support them to succeed and remove barriers during their studies.

The second level of support is the DSA (page 83). The DSA is a government fund which should be applied for when applying for tuition fee support through Student Finance England.

The DSA is tailored to the individual's needs. It can include support towards additional costs that your students may incur while studying which are related to their disability.



These additional costs might include:

- travel costs
- support towards specialist equipment, software, and related training
- non-medical helper support, such as a specialist mentor, specialist tutor, British Sign Language Interpreter (BSLI), or a specialist notetaker.

Applying for disability support

Your students will need to follow a few steps to apply for disability support:

1. Declare their disability on their UCAS application.
2. Apply for the DSA alongside their application for tuition fee support.
3. Declare their disability to their university directly. For instance, if they're hoping to stay in university accommodation, then specialist rooms might be available.
4. Register with a university support team, if available. They will engage with your students during their time at university.

Final considerations

- Every university will provide your students with reasonable adjustments, but the type of adjustments may differ. It's important that they engage with the university directly to discuss their specific needs or concerns before applying.
- The DSA has eligibility criteria, so please check your students are eligible. If they're not, contact their chosen university to discuss the other types of support available to them.
- Attend university open days and specific events. These will enable them to meet with support staff and academics.
- Engage with the students' union and speak to their disability officer or liberation rep. They'll be a go-to individual for your students during their transition to higher education.

"Remember, it's in the university's best interest to support them to succeed and remove barriers during their studies."



Introducing The One In Five Podcast

- ✓ By disabled students, for disabled students
- ✓ Discover the lived experiences of disabled students
- ✓ Advice for disabled students considering university
- ✓ A series of 6 insightful episodes



Listen and share: www.UniTasterDays.com/OneInFive

A collaboration between UniTasterDays, Go Higher West Yorkshire, and Kent & Medway Progression Federation

Support for international students

By Ana de Miguel, International Officer at Norwich University of the Arts

Schools and colleges play a vital role in helping international students feel safe, welcome, and seen. It can be both exciting and overwhelming to leave your home country, family, and friends to live in a new setting with an unfamiliar custom, system, and language.

We have heard of the common struggles international students face: fitting in, learning a new language, and understanding the UK academic system with its unfamiliar exams, tests, grades, and timetables. However, some significant struggles are often overlooked.

Challenges for international students

- **The cultural context in the language** - learning English and understanding English are two different things. When I first arrived in England, I understood the key health-related words: doctor, hospital, nurse, emergency, medicine. However, I didn't know that a doctor is often called a GP (General Practitioner) or that the UK's emergency room is called A&E (Accidents and Emergency).
- **Mental health and wellbeing** - adjusting to a new country is often a quiet and invisible stress. International students experience mental fatigue from speaking a second language, dealing with homesickness, and facing loneliness while trying to keep up with everything. They may also experience academic pressure, particularly if they feel

they are underperforming compared to their peers, or their past academic performance in their home country.

- **Integration beyond studying** - I believe this is one of the most difficult things to achieve. While schools may work hard to create safe and open environments, many international students will face discrimination or microaggressions on the streets. This can lead to feeling isolated and a fear of engaging with the local community.



Support for international students

- **Make cultural transition visible** - training staff in intercultural awareness can help students navigate through the new culture: manners, expectations, slang, non-verbal communication. Written guides and visual aids are very helpful to ensure the message is understood, especially in the early days.
- **Include intercultural events in the curriculum** - integration is a reciprocal process. International students can't fully integrate if UK students are not involved. Events such as international days, collaborative projects, or cultural festivals give students the opportunity to share their identities. This helps everyone to develop cultural awareness (students and staff).
- **Offer buddies for international students** - partner international students with UK students. This will help international students to make friends, assist them in understanding the new setting, and make it easier for them while fostering inclusion.



Create safe spaces

International students bring new perspectives and fresh ideas. They contribute to the global awareness we want in our communities. Inclusion isn't about asking students to forget their identity and culture to fit in. Inclusion is about creating safe spaces where being different is valued, so they can thrive academically, creatively, and personally.

English language support at university

By Alexandra Roberts, Senior Welsh-medium and Widening Participation Outreach Officer at the University of South Wales

For students whose first language is not English, adjusting to academic life in the UK can be both rewarding and challenging. Strong English language skills are essential, not just for academic success, but also for building confidence and making the most of university life. To support international students and those for whom English is an additional language, many universities offer a range of dedicated services designed to develop academic English and communication skills throughout the student journey.

Pre-session English courses

Before enrolling on a degree programme, students who need to meet the university's English language requirements can take advantage of Pre-session English courses at certain institutions. These intensive programmes can be offered online and on campus and run for 5 to 12 weeks depending on a student's current level of English. The courses focus on academic reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and are taught by experienced tutors who understand the linguistic and cultural needs of international learners.

Pre-session English courses also prepare students for university-level study by introducing key academic conventions such as essay structure, referencing, and seminar participation. Successful completion of one of these courses could allow students to progress directly to their chosen academic programme

without needing to retake IELTS or other language qualifications in some instances.

In-session English support

Once enrolled, students can access in-session English language support, often at no additional cost. These sessions are delivered by a specialist team within the university. This support is usually available throughout the academic year and is tailored to meet the demands of degree-level study.

Support can include:

- Workshops on academic writing, grammar, presentation skills, and exam preparation
- One-to-one tutorials for personalised feedback on written assignments
- Drop-in sessions for quick queries about language or academic conventions
- Online resources for independent learning and language practice

This flexible approach ensures that students can access help when they need it and develop their language skills alongside their studies.

Cultural and social integration

In addition to language tuition, universities are committed to helping students feel at home in their new environment. Language learning is closely linked to confidence and cultural understanding, so universities often provide opportunities for students to practise English in informal settings. Peer support schemes and international student societies all encourage interaction and cultural integration.

Working with teachers and advisers

Universities work closely with teachers and advisers to support students' transition from school or college to higher education. If you are advising a student who may benefit from English language support, you can contact universities' international or widening access teams for tailored guidance on entry requirements and support pathways.

" Strong English language skills are essential, not just for academic success, but also for building confidence and making the most of university life. "

Opportunities offered by Uni Connect

By Susan Darlington, Partnership Assistant at Go Higher West Yorkshire

Uni Connect is a national programme funded by the Office for Students. Since 2017, it has brought together regional partnerships of universities, colleges, and other local partners to offer activities, advice, and information on the benefits and realities of higher education (HE). Uni Connect activity covers all HE options, including university study, higher and degree apprenticeships, and technical and vocational qualifications.

Uni Connect believes that access to HE shouldn't be limited by an individual's background, location, or characteristics. This is why the programme's work focuses on students who are underrepresented in HE or may face additional barriers to accessing HE. This includes:

- care-experienced students
- first in their family to apply to HE
- pupils in areas with low participation rates to HE
- students who have been eligible for free school meals (page 12)
- students at risk of becoming NEET - not in education, employment, or training.



Collaborative and impartial advice

The Uni Connect partnerships respond to local need. They offer impartial advice and information through various methods, such as free online resources, parent and carer workbooks, and expert-led webinars. Areas include:

- student life
- student finance
- apprenticeships
- vocational studies
- UCAS applications
- choosing courses
- wellbeing
- careers.

Each has developed their own programmes of activities, usually delivered with local schools and colleges, to help students make confident and informed decisions about their futures.

You can find your local partnership on the Uni Connect website. You can also find information about university on the Discover Uni and UniTasterDays websites.



The benefits of studying in HE

There are many ways to achieve higher levels skills. This is demonstrated through the range of qualification types, modes of study, and learning environments available across England's broad range of HE providers.

Your students' options could include studying anything from a practical Higher National Certificate, through to a full-time three or four-year undergraduate course.

Some of the numerous benefits of studying in HE are:

- learning transferable skills
- increased earning potential
- health, wellbeing and resilience
- taking part in extra-curricular activities
- social benefits, including industry links
- becoming an expert in a particular area.



Links with employers

By working with local employers, Uni Connect delivers activities to provide your students with a wide range of subject insights. These can introduce them to HE pathways and careers they hadn't previously known about.

Employer engagement also provides links to help your students find industry placements. These placements will give them practical experience and transferrable skills, which will help them secure a graduate-level job after their studies.

Uni Connect partnerships work closely with stakeholders to identify regional skills needs, ensuring there is a local pipeline of talent to boost your students' employment prospects.

My advice for teachers



By Reece Buckley, Micro and Molecular Biology student at Manchester Metropolitan University

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, 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.

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 student experience comprising of. 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.

How to research universities and courses

By Thomas Jones, Student Recruitment Assistant at Edge Hill University

There's no correct way to choose a university or a course. It's a personal choice and can easily become overwhelming, especially with the number of universities and courses available. As a teacher or supporter, understanding the process which students undergo means you can support them in the best ways.

Choosing a course

Typically, students research a course they would like to pursue before choosing a university. A good starting point is to ask your students to express their top three subjects of interest. This prevents them feeling overwhelmed when undergoing further research.

Next, ask your students to look on university websites. These are insightful tools for things like entry requirements, assessment methods, modules offered, and more. Encourage them to attend your sixth form or college careers fair, so they can chat to universities and explore their options afterwards.

You can also highlight the different online resources and quizzes that can be a good springboard for wider research on subject areas.

Take an approach of asking them questions. By doing this, you are allowing

them to reflect on what resonates with them. Some questions to use from the outset:

- Which topics would you learn?
- Why does this course interest you?
- Does it work with your learning style and preferred assessment style?
- What exciting opportunities are there on the course?
- What career opportunities can you get with this course?



Choosing a university

The next stage for your students is choosing a university. There are a range of resources that can help with narrowing down their choices. UCAS, UniFrog, UniTasterDays, league tables, and plenty of other fantastic resources help support the selection process. You can email universities for additional information and support!

Encourage them to attend open days (page 60). These days are a fantastic way to learn about universities compared to viewing them on a website. You can learn about courses in greater detail, view accommodation, and chat to staff in a range of teams, such as student support and careers.

By having them attend an open day, your students can see if the university resonates with them. They can picture the prospect of living there or commuting to the campus. Advise them to visit a variety of universities, whether in a city or town. This will widen their perspectives and present opportunities they haven't considered.



Time and encouragement

Choosing a course and a university is difficult, and a sensitive topic for some. Everyone is different, with different priorities. Allow your students space to reflect on their ambitions and interests. With time and encouragement, they will choose a course and a university where they can thrive.

" A good starting point is to ask your students to express their top three subjects of interest. This prevents them feeling overwhelmed when undergoing further research. "

How to choose the right university for you

By Charlotte Higgins, Undergraduate Recruitment Marketing Officer at the University of Derby

Students can feel overwhelmed by the choices available to them. Sometimes they don't know how to begin their research. You can help your students by showing them what resources are available and what they should be looking for in a university. At the University of Derby, we believe that choice should take into consideration three key factors. This article offers advice on how you can support your students in choosing the right university for them.

Choosing the right degree

When it comes to choosing the right degree, we often see two types of students. There are students who have a subject area in mind (especially if they enjoy studying it at school or college) but aren't sure which career they want. Alternatively, there are students who have a career in mind, but don't know which course will get them there.

There are also various types of degrees: traditional three-year programmes, foundation pathways to help transition to university, integrated masters for advanced learning, and degree apprenticeships.

To find out more, you can help students navigate university websites, create a prospectus library for them to browse, and encourage them to attend open days. Remind them that speaking to experts in person can often help them discover options they might not have come across.

At the University of Derby, we offer tailored support to help students make the right decision. The right degree will be the one they are most passionate about and offers the right opportunities for their career path.

💡 **Top tip** – if your students have a specific career in mind, they might need a degree which offers specific accreditations from an industry board.

»»» **Example** – if they want to become a professional psychologist, they will need a degree that is accredited by the British Psychological Society.

Choosing the right campus

Going to university often means moving away from home for the first time. This is a big change for students, but also a big opportunity for their personal development.

A university's campus is the heart of the learning journey. It's the place where students will spend time in lectures, seminars, and other learning activities, so they need to choose the campus that is right for them.

It should offer passionate teaching staff who are experts in their field and excellent facilities. The best way to find the right campus is to attend an open day.



Encourage them to attend a subject talk to learn more about their chosen degree and future teachers.

💡 Top tip – student finance applications typically open in March. It's worth applying as soon as possible, even if they haven't yet decided where they wish to study.

»»» Example – at the University of Derby, we have a dedicated team of staff ready to help you with all student finance questions.

Choosing happiness

University offers the opportunity for students to explore their independence, grow their confidence, and make new friends along the way. Universities have a range of support systems available to help. At The University of Derby, our Student Services team offers support from application to graduation. This includes financial advice and academic support plans to get the most out of their university experience.

Students can grow their social life and meet like-minded people by engaging with their students' union (page 110). They can participate in welcome events or join a club, society, or sports team to continue their passions or discover new ones. Choosing a university might also mean choosing a new city to live in and explore. This is an exciting part of the student experience. Encourage them to choose accommodation that suits their lifestyle and needs.

💡 Top tip – encourage your students to research their student accommodation options, so that they can apply once they receive their offer to study.

»»» Example – the University of Derby offers guaranteed halls in award-winning accommodation for all new first-year undergraduates if they make Derby their firm choice.

Making that all-important decision

Going to university will help your students build a strong foundation, academically and personally, by providing new and exciting opportunities. Whatever subject, career, or campus they choose, support them in making an informed decision so they will thrive at university.

" Choosing a university might also mean choosing a new city to live in and explore. This is an exciting part of the student experience. "



The different types of university

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

Research is an important part of the planning process for students thinking about university. There isn't one university that fits all students. There are a variety of universities for your students to consider based on their preferences and desired experience.

Campus vs city

Universities take different forms. If your students prefer a busy environment, then a city university might be more desirable. These universities offer a buzzing atmosphere and social scene, but they may require more travel between university teaching facilities and accommodation.

Conversely, a campus university typically means the university facilities (teaching and non-academic) are located on the same site. The university will have a campus environment, which is ideal for students looking for a relaxed community environment, with greater opportunities of support and safety.

Large vs small

The size of a university could help in the decision-making process. A larger

university may have a greater choice of courses to study and perhaps more student facilities for their bigger student population. Meanwhile, smaller universities tend to have smaller class sizes, which could allow for more individualised support.

Your students should attend open days and visit universities for campus tours. This will help them narrow down their choices, prioritise what they value most, and gain clarity on what they hope to achieve from their university journey.

Comprehensive vs specialist

Specialist institutions offer your students the opportunity to study a degree course focused on one specialism. They are sometimes referred to as academies or conservatoires. This could interest students who wish to specialise in a particular area.

Unlike large comprehensive universities, most specialist institutions are small and provide vocational programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. They have strong connections with industry, which will prepare your students for the professions they wish to enter.

Investigate, compare, ask

When investigating their choices, your students can visit university websites to browse the course pages and events. They should compare the course content and requirements between universities, and consider university league tables (page 35). Finally, another valuable way to research universities is to speak with current students about their experiences on the course and at their chosen university.



The different types of university courses

By Sophie Hawkins, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Essex

With over 50,000 university courses in the UK, it's understandable that your students – and yourselves – can feel overwhelmed. While university reputation matters, choosing the right course is equally important. This article explains several course types to help you support your students in their decision-making.

Bachelor's degrees

This is the most common university qualification, usually 3 years long, although some extend to 4 or 5 years. You'll notice abbreviations before university course titles:

- BA - Bachelor of Arts - for arts and humanities subjects
- BSc - Bachelor of Science - for science or IT courses with lab time
- LLB - Bachelor of Laws
- BEng - Bachelor of Engineering
- MBBS - Bachelor of Medicine
- BVM - Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine.

Some subjects, such as Psychology, may be offered as both a BA and a BSc. The BSc version typically includes more science, maths, or research. Your students should review course content because modules, assessments, and teaching styles vary between universities, even for courses with the same title.

Single and joint honours

Students can choose a single honours degree (one subject) or a joint honours degree (two subjects). A course title with "and" (such as Politics and History) indicates equal emphasis on both subjects. A title with "with" (such as Politics with

International Relations) gives greater weight to the first subject, such as a 70:30 split.

Sandwich degrees

These courses include a year-long work placement or year abroad, usually taken after the second year. Students then return for their final year. These degrees provide valuable experiences and can enhance employability.

Integrated master's

A four-year course combining undergraduate and postgraduate study. Students graduate with a master's-level qualification, such as MEng or MSci. These courses usually have higher entry requirements and allow students to progress directly into the final master's-level year.

Foundation year

These are offered to students who don't meet standard entry requirements. This extra year helps develop subject knowledge and academic skills before starting a full degree. It's a useful route if your students are returning to education or they have alternative qualifications.

Certificate of higher education (CertHE)

This is equivalent to the first year of a bachelor's degree. It can be taken on its own or awarded if a student leaves a degree programme early. It can be completed as a standalone qualification or may serve as a stepping stone into further study.

Top tips for teachers

Encourage your students to:

- look beyond course titles
- examine modules and assessments
- consider course structure, flexibility, and placement options
- explore alternative pathways, especially if their qualifications or interests don't align with standard routes.

"It's understandable that your students – and yourselves – can feel overwhelmed."

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. "

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.





Join us for an Open Day 2025

Join us for an Open Day and explore everything Keele has to offer – from our diverse range of career-focused courses, to our thriving student life on our beautiful 600-acre campus.

Friday 27 June
Saturday 28 June
Saturday 16 August
Saturday 11 October
Sunday 12 October
Saturday 15 November

keele.ac.uk/openday



Studying higher education at a further education college

By Beth Curtis, Vice-Principal at Bishop Burton College and Riseholme College

There are 218 colleges in England. The majority offer some kind of higher education provision. You might be wondering if you should advise your students to consider this route, rather than studying at a university.

The key benefit is the alignment that colleges have with the local, regional, and national economy. By their nature, colleges aim to deliver the skills and knowledge that employers need to create the next workforce. This is evidenced by the level of engagement that colleges have with businesses to ensure their curriculum is moving with the times, leading to agile curriculum development and delivery models.

Allied to this is the standard of specialist facilities often available at FE colleges. These facilities allow for bespoke and applied learning. They put what is being taught into practical application, allowing the student to develop skills alongside the theory and underpinning knowledge. Equally, methods of assessment are linked to real world scenarios. This combination makes graduates highly employable.

Staff teaching in colleges often have a highly specialist background. This means they are expert education practitioners with years of service in the sector that they now teach. This brings significant added benefits to your students who can learn from industrial experience and academic excellence.

Colleges tend to be smaller and local. This might be exactly what some of your students are looking for. Many colleges offer residential accommodation with the associated social life. However, others are suited to local learners

who want to commute for their studies but live at home. This allows them to work or retain other responsibilities.

Class sizes can be smaller than at many universities, which allows for a very supportive and engaging learning environment. Students are known to the staff (they are always a name) and these closer relationships allow for more honest feedback. This can help drive engagement and achievement. Colleges are known for offering robust student support services, including academic help, career guidance, and personal counselling, especially useful for mature or non-traditional students.

Colleges also pride themselves on flexible learning options: studying part-time, in the evening, or online. There is often a variety of options for students to fit study around other commitments. Colleges also offer different pathways, where students can commit to shorter periods of study and then build on that base. For example, a student could start with an HNC, move onto an HND, before completing a full degree. This allows learners to move at their own pace, whilst gaining the same qualification in the long run.

Also, many learners who felt HE wasn't for them often find their confidence and success in a more supportive FE environment. Colleges can make bespoke offers to applicants who lack the grade profile for successful applications to larger institutions. This means applicants from under-represented groups, or those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are often able to gain places. This, alongside the tailored specialist support, means that students achieve fantastic outcomes, having genuine social impact and driving social mobility.

This flexible, local, and applied approach to higher education will be a desirable alternative for many of your students. They can complete the same quality qualification, usually accredited by a university, but through a more tailored route.

" Many learners who felt HE wasn't for them often find their confidence and success in a more supportive FE environment. "

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 £9,535 each year for 2025 entry - are covered by the employer and the Government through the Apprenticeship Levy. Not only that, but the apprentice will receive a salary for the duration of their training. According to the Department for Education, the salary will be at least £20,000 and likely to be much higher.

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.

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.

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.

💬 Advising on degree apprenticeships

79,000 school leavers started a degree apprenticeship in the 2023-24 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.



Are you getting confused by university acronyms and jargon?
Visit our jargon buster where 100s of terms are explained!

www.UniTasterDays.com/JargonBuster



Book a 2025

Open Day

**And claim up to £75
towards your travel**

**Saturday 21 June
Saturday 27 September
Wednesday 15 October
Saturday 22 November**

**Book
now**



hud.ac/t69

My advice for teachers

By Rosie Glover,
Law student at
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 a 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 11).

 UniTasterDays.com

Find a university event to help your students

- ☒ Explore 100s of university events
- ☒ Filter by location, subject, age, university
- ☒ Use our keyword search to find specific interests
- ☒ Discover open days, summer schools, taster days, webinars, and more!

Begin your search at www.UniTasterDays.com/Search

 info@unitasterdays.com

 UniTasterDays

 UniTasterDays



Studying a solicitor apprenticeship

By Edward Bartley, Student Recruitment Officer at The University of Law

Do you need to go to university to qualify as a solicitor or barrister in England and Wales?

This is one of the most common questions I'm asked at events. It's true that to qualify as a barrister in England and Wales, your students will have to study an LLB or Law Conversion before the Bar course. However, the same cannot be said for the solicitor route.

Defining a solicitor apprenticeship

A solicitor apprenticeship takes around 6.5 years to complete. This is the average time it would take to qualify as a solicitor through the traditional route. During an apprenticeship, apprentices spend 80% of their time on the job, carrying out the daily tasks of a solicitor. The other 20% will be spent studying.

Apprentices will work towards a qualifying LLB law degree in Legal Practice and Skills, and complete part 1 and 2 of the Solicitor's Qualifying Examinations (SQEs). Apprentices study and complete their SQEs during their 5th and 6th year. Upon successful completion, and subject to the SRA Character and Suitability test, your students can register with the SRA as a qualified solicitor.

Benefits of a solicitor apprenticeship

Solicitor apprenticeships offer the opportunity to earn as you learn. Some starting salaries are well above £30,000. On top of this, the LLB and SQE course/examination fees are funded by the

employer and government, meaning the apprentice qualifies without having to use student finance or loans. All learning materials are provided within the cost paid by your employer, including access to online study materials and digital books.

Apprentices join the workplace sooner. They start to develop the key skills and competencies of a solicitor from Day 1. They are a fantastic opportunity to work alongside experienced legal staff and gain invaluable solicitor-specific skills. Early indicators suggest that solicitor apprentices pass both SQE 1 and 2 at much higher rates than their peers on the traditional route.

Apprenticeship vs university study

A solicitor apprenticeship isn't easier than the university route. Undertaking an apprenticeship is a worthwhile challenge which enables study, whilst also gaining practical work experience and skills. A solicitor apprenticeship isn't an 'easy' route and requires resilience, organisation, and self-discipline. Solicitor apprenticeships may not be the right route for every student, especially if they are seeking a more traditional university experience.

Applying for a solicitor apprenticeship

All solicitor apprenticeship vacancies are advertised by the firm or provider themselves. They have their own internal application process, which may include a mixture of psychometric testing, assessment centres, and interviews. Different providers will set different recruitment processes.

Applicants don't apply through UCAS for the apprenticeship route, nor do they choose their preferred institutions. Each firm has partnerships with various law schools who provide the study element of the apprenticeship.



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.



Studying a part-time university course

By Zoe Mason, UK Recruitment Manager at the University of Wolverhampton

If your students are considering university, it's easy to assume they'll be studying full-time. But part-time courses are an option that might suit their goals, lifestyle, or circumstances better. Understanding how part-time study works will help you guide them in making an informed decision.

What is a part-time course?

Part-time university courses are structured to spread study over a longer period. This allows students to balance learning alongside work, caring responsibilities, or other commitments. While a full-time degree often takes three years, a part-time route might take between four and six years, depending on the subject and university.

Part-time courses are available in many areas, including:

- foundation degrees
- undergraduate degrees
- professional qualifications
- Higher National Diplomas or Certificates.

Some courses are taught during evenings, weekends, or online to make them more accessible.

Why choose part-time study?

There are several reasons your students might choose part-time study:

- Flexibility - it offers the chance to fit learning around work, family, or other priorities.
- Earning while studying - they can continue to work, which may help with finances (page 86).
- Building experience - combining study and work can give them valuable skills and experience.

- Career change or progression - part-time study is popular with those looking to upskill or retrain while continuing in their current role.

Things to consider

Before committing to part-time study, it's important to understand what it involves. You can support your students by helping them consider a few aspects:

- Time management - balancing study with other responsibilities takes planning and commitment.
- Tuition fees - part-time courses are usually charged per module or year. Student finance is often available, but it's worth checking the rules.
- Support services - universities offer academic and wellbeing support. It's helpful to explore what's available for part-time students.
- Course structure - some courses offer flexible pathways, while others may follow a set schedule. Checking this can help manage expectations.

How you can help

If your students are unsure, here are some ways you can support their decision-making. Help them to:

- Explore different course options – understand what part-time study really looks like.
- Research funding options – this includes tuition fee loans and support from an employer.
- Ask questions – speak to course leaders to get a feel for what's involved.
- Plan how they'll balance study and other commitments – this can build confidence.

Earning and learning

Part-time study is a valuable option. It makes university education available to more people, whatever their situation. With the right planning and support, it can offer the best of both worlds - earning and learning - while keeping future ambitions in sight.

Studying a creative university course

By Becky Sandford, SEO Specialist at Falmouth University

Choosing to study a creative subject at university can lead to fulfilling and meaningful careers but it's not always easy for students to make that decision with confidence. For teachers and careers advisers, understanding the value and outcomes of creative degrees can make a real difference in guiding your students who are passionate about the creative industries - whether that's art and design or gaming and computer science.

Why students choose creative subjects

Creative degrees allow students to study a subject that they're truly passionate about while also developing transferable skills, such as:

- problem solving
- collaboration
- communication
- leadership
- critical thinking
- resilience.

For many young people, these subjects are where they thrive. They may not always achieve high grades in more traditional subjects, but they demonstrate drive, originality, and discipline in their creative work.

Career outcomes

A common concern around creative degrees is what happens after graduation. Careers in the creative industries can appear uncertain or overly competitive, but they remain a vital and growing part of the UK economy. Earlier this year, the government recognised the creative industries as one of eight growth-driving sectors in its industrial strategy. This reflects the economic importance and the ongoing demand for creative talent across areas such as design, media, performance, and digital innovation.

Graduates from creative degrees go on to a wide range of roles, including:

- advertising and marketing
- architecture
- crafts
- product, graphic, and fashion design
- film, TV, media, and photography
- gaming, IT, software, and computer services
- publishing
- music, performing, and visual arts.

Some graduates use their creative background as a springboard into entrepreneurship, setting up their own businesses or working freelance. These routes require initiative and flexibility - skills often nurtured through creative courses.

Supporting your creative students

Your students may feel pressure to choose more 'academic' subjects or follow a degree with clearer graduate outcomes. But when creative skills are a student's strength, their motivation and performance often improve when they pursue subjects aligned with their interests.



You can support your students by:

- encouraging students to research course content or attend open days or virtual events
- discussing the broad career pathways provided by a creative course
- highlighting the importance of portfolios or auditions in the application process
- reassuring students that creative courses often include the option of professional placements and industry experience.

Equally, it's important to remember:

- entry requirements can differ significantly from other subjects. Some courses weigh practical experience and portfolios over exam results.
- creative degrees often require collaborative project work. This can suit students who are self-motivated and enjoy working as part of a team.
- facilities and equipment vary between universities. Studio space, technical support, and access to materials all matter to creative students.

A career from their creativity

Studying a creative subject at university is a serious academic and professional choice, not a fallback. It offers students the chance to build a career from their creativity, often combining personal fulfilment with long-term employability. As a teacher or adviser, your support and understanding can help students make informed, confident decisions, which reflect their abilities, interests, and ambitions.

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.

" Studying a creative subject at university is a serious academic and professional choice, not a fallback. "



Studying a creative university course in the age of AI

By Sarah Jones, Faculty Marketing Manager for Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University

The number of new entry-level jobs in the UK has dropped by almost a third since the launch of ChatGPT. While this may seem like a sudden shift, it's part of a broader and long-anticipated transformation. For over a decade, organisations such as the World Economic Forum, Microsoft, and McKinsey have warned of the seismic changes that AI and automation would bring to the global labour market in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). And it's happening now. How do we prepare your students for the jobs of the future when those jobs don't even exist yet?

We don't. At least, not by preparing them for specific job titles.

Instead, we prepare them by focusing on transferable skills. It's not new but it's an increasingly difficult message to communicate, particularly to parents and carers who view higher education as a direct investment in a defined career path. But in a labour market defined by rapid change and disruption, the currency of career success is adaptability coupled with lifelong learning.

The challenge is exacerbated by a longstanding policy focus on STEM subjects at the expense of the arts and humanities. STEM is undeniably vital for innovation and economic growth, but the disproportionate focus has led to the undervaluing of the arts and their contribution to the UK economy. However, ironically, rapid technological advancement is forcing change.

The World Economic Forum's 2025 Future of Jobs report highlights that creativity, critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and adaptability are skills increasingly sought after by employers. These are precisely the skills that arts and humanities help develop. As automation handles more routine and technical tasks, it's these human-centred competencies that offer enduring value.

The UK's creative industries – such as advertising, architecture, crafts, design, film, video games, software, publishing, music, performing, and visual arts – generate £124 billion annually for the UK economy. They also employ 2.4 million people, which is about 1 in every 14 jobs in the UK.

The government's ambitious Creative Industries Sector Plan proposes to cement the UK's position as a global creative powerhouse by 2035, with a £380 million investment package. Underpinning this investment is the need to build a resilient, skilled workforce for the future. As the plan outlines, creativity has been identified as the most significant predictor for an occupation's growth, and creative thinking is expected to be one of the most important skills for employment in 2035.

This being the case, why are we still pushing STEM subjects or specific job titles at young people? Many young people guided down STEM routes against their skills or interests will fail. And who wants that outcome? Already graduate earnings increase at a faster rate than those of non-graduates. Between the ages of 23 and 31, average earnings grow by 72% for graduates compared to 31% for non-graduates. This gap will only increase when you consider the disappearance of entry level jobs for non-graduates.

As digital disruption reshapes traditional roles, a creative education will emerge as the answer to career resilience and socio-economic opportunity.

"How do we prepare your students for the jobs of the future when those jobs don't even exist yet?"

Studying medicine at university

**By Professor Danny McLaughlin BSc PhD
SFHEA, Dean of Medical Education at the
University of Lincoln**

Studying medicine at university is a challenging yet rewarding endeavour. Medicine programmes are rigorous to ensure your students are equipped to meet the demands of the profession and make a positive contribution to healthcare within their local area and beyond.

Programme structure

Medicine programmes in the UK vary slightly between universities but generally follow a similar structure:

- **Years 1-2** – your students will focus on the fundamentals of medical sciences such as anatomy, physiology, behavioural science, and pharmacology. They will also study public health, ethics, and research skills, and gain some early clinical experience and clinical skills. Teaching is often integrated with clinical cases, which may require small group work. This allows your students to put their learning into a clinical context right from the start.
- **Years 3-4** – most programmes start full-time clinical placements in Year 3. Initially, your students will learn the fundamentals of medicine, surgery, primary and community care, child health, mental health, women's health, and long-term conditions. Teaching environments include a variety of clinical settings, such as hospital wards, outpatients, general practice, other community settings, and the emergency department. Your students may also undertake regular simulated practice back on the university campus. This exposes them to more challenging clinical situations in a safe and controlled way.

- **Year 5** – in the final year, your students will prepare for the UK Medical Licensing Assessment by undertaking placements in more acute medical and surgical settings and in primary care. Most courses conclude with a series of activities designed to prepare students for practice as newly graduated resident doctors.

Some universities offer 6-year medicine programmes. These include a gateway year at the beginning of the course to prepare students for university-level study.

Assessments

Assessments are diverse. It's not all about exams. Medical schools also use written assignments, reflective writing, presentations, portfolio work, workplace-based assessments, clinical skills tests, and competency sign-offs.

Medicine admissions process

The admissions process involves several steps which your students should follow:

1. **Research** – research medical schools by reviewing online course information, making sure they meet the entry requirements of any courses they intend to apply for.
2. **UCAS registration** – register to apply through UCAS in the summer before their start year.
3. **Application** – apply through UCAS in the year before their start year. For 2026 entry, the deadline is 15 October 2025.
4. **Aptitude test** – undertake any required admissions aptitude test by the deadlines set by the universities they have chosen.
5. **Interviews** – if their application scores highly, they will be interviewed to decide if they should be offered a place. Most medical schools use an interview format where candidates have several mini-interviews over the course of 1-2 hours. Each will focus on a different topic.
6. **Offer** – any offer to study medicine will be conditional on obtaining (or having obtained) the right grades in the right subjects at A-level. For applicants in Year 13, decisions are made when A-level results are released in August.

Studying graduate-entry medicine at university

By Amanda Moralee, Marketing Campaigns Officer at the University of Sunderland

Graduate-entry medicine offers an alternative route into the medical profession for students who didn't receive offers to study medicine, are considering a different degree, or would like to change careers from another field.

Emma Carnell shares her experience as a graduate-entry medicine student on the five-year MBChB Medicine course at the University of Sunderland.

Why pursue medicine as a graduate rather than through the A-level route?

After finishing A-levels, I went to Newcastle University to study biomedical science. I didn't fully commit to studying medicine until after my degree. I had always been interested but I lacked confidence in my academic ability and whether I could pursue such a demanding career. I took a gap year, working as a teaching assistant for SEN children at my local school, then applied to medical school the following autumn.

What was your experience of the application process?

Having already completed my degree, I wasn't waiting on any academic results, which took some pressure off. However, it also meant that everything hinged on the interview, which brought its own stress.

Sunderland was my first interview, so naturally I was nervous, but it ended up being my favourite interview. The positive experience played a big role in my decision to study here.

Did your previous degree provide you with specific advantages?

It helped me avoid getting too caught up in the comparison that often comes with studying medicine. It's easy to see others pulling all-nighters in the library or studying constantly and feel you need to do the same. Being slightly older helped me recognise what works best for me in terms of revision and balance, which allowed me to settle in a bit sooner.

How did you manage financially?

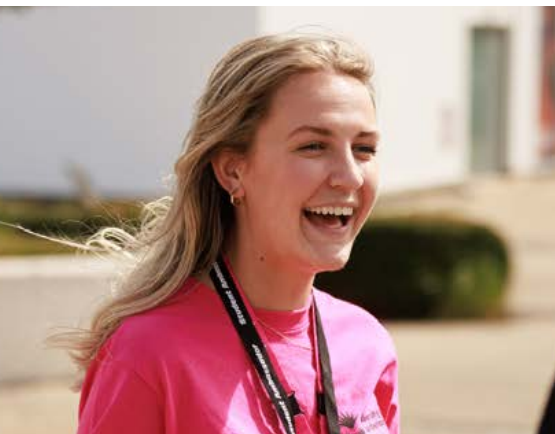
As a postgraduate on the undergraduate course, I didn't get a tuition fee loan. My parents helped, I received a maintenance loan, and I work every summer holiday in various roles, enabling me to save for living expenses.

What are the benefits of work experience or further study before studying medicine?

Exam results pending, I'll be the first doctor in my family. This is something I'm proud of. It can be incredibly difficult to get shadowing experience without connections in medicine. That's why a bit more life experience really helped for interview preparation and, more generally, in feeling confident speaking with people from all walks of life.

What advice would you give to other graduates considering this route?

Choosing to study medicine as a graduate is a big decision. I remember worrying that I'd fall behind peers who were already progressing in their careers or buying houses. But now, towards the end of the course, I can honestly say it's been absolutely worth it. My biggest advice would be to enjoy the journey. It's not a race. Five years will pass anyway, and if you're doing something you love, that time is well spent.



Emma Carnell working as a student ambassador at the University of Sunderland



University of
Sunderland

WE MAKE IT HAPPEN



Come and visit us at
one of our **Open Days**

SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2025

WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2025

SATURDAY 6 JUNE 2026



sunderland.ac.uk

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

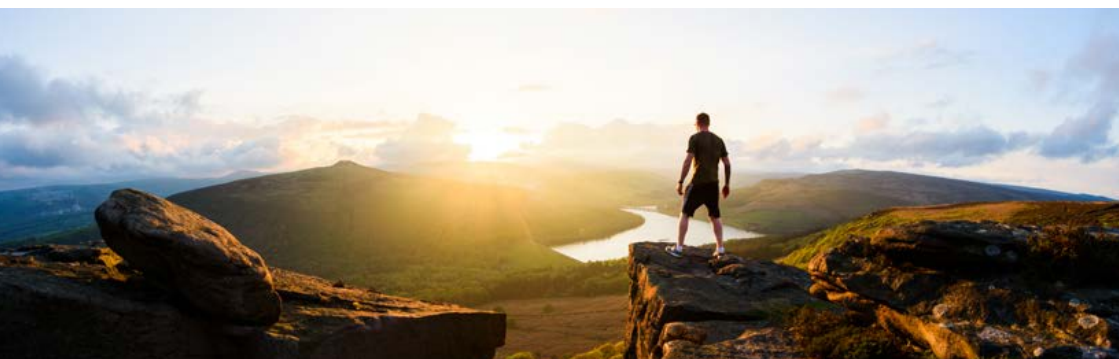
Campus universities offer a close-knit, community atmosphere with buildings, facilities, green areas, and social spaces grouped into one location. Some students prefer this for the convenience it offers when attending classes, seeing friends, and taking part in clubs and societies (page 106). They may 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

Reach of 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.



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.



GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES



EST → 1495

Aberdeen Open Days 2025

Saturday 7th June (Medicine)

Tuesday 26th August

Saturday 4th October

→ abdn.ac.uk/openday



The benefits of studying in Wales

By Sophie Robinson, Dental Therapy and Dental Hygiene student at Cardiff University

Studying in Wales offers a unique blend of academic, financial, and social advantages, contributing to a well-balanced and affordable student experience.

Academic benefits

Welsh universities are known for high-quality teaching, a wide range of subject options, and inclusive open environments. Students can learn Welsh, and immerse themselves in Welsh culture, all while exploring the nature and outdoor adventures Wales has to offer. This blends to form a unique and enriching student experience comprising of:

- High quality teaching
- Variety of subject options
- Highly inclusive, making it a safe space for international students and the LGBTQ+ community
- Opportunities to learn to speak Welsh.

Financial benefits

Cost of living in Wales is lower than many other UK universities. Equally, we are forward thinking about decreasing our impact on the environment. We have an enhanced waste management strategy and use renewable energy, which further reduces costs. Other financial benefits:

- Wales offers the common ailments scheme and free NHS prescriptions for all citizens - this is highly beneficial for all, but especially students who may not have budgeted for an illness.
- Scholarships for home and international students - for example, those studying a healthcare subject are eligible for the Welsh NHS bursary, which funds tuition fees and provides grants towards maintenance.

- Good walkability and strong public transport - part of the reason I chose Cardiff was due to the walkability and amount of cycle paths, which has saved me lots of money on fuel and public transport.

Social benefits

Deciding where to study isn't just about what the university has to offer but also what the location has to offer. Provide information to your students about the university activities, green spaces, nightlife, public transport, and the size of the city to help them make their decision. Welsh cities offer a wide range of activities from outdoorsy hiking trips to a lively nightlife. To name a few:

- Diverse countryside which makes for unforgettable weekend trips - I've found everything is very accessible by train.
- Welsh cities generally have lots of green spaces. For example, Cardiff is home to Roath Park and Bute Park, two beautiful green spaces that can be visited to wind down alone or with friends.
- Universities in Wales are often located near the coast, meaning it's quick and easy to have a trip to the beach.
- Vibrant nightlife with many clubs, bars, and active students' unions.
- Frequent train connections, especially in the cities where universities are located - this makes it easy to travel back home or explore somewhere new with friends.

Your students may ask you about the weather as Wales. We are notorious for rain. Personally, I haven't noticed any more rain than anywhere else I've lived in the UK.

My experience

I was a dental therapy student at Cardiff University. I had the opportunity to use a range of materials and up-to-date equipment on both phantom head and patient clinics. Teaching staff were all friendly which aided my confidence in asking questions and provided a safe space to push myself. Receiving regular individualised feedback about my strengths and weaknesses helped motivate me and focus on where to improve. Overall, my experience at Cardiff University has been highly positive, resulting in a first-class honours degree.

The benefits of studying in Northern Ireland

By Damian Connor, Marketing and Insights Manager Queen's Global at Queen's University Belfast

Northern Ireland is a hidden gem of the UK. This corner of the world offers students a unique blend of affordability, culture, and natural beauty that's hard to beat. Here are a few reasons why studying in Northern Ireland might be one of the best decisions your students will ever make.

Affordable living

University is an investment, and managing finances is key. Luckily, Northern Ireland boasts the lowest cost of living in the UK (Mercer Cost of Living City Ranking 2023). Student housing in vibrant areas like Belfast's Queen's Quarter is significantly cheaper than other major UK cities, with average rents almost 70% less than in Dublin. Groceries and bills are also notably less expensive, making day-to-day living easier on the wallet.

Safety and security

Belfast is one of the safest cities in Europe. This makes it an excellent choice for students seeking peace of mind while studying abroad. Whether your students are enjoying a night out, or a sunny daytime stroll around the Queen's Quarter, they will encounter a warm and welcoming environment with a strong sense of community.

Gateway to adventure

Northern Ireland's size is one of its greatest assets. Students can explore world-famous

landmarks like the Giant's Causeway, the Mourne Mountains, and the rugged North Coast – all just a short journey from major cities. If your students prefer city life, Belfast's vibrant streets are brimming with music, art, and culture.

Culture and energy

Belfast has a cultural scene like no other. A dynamic and forward-focused city, it hosts an incredible variety of festivals and events, such as Belsonic and Belfast Vital. Belfast's buzzing nightlife, packed with lively pubs, clubs, and music venues, offers endless entertainment. Whether wandering through the Cathedral Quarter or attending one of the many cultural festivals, your students will quickly feel Belfast's unmatched energy.

Academic excellence

Northern Ireland's universities, including Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, deliver world-class education and research opportunities. For example, Queen's offers innovative programmes, a supportive campus community, and career-focused opportunities like GoGlobal and QWork.

Accessible and convenient

Travel to and from Northern Ireland is easy and affordable, with three airports and regular ferry crossings. Once here, public transport and compact cities make getting around a breeze. Students can hop from a lecture to a scenic hiking trail or a lively gig in record time.

Choosing Northern Ireland isn't just about getting a degree. It's about embracing a lifestyle that's enriching, adventurous, and unique. Your students might just find the experience of a lifetime.



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 demographics 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. More than half of 18-year-olds go to university, so your students 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.



Prepare for Clearing with our helpful Clearing Guide!

☒ Listen to 3 mock Clearing calls so you know what to expect

☒ Complete our worksheet to prepare for your own Clearing call

☒ Understand the importance of "knowing your why"

☒ Gain advice from recent graduate, Leah Brooks!



www.UniTasterDays.com/ClearingGuide

The benefits of attending a university event

By Jade Matthews, Schools and Colleges Development Officer at Anglia Ruskin University

Throughout the academic year, universities host a variety of events for both students and their teachers. When your students are deciding which route to take into higher education, attending events is a fantastic way for them to gather information.

Larger events, such as summer schools, usually run once a year. They give students a real hands-on experience of student life. Subject-specific taster days run more frequently. They allow students to find out more about the course they are interested in. Generally, attendance at any university event will look brilliant in their personal statement. It shows they've thoroughly researched their options before deciding on their final 5 choices.

Teacher conferences

As teachers and advisers, you may wish to attend a university teachers and advisers conference. These annual events will provide you with up-to-date information to help support your students. Sessions might include student finance updates, degree apprenticeship breakdowns, subject-specific Q&As, and more.

For example, at Anglia Ruskin University, we run our Teacher and Adviser Conference every Spring. This gives you the chance to hear about sector-wide updates before your Year 12 students begin their applications in the summer. These are also an opportunity to network with other education professionals and staff from around the university.

Taster days

Experience a university course or subject area before making their final choice. For some students, taster days help them decide which universities are the right fit for them. For other students, taster days help them decide which course to pick as their final choice.

Taster days generally include lectures from academics, hands-on workshops, campus tours, and the opportunity to use subject-specific, specialist equipment. They tend to run throughout the year in various subject areas. You can search for available events by visiting UniTasterDays.com then book a group of your students to attend by visiting the host university website.

Offer-holder days

Offer-holder days invite students who have already received (or accepted) an offer to attend introductory sessions at the university. They learn more about the support available to them, and the process of beginning a university course. A large benefit of attending these days is the opportunity for students to network with other offer-holders who may start their course in the same academic year.

Neurodiversity days

Some events for students can be very specific, such as neurodiversity days. These are aimed at students with particular needs. Neurodiversity days consist of smaller group activities and tours aimed at students with neurodiverse or SEN needs. This gives them the opportunity to experience a university at their own pace.

Final thought

Overall, your students will gain many benefits from attending a variety of university events, such as seeing a university campus for possibly the first time, meeting university students to hear about their experiences, and getting a feel for specific subjects at university level. There are just as many benefits to attending events yourself, such as teacher and adviser conferences, so look for these at your local higher education institutions.

" Attendance at any university event will look brilliant in their personal statement. It shows they've thoroughly researched their options. "

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.



How to prepare for a university fair

By Frankie Perren-Smart, Student Recruitment Officer at The University of Law

From UCAS to UK University Search, there are a variety of fairs to explore that offer the opportunity to learn about new courses, connect with university representatives, and ask questions. It can be an overwhelming experience, with so many stands to visit, prospectuses to collect, and conversations to be had. This article offers some suggestions to help you prepare your students for the big day.

1. Review planned attendees

If available, encourage your students to look at the list of colleges, universities, and organisations that will be there. This list will differ with each fair. Ask your students to choose their top few to visit on the day, and suggest they conduct background research beforehand to help prepare questions. This could include understanding each university's offerings and entry requirements, whilst also considering what appeals to them.

2. Explore free resources

There are a variety of free resources to help you and your students to prepare for a university fair. For instance, What University? And What Career? Live offer student and parent/guardian email templates that cover what to expect at their event. Another example is this UniTasterDays guide, which contains an excellent article about top questions to ask at a university fair (page XX). You could compliment this advice with the UCAS Fair Access Mission Cards, which focus on topics for students with individual needs, such as for disabled students and students in care.

3. Analyse the schedule

University fairs will often have a variety of informative, engaging sessions to choose from. These include talks on student life, understanding student finance, and discovering apprenticeships. They are delivered by lots of different institutions and will help your students broaden their understanding of possible next steps and the application process. Encourage students to review the schedule beforehand, then choose sessions that match their interests and fit into your planned event attendance times.

4. Connect with university teams

Fairs are also a fantastic opportunity to speak to university teams because we're all there to help. Plan how you will use this chance to build professional relationships, ask questions about the application process, and gain top tips to pass onto your students. You could also ask about upcoming events your students could attend such as campus days or school visits.

5. Encourage students to keep an open mind

It can be helpful for students to have a plan for the day but encourage them to take the opportunity to explore other options. It's a fantastic chance to discover courses that combine subjects, learn about unfamiliar universities, and consider areas in which they could specialise. Prompt students to visit a few stands outside of their planned list and report back with their learnings.

Support your students with research and preparation, and practical elements such as timings and tickets. Together, this will enable them to navigate these excellent events with confidence and ensure they make the most of their time.



How to prepare for a university open day

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

Open days have long been a fixture in prospective students' diaries. Even after a brief pause during the COVID-19 pandemic, open days remain the most valuable way to discover where to spend three years or more as a student.

As teachers and advisers, I'm sure I'm already preaching to the converted. You are unlikely to be attending open days alongside your students, but you are well-placed to ensure that their attendance isn't wasted. You can also safeguard against them leaving the event, unsure whether it was worth their time.

Supporting research

Attending an open day can be quite a daunting prospect, especially if you don't have family experience of university (page 11) or you are uncertain about your future. All students must understand that open days are for them, regardless of their background or the stage they are at in their post-18 journey.

It's helpful to start small. A good way to begin this process is recommending that your students attend a local open day or campus tour. Local events might be more familiar and less intimidating, with less to lose and only something to gain.

Types of open events

A full-scale open day might not be the best event to attend. Universities organise various open events on campus throughout the year. Some events are on a larger scale, often during the summer months and the start of the academic year. Other events offer a more personalised, one-to-one experience.

Campus tours provide a more intimate look at university life, allowing visitors to experience a typical day at the university. They can also ask questions of the tour guide, who is often a current student. Taster days and applicant

days are more focused on specific courses or areas of study, meaning the event is tailored to the student's interests. They offer the chance to spend time with like-minded individuals interested in the same field.

Using websites such as [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.unitasterdays.com), UCAS.com or OpenDays.com can help students gain a clearer idea of what options are available. Whatever the event, these will all give your students a sense of what university life is like and whether it's something they'd like to pursue.

Look for incentives

There's no such thing as a free lunch. Whoever said that had obviously never been to a university open day!

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, several universities have offered additional support for students attending events. Plenty of support is available to students where the costs of visiting universities would otherwise be prohibitive. This could include money towards travel costs, free parking, discounts on National Rail, or a free lunch. The University of Winchester, for example, has an agreement with South Western Railway for a 34% discount for anyone travelling to an open day or similar event.

The fantastic people at UniTasterDays have put together a truly brilliant resource, pooling this information together to make everyone's lives easier. You can search for event discounts, rewards, and travel bursaries by visiting the [UniTasterDays event incentives platform](https://www.unitasterdays.com/event-incentives).

Seeing your new home

Open days remain a vital part of the university research process. While online events, virtual tours, and on-demand resources are plentiful, nothing can replace the feeling of seeing your new home for the first time. I still recall vividly the first time I stepped onto the campus of the university I attended. I thought, 'I'm coming here,' within just thirty seconds. That was solely due to my feeling in that place. As teachers and advisers, universities count on you to ensure that students continue to access and cherish that feeling.

SUPPORT

from the University
of Winchester



UNIVERSITY
OF
WINCHESTER



SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES TEAM

Our Schools and Colleges Team supports students, teachers, and parents across the UK with all things related to next steps. This includes attendance at careers fairs, a host of IAG workshops, academic taster sessions and visits to campus.

For more information, please contact schoolsandcolleges@winchester.ac.uk or visit our website winchester.ac.uk/collaborate/schools-and-colleges/

DISCOVER WINCHESTER SCHEME



Our Discover Winchester scheme supports applicants from widening participation backgrounds. We collaborate with schools and colleges to provide tailored support. Staff are invited to join our Discover Winchester Advocates scheme to receive termly newsletters and invitations to our annual forum for updates and feedback.

If you would like to join the Discover Winchester Advocates scheme please email us via discover@winchester.ac.uk



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 residentials 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 Madeeha Aminuddin, Taster Course and Outreach Engagement Officer at the University of London Careers Service

Over the past few years, online events have played a significant role across the higher education landscape. They have become an important part of university outreach. Gatsby Benchmark 7 outlines that, “By the age of 18, all pupils who are considering applying to higher education should have had at least two visits to higher education providers to meet staff and learners.”

These visits can be a mix of face-to-face, online, and hybrid events. In-person events offer valuable face-to-face interaction with university staff and students, whilst online events provide flexible, accessible alternatives that give your students meaningful insight into university life.

Preparing for online events

Encourage your students to register in advance for events. Once they have registered, they will receive a link to join the event on a platform such as Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, and others. Your students can prepare by checking the date and time of the event, and that they have received the link. They can also read the outline and write down some questions they may want to ask, just as they would do in a face-to-face event.

Your students should also ensure they have downloaded the correct platform and can access it before the event. One of the barriers to online events is lack of access to technology, so remind your students to check they have the right device and equipment: Wi-Fi, headphones, camera, microphone.

Many online events are held after school hours, meaning your students don't need to miss lessons to attend. However, if an event is scheduled during the school day, it's important that they find time and seek permission to attend. They should also arrange a quiet space with reliable technology and minimal

distractions to make the most of the experience.

Benefits and accessibility

Online events are a great way to gain insight into the admissions process, the courses available, and campus life. There is usually a careers talk where career pathways are discussed. Online events are free (much like face-to-face events) but they don't require travel to and from the university. This makes them more accessible to underrepresented students. Students can usually fit an online event around their school day, without much disruption to their normal routine. Sometimes sessions are even recorded, so students can replay the videos at a later stage.

Maximising engagement

Your students should follow the guidelines given. For example, they may be asked to disable their microphone and camera, use the chat/Q&A tools, and respect other participants. Sometimes, students may be asked to keep their camera on. Your students should try to engage with the speakers and take notes for future reference.

Post-event reflection

Evaluation forms are usually shared following online events. Encourage your students to reflect on what they have learned. This reflection helps transform the encounter into meaningful learning. If your students have any questions for the institution, a thank you note in a follow-up email is always courteous. They can go a step further by researching the university or course, and booking onto a campus tour or speaking with a careers adviser. You can support your students by promoting events, explaining their relevance, and creating space in lessons to discuss student experiences.

The University of London Taster Course Programme collaborates with its federal member institutions to promote both online and in-person taster courses on [UniTasterDays.com](https://www.uni-tasterdays.com). A diverse selection of engaging events are listed from multiple universities.

How to organise an event at your school or college

By Oliver Rossetti, Outreach Manager at Arden University

A successfully organised event can greatly support the achievement of the Gatsby Benchmarks and ignite that lightbulb moment for your students. Planning an impactful event can seem daunting, no matter whether it's your first event or your hundredth. Rest assured, you're certainly not alone. As higher education institutions, we're here to help you.

Online vs in-person

Face-to-face events are often the preferred choice. The value of interpreting non-verbal cues and engaging in a more meaningful career conversation is high on the list of reasons why. Many universities now have regional contacts, so you may discover a university from afar is actually closer to home than you expect.

However, it's still worth considering whether an online event could better serve your students. Going digital allows you to broaden your reach to institutions from further afield and really get your students thinking. Logistically, it could be easier to beam representatives in, with resources sent beforehand, to create

the same impact. For example, parents and carers could meet universities from the comfort of their own home, which may support attendance if they have other responsibilities and commitments.

Above all else, make sure students feel connected to the session by being interactive. Slido and Mentimeter are two platforms that work great on mobile and are worth incorporating. It's also an easy way to gain some instant evaluation data to present to senior management!

Deciding a date

Universities receive multiple requests to attend events, so we suggest you carefully research your intended date. Check whether it conflicts with local or national career exhibitions. You could also consider linking up with another school within your trust, or another local school, to boost student numbers and encourage a larger variety of universities to attend.

Alternatively, if the time of year is unavoidable, then you could reap some benefits by scheduling your event either side of a large exhibition. This will allow universities to reduce their carbon footprint and resourcing. In return, you will secure a wider pool of universities and further broaden the horizons of your students. It's a win-win!



If this works for you, be sure to invite university representatives in good time, so they can factor in your event before booking their travel. The more detail, the better.

Inviting university staff

I suggest including the following details in your first invitation to university staff, and also in a confirmation email two weeks before the event:

- Date, times, location
- The schedule of the day
- Safeguarding information
- The main organiser's contact details
- Expected size of audience - this helps universities adequately staff the event and bring the correct quantity of literature. We appreciate that audience size can fluctuate, so approximate numbers are fine.
- Refreshment details, including requests for dietary requirements
- Car parking, including alternatives if the car park is likely to be busy
- Directions - What3Words is a great tool to use when you have multiple entrances!
- Accessibility requirements – for the university staff and your students if appropriate
- The talks you are requesting for the university staff to deliver – include the key learning outcomes of each session. This will ensure the content delivered is what your students require
- Anything that may impact the day, such as construction work or the weather. For instance, are warm clothes needed if exhibitors are going to be in a draughty school hall?

Securing speakers

Avoid booking multiple institutions to deliver the same talk to a handful of students. Universities have a finite amount of resources,

and we try to cover as many events as possible to support knowledge gaps. Consolidate classes to increase the likelihood of a university staff member being able to support for half a day, rather than a full day. Speakers may begin to forget what they have and haven't said by the seventh talk of the day!

Providing refreshments

We realise this will always be budget dependent. Tea, coffee, and water go a long way, particularly for those colleagues who may have left at sunrise. Food is always welcome, but if this can't be provided, let exhibitors know in advance to bring their own lunch or evening snack.

Visiting a university

On occasion, instead of hosting a university event at your school, you might decide to attend an event organised by a university on their very own campus. Regardless, much of the above advice still applies when visiting a university.

However, my most important piece of advice is to communicate regularly with your lead contact. Keep in touch in case your plans change last minute, and you need to shorten the day, or you need to ensure accessibility needs are best met on your trip. We want your visit to be tailored so we can maximise positive impact.

Asking for feedback

Don't be afraid to ask for feedback on your events from your students and the university staff who attend them. You'll gain valuable insights to help you improve them for future years.

I hope you have found these tips useful. I wish you the best of luck in organising a successful university event!

" Communicate regularly with your lead contact. Keep in touch in case your plans change last minute, and you need to shorten the day, or you need to ensure accessibility needs are best met on your trip. "

Opening Doors to Equal Opportunities

Supporting teachers and advisers with tailored outreach activities that inspire and support raising attainment.

5th
for student
satisfaction

National Student
Survey 2020

Fully funded Postgraduate Certificate in Neurodiversity
places available for schools & colleges*

Explore our wide range of activities — from mental health and wellbeing workshops to a criminology guest speaker sharing their journey back into education.

Our programme of information, advice and guidance sessions provide engaging, curriculum-aligned experiences that work in partnership with you to take learning beyond the classroom.

*Subject to availability and eligibility

For more information, contact the
Community Outreach team

 arden.ac.uk/community-outreach

 outreach@arden.ac.uk

Top questions to ask at university fairs

By Krissie Martin, Schools and Colleges Liaison Manager at the University of Lincoln

University fairs are ever-popular events aimed at helping students make informed decisions about their future. Most schools and colleges hold an annual internal fair, with a significant number also taking their students off-site to external fairs hosted by the likes of UCAS or UKUS. Hosting or attending these events takes a lot of time, commitment, and organisation from teachers and advisers. As such, we know how important it is that your students make the most of these events by asking the range of providers the best possible questions.

Of course, the best questions depend on the personal interests and circumstances of each student. However, asking the following five questions should mean your students come away from each university's stand - and the event itself - better informed about their options moving forward.

1. Do you offer the course or subject area I'm interested in?

Some of your students will have a clear idea of the course they want to study. The rest will likely know the general subject area they see themselves progressing into. For this reason, their first priority should be to establish whether each provider offers courses in their preferred area.

2. Would your university cater for my living preferences?

Across the sector, students are increasingly living at home and commuting to their chosen university, often to save on the cost of accommodation. If your students are considering this too, they should chat to the university's team to understand if commuting is realistic and whether there are good transport links in the area. Conversely, for students intending to live at university, they might ask whether the university is city or campus-based, what the city is like, and what accommodation options are available.

3. Do you offer placement years?

For some students, having the opportunity to add a year into their course to work in industry or study abroad will be non-negotiable. Others may be less sure, but it's useful to ask if the university offers this option. We regularly have students realise during the first two years of their course that this is something they want to do, so knowing whether this is possible from the offset is very useful.

4. What bursaries and scholarships do you offer?

The financial support available to prospective students will vary across universities. This doesn't tend to be the decisive factor for most students choosing their provider, but it's still useful to know what support is available if they were to join each institution.

5. When are your open days?

If the student likes everything they have heard so far, their next step should be visiting that university at an open day. This will build on what they have found out. It will help them decide whether they can see themselves studying and living there.



The benefits of attending a teacher conference

By Zoe Mason, UK Recruitment Manager at the University of Wolverhampton

Attending a teacher conference can be one of the most rewarding investments you make in your professional life. Beyond the inspiring keynote presentations, teacher conferences will also offer you a unique environment where ideas spark, connections flourish, and your daily classroom challenges feel a little less daunting. This article explores six benefits that demonstrate why carving out time in your calendar for a teacher conference is so worthwhile.

1. Stimulating professional growth

Conferences bring together education experts, researchers, and innovators to share the latest pedagogical strategies and research findings. You might enjoy a hands-on workshop on differentiated instruction or a panel discussion about integrating technology in the classroom. Either way, you'll return to your school or college with practical tools to implement immediately. This continual learning refreshes your teaching toolkit, helps you stay ahead of curriculum changes, and support the evolving needs of your students.

2. Expanding your network

One of the richest conference experiences happens during coffee breaks and evening receptions. Engaging in conversations with fellow teachers, careers advisers, and university outreach officers can lead to ongoing professional relationships. These connections may develop into peer-mentoring partnerships, collaborative research opportunities, or even guest-speaking invitations back at your institution. A strong network also means you have more ready support when you face challenges in your classroom role.

3. Access to fresh resources

Exhibitor halls at teacher conferences are treasure troves of new textbooks, digital platforms, and outreach materials. Vendors often offer conference-only discounts or trial access, giving you a cost-effective way

to explore resources that can enrich your students' experience. Picking up samples or demos enables you to evaluate tools before committing budget time, ensuring you only invest in materials that truly align with your teaching objectives.

4. Renewed inspiration and wellbeing

Teaching is a rewarding but sometimes stressful profession. Stepping away from your daily routine and immersing yourself in a community of passionate educators can reignite your enthusiasm. Keynote speeches by renowned speakers often touch on the broader purpose of education, reminding you why you chose this path in the first place. Many attendees describe returning home with a renewed sense of purpose and a positive outlook. These benefits ripple out into your classroom environment and student engagement.

5. Showcasing your expertise

Teacher conferences aren't just for consuming content. They're also your platform for sharing. Presenting a workshop or leading a roundtable session raises your profile among peers and decision-makers. It positions you as a thought leader and can bolster your credibility when you return to your school or college role. If you're nervous about speaking publicly, co-presenting with a colleague can be an excellent first step.

6. Informing recruitment and outreach

Teacher conferences offer insights into current student concerns and emerging sector trends. Listening to sessions on career readiness or attending university panels can inform the advice you give to your students. Additionally, you can scout potential partner universities or regional Uni Connect networks to expand the insights and resources available to your students.

Your next big breakthrough

Investing time to attend a teacher conference pays dividends in your professional development, resource discovery, and personal renewal. The connections you forge and the knowledge you gain will empower you to make a lasting impact on your students. Consider carving out two or three days in your schedule this year. It could be the catalyst for your next big breakthrough in your teaching and advising role.

How you can help universities evaluate their events

By Dr Jay Rees, Student Recruitment Manager at The University of Law

School and college visits, workshops, and careers fairs are staples of my outreach work. These events play a vital role in helping young people explore their next steps, whether that's university, apprenticeships, or pathways they hadn't even considered before.

It's always rewarding to see students engaged, nodding along, smiling, or chatting with each other during our visits or classroom interactions:

- "Oh, they offer that course I like!"
- "I'm definitely going there!"
- "I didn't know I could do an apprenticeship instead of full-time uni and even earn a wage!"

These are the moments we live for. We want to help your students see the possibilities ahead. But once the session ends, we leave and that insight often stops.

Most of the feedback we receive is surface-level, early-stage, or top-of-the-pipeline. We know how many leads we gathered, patterns of interaction with key contacts, and how many applications came from a particular school or college. What we don't always see is the long-term impact. How did that initial spark influence a student's journey weeks or even months later?

That's where teachers and advisers can make a huge difference. A simple follow-up conversation with your students, a quick survey, or the sharing of anecdotal feedback can give us a richer understanding of how our presence supported and inspired your learners. This collaboration helps us tailor our future outreach and ensures we're making a real difference, rather than generating empty leads.

Here are a few simple ways you can help us evaluate the true impact of our engagement:

- » **Complete feedback forms** - encourage our students to complete feedback forms, event surveys, and data capture questions. Yes, these can sometimes be a headache to complete, but the insights are gold dust. They help us refine our delivery and understand what truly resonates with your students. We want to help your students decide the best route forward, even if that isn't with us.
- » **Research visiting universities** - help your students prepare by researching the visiting university, having their questions to hand, and reflecting afterwards on whether the session met their expectations.
- » **Register for newsletters** - prompt your students to register for university newsletters and ongoing communications. This allows them ongoing insights into our universities, long after we leave the school gates. Also, encourage them to engage with webinars, taster events, and networking so we can continue to support and shape their future.
- » **Offer your insights** - your own professional insight is vital in helping us understand what worked (or didn't) at your school or college. Every student cohort is unique, and we want to tailor our support to reflect that. We aim to deliver content that inspires students to explore new possibilities, not leave them bored by another "typical" university session. By completing our teacher feedback form, you help us better engage your learners and make each visit count.
- » **Share progression data** - where possible, tell us how previous cohorts of your students have been influenced by university events in their post-16 or post-18 choices. This information is invaluable in helping us understand the real impact of our engagement and will allow us to tailor future activities to your students' priorities.

When teachers and universities collaborate, we create a powerful feedback loop that supports student decision-making and ensures every visit leaves a meaningful impact for everyone involved.

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 underrepresented groups. It lists opportunities such as summers 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 webpages 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. "



Supporting you with your university events

You can request...

- ☒ A university event at your school
- ☒ An online university event
- ☒ A visit to a university
- ☒ University support for your careers fair



Submit your request at www.unitasterdays.com/request

Support for your Medicine applicants



Our Medicine subject-specific resources, taster days and open days give your students the support they need to progress to a Medicine degree, including:

- UCAT and UCAS workshops
- interview prep sessions
- academic-led clinical skills practicals
- taster lectures
- student-led facility tours



Click or scan to find out more

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 8). 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 these visits with schools and colleges. Find the outreach pages on the university website to discover what the university can offer you.

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!





UNIVERSITY OF
GREENWICH

Open Days

Education without boundaries

Don't let them miss out!
Pass on these dates

18 October

22 November



[gre.ac.uk/
events/opensdays](https://gre.ac.uk/events/opensdays)



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



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 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.

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.



Student finance in England: 3 must-know facts for supporting your students

By Jon Cheek, Founder of UniTasterDays.com

Student finance is one of the biggest concerns for students thinking about university. In our own National Review of University Guidance, it was highlighted as the most significant barrier.

My personal view?

As a society, we need to tell more young people how student finance works if we want to encourage them to consider university. I'm very fortunate to work with thousands of students every year. The vast majority don't understand the student finance system until I have an opportunity to explain it to them. However, it's far more straightforward than many think.

Student finance is an area that can change, has changed, and will change again, meaning great advice is essential. The most recent major change came in 2022. The Department for Education announced important updates to the student finance and repayment system for new students in England starting university from September 2023.

Before we look at these changes, please note that they don't apply to:

- graduates already repaying their loans
- current students already receiving student finance
- students from Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland.

The latter three countries have different student finance systems. For details, see the excellent [guidance from Martin Lewis](#).

Below are the three essential facts that every student, school, and college needs to know.

1. Students won't repay anything until they earn over £25,000

Starting from the April after graduation, students will only make repayments once their annual earnings are above £25,000. Repayments are 9% of anything earned above that threshold.

For example:

- Harry starts university in 2026 and graduates in 2029.
- In April 2030, Harry is earning £30,000. His repayment is 9% of £5,000 (the amount above £25,000).
- That works out at around £37.50 per month, and could be lower if the repayment threshold rises in line with inflation in the years ahead, as I expect it will. But let's not overcomplicate things here!

Talking point for students

It isn't like a typical loan. Repayments are based on what a student earns, not what they owe. If they earn less, they pay less. If they don't reach the threshold, they pay nothing.



2. The repayment term is now 40 years

Repayments can continue for up to 40 years after a student leaves university. Any remaining balance after that time will be written off.

Talking point for students

Many graduates won't repay the full amount before it is written off. For some, this works more like a graduate tax than a traditional loan. It was previously 30 years. A useful exercise is asking students to brainstorm why that changed.

3. Maintenance loan amounts vary depending on household income

A student's loan comes in two parts:

- Tuition fee loan - this covers the course cost, usually up to £9,535 per year at present. This loan is paid directly to the university.
- Maintenance loan - this is paid directly to the student to help with their living costs.

The size of the maintenance loan depends on several factors, but the biggest is parental or guardian income. The higher the household income, the smaller the maintenance loan will be. The problem is that many parents aren't told about this, and don't prepare for it.

Support is available

I have kept things brief in this article, but there is additional financial support available for students in many circumstances. This includes the Disabled Students' Allowance (page 83),

extra funding for certain subjects, and support based on personal circumstances, such as young carers (page 18).

Talking point for advisers

Every eligible student will get some support, but the amount can be very different. Encourage students and families to use the [Student Finance Calculator](#) to check what they might receive. If you work with parents and guardians, they'll appreciate the heads-up!

Share clear examples

Student finance can feel complicated and intimidating for both students and their families. The best way to build confidence is to share clear examples. Point people to trusted sources, such as the Student Loans Company and the Student Finance Calculator. My favourite expert in this area is Martin Lewis, who has provided content for many of our other [guides to university](#).

Finally, I always recommend a practical approach to help students learn. One simple exercise: ask your students to guess their repayments based on annual earnings of £20,000 (zero), £25,000 (still zero), £30,000 (roughly £37.50 per month), £40,000 (roughly £112.50 per month) and £50,000 (roughly £187.50 per month). It's a fun way of teaching them about repayments and makes student finance so much more engaging.



University bursaries and scholarships

Nikky Hammond, School & College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter

For some students, the costs involved in progressing to university mean that they discount this pathway as an option. Student finance can help with the basics but, particularly in the current climate, student loans are normally not sufficient to cover costs. This presents an obstacle for some prospective students and their parents/carers.

Making students aware of the additional financial support available through bursaries and scholarships is essential. It will reduce financial concerns as a barrier when considering university as a viable post-18 option.

↔ Bursaries vs scholarships

Both are types of funding which, unlike student loans, don't need to be repaid. However, the main difference is the eligibility criteria for each funding type. Bursaries are non-competitive payments intended to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds, or having difficulties funding their studies. Scholarships are payments made to support a student's education. They are awarded based on merit, personal achievement, or academic ability. Both bursaries and scholarships are usually paid incrementally throughout the student's time at university.

🏠 University bursaries

University bursaries are usually awarded to students who need financial help. They may offer support due to a student's personal circumstances or a low family income. In doing so, they ease the pressure of living costs to help students go to university who might not otherwise be able to attend. Bursaries are usually non-competitive, making them more accessible than other funding options.

There are numerous individual circumstances which mean students may be eligible for a bursary, so help them explore additional funding sources available to them. Eligibility for bursaries linked to family income are often automatically assessed by universities. However, consent to share financial details is needed through the student finance application.

💰 University scholarships

Scholarships are intended to reduce the financial burden of attending university. They are awarded in recognition of particular skills and abilities. They are generally more competitive than bursaries and have a more detailed application process. Scholarship opportunities vary between universities, but typical categories are:

- academic
- sports
- artistic and creative
- specific backgrounds
- specific circumstances.

Scholarships may be financial. In some instances, the scholarship may offer specific resources needed to support a student's studies.

✍ Application tips

Encourage your students to be organised to maximise their chance of success. Good advice is:

- start researching early
- apply when applications open
- ensure the application fits the criteria
- note down deadlines - these are often early in the application cycle, particularly for scholarships
- consider less widely known scholarships from charities, professional organisations, and businesses
- Apply for multiple grants, bursaries, and scholarships to increase the chance of success.

As a teacher and adviser, please reassure your students that support is available so finance isn't a barrier in their progression to university.



University
of Exeter

Discover University for Teachers and Advisers

We work with schools and colleges across the UK, offering a selection of activities and programmes in person and digitally, to encourage students to consider higher education as a realistic and achievable goal.

We are able to deliver a range of topics within your setting, including:

- An Introduction to Higher Education
- Degree Apprenticeships
- Applying to Competitive Universities
- Applying to Medicine and Nursing
- Student Life in Devon and Cornwall
- Writing an Effective Personal Statement
- Student Finance
- Managing Your Money

Discover University is a collection of online activities and resources designed to support students, parents and supporters, and teachers and advisers.



**To sign up to our teacher and adviser newsletter,
or to book an activity visit: exeter.ac.uk/teacher**



@DiscoverUniExe



@UniversityofExeter

Access, Participation and Outreach Office, Exeter EX4 4RN
exeter.ac.uk/discoveruniversity

**RUSSELL
GROUP**

Scholarships: finding opportunities and standing out

By Larissa Eddy, Corporate Manager at Blackbullion

Over the past 3 years, scholarships have finally begun to take hold as a real opportunity for students in the UK. With the cost-of-living crisis exacerbating the already expensive commitment of pursuing a university degree, stakeholders outside of the education sector have taken notice and begun to step in.

We've seen the unveiling of Santander's new education strategy, which included a multi-million pound scholarship programme. Even UK grime artist, Stormzy, is getting involved by funding dozens of scholarships for Black students at Cambridge.

However, even with more opportunities opening up for your learners, the market for scholarships is still small and very competitive. This article will help you point your students in the direction of the right opportunities and maximise their chances of securing the awards by smashing their applications.

When to expect scholarships to launch

Students should be aware of these funding windows:

- **April** – A key period when many scholarships open. Encourage students to prepare applications in the spring.

- **September** – Another wave of scholarships launches in early autumn, giving students a second chance.
- **National Scholarships Week 2025** – This took place between 31 March and 4 April 2025, in partnership with Amazon. NSW25 launched over £1.1 million worth of scholarship funding through corporate partners.

Scholarships as a gateway to opportunities

Many scholarships provide more than just financial aid. They offer internships, mentorships, and work experience. These extras can be pivotal in building a student's career. Encourage students to seek scholarships aligned with their goals, as these opportunities make them more appealing to future employers.

Finding opportunities

The scholarships marketplace remains fragmented, but students now have more ways to find the right opportunities. Students can search directly through universities, or using a scholarships aggregator like Blackbullion's Funding Hub, The Scholarship Hub, and even the British Council.

Many scholarships provide more than just financial aid. They offer internships, mentorships, and work experience. These extras can be pivotal in building a student's career.



However, students should also be aware of additional channels where scholarship information is shared. For instance, platforms like TikTok and Instagram are increasingly being used by scholarship providers to promote their programmes. You can also sign up for newsletters from scholarship websites and follow key scholarship influencers on social media who provide regular updates on new opportunities.

Increasing chances for success

We work with providers from both the higher education and private sectors. Both sides give us the same answer when it comes to what makes an application stand out: the student sharing their genuine story with the funder. This is particularly true when it comes to widening participation scholarships. The funders want to know why the student is applying and, more importantly, how the scholarship will help the student achieve their goals.

Remind your students to try to feel comfortable sharing experiences about their families, their personal achievements, and what their aspirations are. Linking future goals to the

subject that they have chosen to study will demonstrate the student's commitment to their education and their future, which goes a long way with funders.

Another excellent way to stand out is to show off the research that the student has done into the funder. Each scholarship application is different. Demonstrating to the funder that this application is for them, and only them, ensures that the student will be noticed.

Another important note for your students is to provide evidence. Many scholarships will be targeted towards students who truly require the funding due to their personal circumstances. In these situations, most funders will ask for evidence of the student's financial situation, so they should have bank statements, SLC entitlement letters, and photo IDs within reach to speed up the process!

One final word of advice: there are a lot of students, and too few opportunities out there. Please encourage your students to apply to as many scholarships and bursaries as possible for the best chance of success.



CAUTION: Reviewers can tell when students use AI on their scholarship applications! That doesn't mean that students shouldn't use Chat GPT to assist with their applications, but it does mean that they need to be careful.



Have you listened to The Uni Guide Podcast?

- ☒ Over 40 episodes featuring university experts
- ☒ Supported by a student and graduate panel
- ☒ Exploring key university guidance topics
- ☒ Can even be embedded into your school website!



Please listen in and share with students: www.unitasterdays.com/theuniguide

Want to feel confident supporting your student through uni?

Join the Blackbullion Parent Pathways + community

- Step-by-step toolkits to help your student at university
- Private forum to ask questions & share experiences
- Invites to expert webinars on mental health, employability & more
- Monthly digest with tips, trends & parent FAQs

JOIN THE COMMUNITY NOW



Help your young person master money

Track spending, build money skills, earn rewards & feel more prepared for uni life.



TRY OUR FREE APP

The NHS Learning Support Fund

By Teri Garfitt, Money Advice Manager at the University of Gloucestershire

Choosing a career in healthcare is more than a degree decision. It's a commitment to helping others and making a difference. Funding can play a big part in making that journey possible for many of your students.

This article will help you navigate the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF). The LSF is a financial support package designed to ease financial pressure to let your students focus on what matters most: their studies, placements, and future career.

Introducing the LSF

The LSF is a non-repayable financial package available to eligible students studying full-time allied health courses. It's offered by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) to support students with the cost of living and studying in England. Your students can apply if they are starting an eligible course in September 2025 or January 2026 and usually live in the UK.

Funding offered by the LSF

Eligible students can access a range of support:

- Training Grant – £5,000 each academic year, or a pro-rata amount for part-time students.
- Parental Support – £2,000 each academic year for students with dependent children under 15 years old, or under 17 if registered with special educational needs.
- Specialist Subject Payment – £1,000 each year for students on courses in shortage areas.
- Exceptional Support Fund – Up to £3,000 each academic year for students experiencing financial hardship who may have exhausted all other funds, such as any financial assistance funds through their university.

This is all in addition to core support from Student Finance England:

- Tuition Fee Loans
- Maintenance Loans
- Dependants' Grants
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

Students from other parts of the UK will need to apply through their relevant national funding body, such as Student Finance Wales, SAAS (Scotland), or Student Finance Northern Ireland.

Applying for the LSF

Applications for the LSF are made directly through the NHSBSA website. Your students need to create an account, provide relevant documentation, and reapply for each academic year. It's best to apply early to make sure funding is in place for when they start.

Courses eligible for the LSF

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

Social Work isn't covered by the LSF, but students can apply for the Social Work Bursary (SWB) through NHSBSA.

Support for the LSF

Universities have dedicated specialist finance advice teams to help your students understand their next steps. For instance, at the University of Gloucestershire, our Money Advice Team will support students through every stage of the application. This includes understanding eligibility, gathering documents, and applying for wider support. We're here to make sure financial challenges don't stand in the way of your students or their future.

The Disabled Students' Allowance

By Caitlin Shaw, Education Liaison Assistant at Edge Hill University

As your students embark on their journey to higher education, they may have concerns about how they'll be supported during their studies. Universities are committed to ensuring the success of their students and recognise potential barriers in learning.

While the transition to higher education is a significant change for your students, it's important to understand the extensive support available to them while studying, including the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

What is the DSA?

The Disabled Students' Allowance is a government-funded support scheme designed to assist students with learning difficulties, mental health issues, and disabilities by covering the additional costs of studying in higher education.

Unlike Student Finance, this support scheme is tailored to individual needs and the cost of support doesn't need to be repaid. DSA promotes inclusivity within higher education, ensuring that students can engage in university life and achieve their full potential.

DSA eligibility

The DSA supports students who have:

- specific learning difficulties – for example, dyslexia or ADHD
- mental health conditions – for example, anxiety or depression
- physical disabilities – for example, if you use a wheelchair or a special keyboard
- sensory disabilities – for example, if you're visually impaired, deaf, or have a hearing impairment
- long-term health conditions – for example, cancer or chronic heart disease.

DSA support

Students beginning their undergraduate or postgraduate studies in 2025 can get up to £27,783 to cover costs of:

- specialist equipment – for example, a computer or assistance software required because of your disability
- non-medical helpers – for example, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or specialist note taker
- extra travel to attend your course or placement because of your disability
- other disability-related study support – for example, having to print additional copies of documents for proof-reading.

DSA application process

To apply for DSA, your students need to:

1. **Apply for Student Finance** – they can apply for DSA as part of their Student Finance application. If they haven't applied for student finance because they don't need it, they can complete a DSA1 form to apply solely for the DSA. This can be found on the Government website.
2. **Submit evidence of disability** – your student will need to provide medical evidence of their disability. This could be a letter from a doctor, psychologist, or other health professional.
3. **Attend a study needs assessment** – once DSA eligibility is confirmed, your students will attend a study needs assessment. A professional will discuss the support required to meet their specific needs. After the assessment, your student will receive a personalised support package. The funding will be used for necessary resources and services.

As a teacher or adviser, you can find out more about student support directly through each university.

"This support scheme is tailored to individual needs and the cost of support doesn't need to be repaid. "

Applying for hardship funding

By Tom Allingham, Communications Director at Save the Student

Nobody wants their student life to be hampered by financial difficulty, but universities can help. In addition to their wide range of bursaries, most universities offer a hardship fund too. Many have even added more cash to the pot of their hardship fund and expanded eligibility in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

But these funds are still limited. To help, this article will introduce you to hardship funds, how much funding your students can receive, and how to access them.

Understanding hardship funding

The focus tends to be on the seriousness of a student's financial challenges, and often if it's arisen unexpectedly through no fault of their own. That last part is crucial. Although the exact rules vary by university, they usually specify that students must have been careful with their money, budgeted, and taken the maximum maintenance package they were offered.

If a student spends recklessly and goes out every night, or routinely buys designer clothes, they might find it more difficult to access hardship funding. But what if someone had a part-time job (page 86), kept to a strict budget, only to be made redundant and unable to pay their bills? Chances are, they'd be more likely to receive help.

The key point is that despite their expansion in recent years, hardship funds aren't infinite. Universities still try to reserve the money for those who tried to make things work, but suffered an unforeseen blow.

Cash offered by hardship funding

In most cases, hardship funding is non-repayable. Precisely how much students get will vary depending on both their university and the issue they're facing. If their problem can be solved by a one-off payment of £100, that's likely all they'll receive.

But if they're facing a far bigger challenge, their university may offer much more. In particularly urgent cases, a university may even pay a small amount upfront to help the student while their application is processed.

Applying for hardship funding

Each university's application process is different, but it's typically an online application. Most will have guidance on their website about the requirements. Failing that, the students' union or money advice team should be able to help.

Your students needn't worry too much about the specifics at this stage, but it's worth knowing that they'll have to supply evidence of their hardship. This could include bank statements, and potentially an explanation of any large or unusual outgoings. As ever, it will vary by circumstance. For example, if a student is claiming they've been made redundant, they may need to provide written proof.

Awareness of hardship funding

As a teacher or adviser, please make your students aware of hardship funding before they go to university. It will help calm any fears about unexpected financial difficulties later. But the onus is on your students to manage their finances carefully, because factoring hardship funding into their budget will likely only damage their chances of receiving it.

" A university may even pay a small amount upfront to help the student while their application is processed. "

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 87). 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!



Do your students need financial support for open days?

- ☒ Use our new event incentives search tool
- ☒ Find universities offering financial support for their events
- ☒ Discover travel bursaries, refreshment vouchers, free parking
- ☒ Explore discounted trains, coaches, and hotels



Search for event incentives at www.UniTasterDays.com/EventIncentives

Part-time work opportunities at university

By Liv Squires, Senior Student Recruitment Officer at Southampton Solent University

Studying full-time and working part-time is absolutely possible. Your students just need to plan their time carefully and have a schedule in place. I hope that this article will give you and your students an insight into the available opportunities.

On campus

On campus jobs help students earn whilst they learn, which could even tie into their subject area. Your students could become a student ambassador, which offers valuable flexibility and variation. Student ambassadors assist with open days, campus tours, subject taster days, and get involved with talks about university life.

There are other job opportunities on campus too. Students can create social media content, help with subject-specific tasks, support with office administration, or work for their students' union in a wide variety of roles.

Off campus

Off campus part-time work could be available within local retail, hospitality, leisure, or tourism companies. For instance,

surrounding Southampton Solent, there are shops, bars, restaurants, leisure clubs, and theatres where students find part-time work alongside their studies.

Within their search, your students should check the work is student friendly. They should only agree to manageable hours and the job should be flexible around their studies, especially during busy exam periods.

Benefits of part-time work

Part-time work gives your students an extra bit of financial support, and it's a brilliant addition to their CV. It's a chance for them to develop skills that are crucial for their employability.

I worked part-time whilst studying for my undergraduate degree. It was a welcome mental break away from my studies. At the same time, I earned money for social activities during the month.

Finding part-time work

Your students can research part-time work options ahead of time, even if they're unsure which university they'll be attending. If attending an open day, they could seek advice from current students.

Equally, they can contact their university careers teams to learn about on and off-campus opportunities. Every university has a careers support service. For example, Southampton Solent's team is called Solent Careers. They offer help with job application forms, creating a strong CV, and where to look for work opportunities.



Saving money with student discount cards

By Kaffe Locke, Regional Schools, Colleges and Outreach Officer at the University of South Wales

Financing and money are key factors when students make important decisions about where to study for their degree. It's reassuring for students to know that many companies offer discounts, both small and large. As teachers and advisers, you can help ease anxiety around financial pressures by encouraging your students to take advantage of these opportunities.

Student discounts have become a valuable tool for saving money, with more companies than ever offering deals for students. Your students should actively seek out these offers and take advantage of them. Discounts can go a long way to reduce financial stress, allowing them to make significant savings on quality products from top brands.

Cards and apps

You can encourage your students to access discounts with the TOTUM card. For a small annual fee, they will receive a physical card to use in-store for discounts. The TOTUM website provides a list of participating companies, making it easy to see where the card can be used.

In addition, two popular free apps for student discounts are UNiDAYS and Student Beans:

- UNiDAYS partners with over 800 brands
- Student Beans offers discounts from more than 1,000 brands.

Each app offers unique discount codes for students to use. Both apps cover a wide range of sectors, including fashion, food and drink, travel and entertainment, technology, and more. You'll find discounts from well-known brands such as Nike, Deliveroo, ASOS, The Gym Group, and many others

To use these apps, your students simply need to provide some basic personal information and verify the institution where they're studying. It's a quick and easy process. Both apps are completely free for students, with no sign-up fee required.

Travel discounts

Students can save money on travel. Two popular options:

- National Express Students Coachcard – offers 1/3 off coach travel for £15 a year or £35 for three years.
- 16-25 Railcard (Student Railcard) – offers 1/3 off rail travel for £35 a year or £80 for three years.

Both cards are rewarding money-saving options for students who commute or travel home during the holidays.

Supermarket loyalty schemes

You can also help your students save money on their weekly food shops by suggesting supermarket loyalty and discount schemes. Several supermarkets offer cards to help students make their budgets go further:

- Tesco Clubcard – unlocks lower prices on selected items and earns points on purchases.
- Sainsbury's Nectar Card – unlocks lower prices and allows students to collect points to spend on future shops or with partner brands.
- Lidl Plus – offers regular coupons, scratchcard prizes, and special discounts.

Entertainment subscriptions

Finally, two companies offer useful student entertainment subscriptions:

- Spotify Student – £5.99 each month, giving access to music, audiobooks, and podcasts.
- Amazon Prime Student – £4.49 each month, offering access to films, TV shows, exclusive deals, and free delivery on eligible items.

These services can help students stay entertained and make the most of their downtime at university.

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.

Understanding the university admissions process and offer-making

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

UK university undergraduate admissions teams follow the UCAS cycle. This runs from early September when applications open, until roughly the same time the following year when UCAS clearing ends. All major UCAS deadlines can be found on the UCAS website. It's important that you familiarise yourself and your students with these dates, to make the UCAS application process as stress-free as possible.

Admissions policies

Most universities publish an undergraduate admissions policy on their website. Your students should read these policies for all five of their chosen universities before submitting their UCAS application. These policies often outline general admissions criteria including key details that could impact a student's eligibility. In some cases, a policy may state that a student isn't eligible for an offer. If this goes unnoticed, the student could waste one of their five UCAS choices on a university that won't even consider them.

Equal consideration

Universities begin receiving applications in early September. There's often speculation about whether admissions departments look more favourably on earlier submissions. Rest assured, they don't. The deadline on 14 January 2026 is named the 'equal consideration' deadline because we give equal consideration to all applications received before this date.

However, universities will start making offers as soon as applications start coming in. We factor years of historical data into this process. We stagger offers so that places don't fill up before the deadline.

Types of offers

Once assessed, an application typically results in one of four outcomes. Some universities may also waitlist or make alternative offers, usually outlined in their admissions policies.

- **Unconditional** – the student has already met all conditions of an offer and doesn't need to complete any further qualifications.
- **Conditional** – the offer is conditional to the student providing further qualifications – usually pending exam results.
- **Reject** – the student has been unsuccessful, and the university cannot offer them a place.
- **Interview** – the student has been invited to interview. Once the interview is complete, the offer will update to one of the previous three types of offers.

Receiving and accepting

Students who apply by the equal consideration deadline should receive all decisions by 6 May 2026. They will have until 3 June 2026 to choose their firm and insurance options. Encourage them to wait for all five decisions and take their time deciding. Universities won't withdraw offers or penalise them for using the full decision period.

UCAS Extra

If a student receives no offers from their five initial choices, they can use UCAS Extra from 26 February 2026 to add one choice at a time until they receive an offer. UCAS Extra closes once Clearing opens on 5 July 2026. After which, most students will need to wait until A-level results day on 13 August 2026 to apply through Clearing.

Talk to the university

Finally, please remember that university applications are reviewed by human beings. Sometimes we make mistakes. If one of your students is concerned that their offer doesn't look right, encourage them to contact the university as soon as possible so that we can correct it.

The 2026 changes to personal statements

By Morgan Cassie, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of Essex

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 webpages 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.

Help shape their future in Edinburgh with Heriot-Watt

2nd in the UK for undergraduate employability

Graduate Outcomes, 2024

Edinburgh Campus Open Days

*Programmes in Science, Technology,
Engineering, Maths and Business*

27 September 2025, 10 – 4pm

25 October 2025, 12 - 6pm

Scottish Borders Campus Open Days

*Programmes in Textiles
and Design*

10 October 2025, 10 – 3pm

7 November 2025, 10 – 3pm



Book an Open Day
hw.ac.uk/open-days



Qualifications accepted by universities

By Caspian Robson, Widening Participation Admissions Officer at the University of Exeter

Qualification choices are among the most crucial decisions made by prospective students. Without the right qualifications, even your most excellent students cannot be considered. However, choosing the right ones can set your students up for success well beyond the UCAS process.

Traditional qualifications

Universities typically list a selection of accepted qualifications on their course webpages. This covers overall attainment requirements (expressed as standard offers) and any additional specifications within. GCSEs and A-levels are the most common qualifications undertaken by UK applicants, so they are most commonly displayed. Other qualifications may also be listed, such as BTECs, T Levels, the International Baccalaureate, and Access to Higher Education Diplomas.

Alternative qualifications

However, universities may also accept, or place relevance on, qualifications that don't display so clearly. Some will have specialist webpages containing lists of accepted qualifications and how they are considered. This might include the Extended Project or Core Maths, or equivalencies for regional qualifications such as Scottish Highers, the Irish Leaving Certificate, or WJEC.

Your students might be unsure whether their qualification is accepted by a university. Equally, they may wish to know what grades would be required for their desired course, especially in subject-specific requirements. If so, they should contact a university's admissions team for bespoke advice, guidance, and support.

Non-standard journeys

Students with a mix of qualifications may feel anxious about being perceived as less able or desirable by a university. This is equally true of students with non-standard academic journeys, such as those with partially online schooling, overseas schooling, homeschooling, or any otherwise disrupted educational histories.

Rest assured, universities welcome applications from students from all walks of life and personal circumstance. Admissions staff are trained to provide helpful, supportive advice. They don't just advise on academic requirements, but also admissions processes, application assessments, and signposting to relevant support.

Tests and tariffs

The term 'accepted qualifications' can also apply to non-academic studies. For example, a student applying to a Medicine programme (page 47) should check which entrance test is used by their chosen university. Equally, a student who needs to sit the GAMSAT test could waste time and effort studying for the alternative UCAT test.

If a university uses UCAS tariff points, your students could consider choosing additional or supplementary qualifications to boost their overall total. However, they should be aware of primary priorities in a university's application assessment process, and whether a university uses tariff points at all.

Feeling empowered

A student's choice of qualification should reflect suitability to progress to their desired course, but it should also allow them to achieve the results that reflect their aptitude and hard work. A university may specifically express a preference for a given qualification type over another. If not, your students should feel empowered to explore their options. They should choose a qualification that allows them to build skills, confidence, and knowledge. This will benefit their UCAS application, their university studies, and their journey into the world of opportunities beyond higher education.

Preparing a portfolio for a creative course

By Holly Hayman, Head of Digital & Content at Falmouth University

For your students applying to creative courses at university, the process can look quite different compared to applying to STEM subjects. This is mainly because they will need to provide a portfolio of their work.

Courses such as fine art, graphic design, architecture, fashion, animation, photography, or illustration will often require a portfolio as one of the most (or the most) important part of the application. A portfolio shows the potential of your creative students.

Preparing a portfolio

Portfolios are more than just a collection of work. They provide university admissions teams with a window into a student's creativity, skills, thinking processes, and potential for development.

When advising your students, emphasise that their portfolios should demonstrate the whole process. Polished, finished pieces are valuable and show their skill. Equally, universities are interested in seeing the process behind the work. Sketchbooks, development work, notes, and drafts help show how a student develops an idea from concept to final outcome.

Different universities, different content

Each university course is likely to have slightly different requirements, such as volume of work or file types. Your students might be applying to multiple courses, and different disciplines will have their own expectations. For instance, a portfolio for art will look

different to one for architecture. Your students should carefully read each course's portfolio guidelines, which are usually available on university websites.

Personal work

Sometimes, a student might have very little work from their school or college projects. In this case, encourage the students to include personal work to demonstrate their skills. This is often the case if a student decides to study a creative discipline at university, but didn't study one at school or college. Personal work could be self-initiated artwork, designs, photography, or creative projects completed in their own time.

Digital vs physical

Portfolios can often be submitted physically or digitally, depending on the university. Digital portfolios are increasingly common. Help your students photograph or scan their work to a good standard. File formats should be checked in advance to meet each university's specifications. There are often maximum file sizes. Universities may accept hosted sources, like a link to Google Drive or Dropbox. Again, check the specific course or university's admissions criteria first.

Physical portfolios are often only required for a university that offers an in-person interview, in which case the student should bring their portfolio with them to the interview. Encourage them to purchase a waterproof case. You don't want the weather to scupper their chances!

Final thought

In summary, a strong creative portfolio is varied, exploratory, tailored, and well-presented. With early preparation and the right guidance, your students can produce portfolios that reflect their creative talents, whilst showing their potential to grow and succeed at university.



Understanding the Solicitors Qualifying Exam (SQE)

By Hannah Coe, Senior Student Recruitment Manager - Postgraduate at The University of Law

The introduction of the Solicitors Qualifying Examinations (SQE) in 2021 has changed the way future students will qualify as a solicitor. Replacing the Legal Practice Course (LPC), this new route was introduced by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) to widen access to the legal profession.

It has become potentially quicker and cheaper to qualify, and ensures all solicitors have the solid foundation of knowledge and skills needed. All students must sit two assessments (SQE1 and SQE2) and complete a period of qualifying working experience if they want to be a future lawyer.

This introduction has caused a stir in the legal profession. Some say it's too hard, some say it isn't cheaper, some say it disadvantages those from non-white backgrounds. This article offers the facts, so you can decide whether the SQE has achieved its aims.

SQE examinations

The SQE is a set of centralised, rigorous, and externally moderated assessments, sat under pressurised conditions. With the previous route, all providers of the LPC course were able to set their own examinations. This meant the variation in quality of those entering the profession was evident. Now, the assessment will be the same no matter where you study.

This means that providers of courses to prepare for the SQE have had to pull their

socks up, ensuring that the quality of their teaching enables their students to pass. At The University of Law, we are incredibly proud of our pass rates on the SQE. They are higher than the national average, so we know our students will have the best chance of succeeding on these assessments.

SQE costs

It's debatable whether the SQE is quicker and cheaper. There's no requirement to study any course to prepare you for the SQE assessments. Students can just book themselves on and attempt to pass. This might be quicker and cheaper in the long run. However, a student only gets 3 chances to pass the assessment in a 6-year period. Arguably, it's better to pay for a course to ensure the best chance to pass first time round. Those courses haven't got cheaper, so the cost-effective aim of the SQE is a little far from being achieved.

SQE accessibility

Some believe the SQE is a disadvantage to students from non-white backgrounds. The SRA are working with the University of Exeter to investigate the complex factors which may contribute to this belief. The review published by the SQE in 2024 found no evidence of bias in the SQE assessments.

However, pass rate data continues to highlight differences in performance between ethnic groups. White students and mixed/multiple ethnicity students generally performed better than students from other ethnicities. This is something the SRA needs to address if it wants to instil a sense of trust in these assessments from future students and advisers like yourselves.

SQE support

To support your students with their questions, you can find helpful resources in the SQE Hub on the Legal Cheek website and the SRA website.

" The SQE is a set of centralised, rigorous, and externally moderated assessments, sat under pressurised conditions. "

Contextual university admissions

By Beth McGeoghegan, Schools Outreach Officer (WP) at The University of Law

Grades don't provide a full picture of a student's achievement or their potential to succeed in higher education. Universities recognise some students face additional barriers that impact their academic outcomes, which is why they offer contextual admissions.

Contextual admissions consider a student's grades in light of their background and life experiences. This may result in the university adjusting their usual offer. This is called a contextual offer. Contextual offers acknowledge disadvantages and make access to higher education fairer.

Contextual offer types

Contextual offers come in many forms, varying by institution and course. A reduced offer allows admission with one or two grades lower than the advertised course entry requirements. The applicant could also be offered a place on a course with a foundation year to boost their knowledge and support their chances of success at university. Some contextual offers mean that eligible applicants receive guaranteed interviews, unconditional offers, or extra consideration given to their application.

For those not yet applying, some universities run enrichment schemes for post-16 learners from groups entitled to contextual offers. These schemes provide insight into areas of study and university life. If participants later apply to that university, they may be guaranteed interviews or awarded bursaries. Applicants who hold contextual offers may be invited to participate in activities or summer schools to support their transition to university and aid skills development ahead of commencing their studies.

Contextual offer eligibility

Eligibility criteria for a contextual offer varies between universities. The following factors may determine eligibility:

- Postcode – those living in areas of high deprivation or with a low proportion of people attending university.
- Care-experience – people who have spent time in local authority care, with kinship carers, under a special guardianship order, or being privately fostered.
- Estrangement – where the student has no contact with either parent.
- Caring responsibilities – people with unpaid caring responsibilities for family or friends.
- Refugee status – those granted refugee status by the UK government.
- School and college – students whose school or college has performed below the national average and/or has few students progress to higher education.
- Disabilities – which may include learning differences, mental health conditions, and long-term health conditions.

Contextual offer opportunities

Contextual offers vary between institutions, so your students should check eligibility at different universities. This information can be found on university websites. Some even have eligibility tools which state whether your students are entitled to a contextual offer based on answers to a few simple questions. If your students aren't sure, they can contact the university admissions department. They are always happy to help.

Fortunately, applying for contextual offers is easy. Your students simply complete the relevant information on the UCAS application form. Encourage them to disclose their circumstances when applying, so that universities will automatically become aware of any characteristics which would make them eligible for contextual admissions. As a teacher, you can also include relevant information in your academic reference if the student has consented.

What happens after receiving an offer

By Nikky Hammond, School & College Engagement Officer at the University of Exeter

It takes patience and stamina to support your students through the UCAS application process and ensure everything is submitted by the deadline. Once offers start being received, your students will wonder how to respond to their offers and make an informed choice.

Any applications received by the 'equal considerations' deadline on 14 January 2026 will receive a decision by 6 May 2026. This will be available on the Track area of UCAS. The offer will be one of the following:

- Conditional – specific requirements must be met to secure the place
- Unconditional – entry requirements have been met, and the place is confirmed
- Invitation received – the student has been invited to interview
- Unsuccessful – an offer has not been made.

Your students must respond to their offers by 3 June 2026, so remind your students to make a note of this date to avoid missing deadlines. They should wait for a reply from all five chosen universities before making a decision. The June deadline allows time for this reflection. If they don't respond by the deadline, their offers will be declined automatically.

Your students should understand the offers they have been made. They should be clear about the conditions of those offers, then take time to consider and compare offers to make the right decision for them. Many universities

host offer-holder events on campus or online to help your students navigate the process.

They'll have the opportunity to find out more about the course and overall student experience before making their decisions.

Students need to make the following choices:

- Firm – this is their first choice and may be subject to conditions depending on whether the offer was conditional or unconditional.
- Insurance – this is their second or back-up choice to ensure they have an option if they don't meet the conditions of their first choice. Guide students to a choice which has lower offer conditions than their firm acceptance. If their first choice is unconditional, they don't have the option to accept an insurance choice.

Any other offers received need to be declined at this point. Hopefully, your students will have researched carefully and be happy with their decisions. However, if they change their mind, there is a 14-day grace period, but they can only make changes once.

Your students may not receive an offer from any of their five original choices. Equally, they may wish to decline all five offers after having a change of heart. In both cases, they can add another choice using the UCAS Extra feature which is available between 26 February and 4 July 2026. If they aren't holding any offers by 5 July 2026, they can add an additional choice through Clearing.

Once offer decisions have been made by your students, the focus can turn fully to working to meet the requirements of a conditional offer and getting excited about checking their UCAS account on results day!



How to choose university accommodation

By Evie Podmore, Undergraduate Outreach Assistant at Keele University

When advising your students about going to university, one of the most common questions is, "How do I choose my accommodation?"

University accommodation comes in many different forms and price points. There are:

- shared halls - often shared between 9-20 students
- shared flats and houses - typically shared between 4-8 students
- studio flats - entirely self-contained.

The other difference is between ensuite and shared bathrooms. Shared bathroom halls and flats are typically single sex, whereas ensuite flats are typically mixed. Your students can request accommodation to meet their needs, such as single-sex, quiet, alcohol-free, or accessible options.

Affording accommodation

When trying to choose accommodation, there's more for your students to think about than just bathrooms or aesthetics. Affordability is a critical consideration to ensure they can afford their rent and their living costs. Does their maintenance loan cover their accommodation costs? Can they put money towards accommodation?

Some students may prioritise having a more modern or less-occupied accommodation, whilst others may prefer basic accommodation so they have extra money

for food, travel, and experiences. Some students may just want a simple room to return home to after lectures where they can sleep and study. Typically, the larger-capacity, shared bathroom accommodation is the cheapest. The lower-capacity, en-suite rooms and studios are the most expensive.

Sharing bathrooms

Your students may initially dislike the idea of larger-capacity accommodation or shared bathrooms. However, many have no issue with them after attending university, myself included!

For me, sharing with more students meant the chance to meet even more people, and it gave me a higher chance of finding friends in my flat compared to smaller flats. It can help your students make those initial friendships when you come to university, with less anxiety because of the proximity.

Most students already share a bathroom at home, and university shared bathrooms are even more private than that! With multiple cubicles for toilets or showers, and usually your own sink in your room, I find that I hardly ran into anybody anyway. It made no difference to my university experience, aside from all the money I saved!

Deciding priorities

Help your students decide their priorities. Shared accommodation is better if they prioritise meeting people or having more money. A smaller ensuite flat will work better if they prioritise having their own bathroom. Either way, make sure they understand the pros and cons of each. Ultimately, reassure your students that their accommodation experience is usually made by the people, not the bedroom. It's their experience to shape!



Understanding and preparing for Clearing

By Rachel Stanley, Interim 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**
Twickenham
London

Teacher and Adviser Conference 2026

Thursday 2nd July | 10am-3.30pm

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 Robin Schieferstein,
Creative and Professional
Writing graduate from
St Mary's University, Twickenham



1. Which teacher or adviser supported you?

Applying to university was a stressful experience, but I was lucky to have help from the careers adviser at my college. I didn't know where to start with my personal statement, or what to include, but my careers adviser helped with structuring my application and identifying what information was most relevant.

2. How did they support you?

I was worried when applying to university that my experiences weren't relevant to the courses I was applying for. I felt I had nothing to offer the universities. However, my careers adviser helped me understand the importance of transferable skills.

She told me to create a mind map of my past experiences and hobbies, then explain all the skills I gained from each experience. This included skills such as time management, teamwork, and communication. To this day, I still use the same technique when applying for jobs and postgraduate courses!

3. What advice will you never forget?

My biggest challenge was writing my personal statement. It was hard to choose what to cut out, as everything felt important. You may have students like this yourself. They might see their application through rose-coloured glasses, not wanting to remove any information because they like it too much.

Sometimes we must leave out parts we really like, which is referred to as 'killing your

darlings' in editing. Advise your students to take a break and return to what they've written with a new perspective. It also helps to have someone else read it. They're not attached to the writing and can look at it with a more objective eye.

4. What advice would you give to teachers?

- **Choosing a priority** - ask your students to consider what is important to them when looking at university options. For me, the most important thing was the support available for students. There were lots of universities with prestigious courses in writing, but I knew that I needed support to reach my full potential. For your students, it might be the students' union or on-campus accommodation. Whatever their priority, they need to know it, so they can ask the right questions at university events.
- **Attending open days** - encourage your students to attend open days in their first year of sixth-form or college. This way, they can concentrate on completing their application in their second year, rather than doing open days and their application at the same time.
- **Changing their mind** - remind your students that it's okay to make mistakes, to change their mind, and to try something that doesn't work out. I withdrew after my first year at university because it wasn't right for me. I then went to St Mary's to study a completely different course, and that's where I really flourished. I grew into a better writer, gained a lot of confidence, and even graduated with a first-class degree. Starting over isn't easy, but it's important for your students to know that getting it wrong the first time doesn't make them a failure. Sometimes we have to get it wrong to understand how to get it right.

" My careers adviser told me to create a mind map of my past experiences and hobbies, then explain all the skills I gained from each experience. "

What happens after results day

By Jenna Page, Regional Schools, Colleges, and Outreach Officer at the University of South Wales

Results day can be an exciting and emotional time for young people and those who support them. Whether things go to plan or take an unexpected turn, it's helpful to know the possible outcomes, so you can help guide your students through their next steps.

If all goes to plan

If your student achieves the grades they need, they'll be able to log into UCAS and confirm their place at their first-choice university. From there, the university will be in touch in the following weeks with more details about enrolment, accommodation, and arrival.

If they miss their first choice

If your student doesn't get into their first-choice university, but holds an offer from their insurance choice, they can log into UCAS and accept this instead. The process is very similar, and they'll soon receive further information from their new institution.

If they don't hold an offer

There are several reasons why a student might not hold a university place on results day:

- They might not have applied during the main UCAS application cycle
- They may have changed their mind about what or where they want to study
- They may not have achieved the grades required for their firm or insurance choices
- They may have exceeded their expected grades and want to explore other options.

In any of these situations, students can explore opportunities through UCAS Clearing. This is a system that matches applicants to courses with remaining places.

Applying through Clearing

Clearing allows students to apply for university courses that still have vacancies. Not all courses will be available. For instance, Medicine rarely enters Clearing, but there are still thousands of options across a wide range of subjects and universities. Students can use university pages, or the UCAS Clearing Plus tool to help them find the right course.

They can contact universities directly, share their results, speak to course tutors, and even take part in interviews, often all over the phone. Some may receive verbal offers on the spot. Encourage them not to accept the first offer they receive unless it feels right. University helplines are usually open all day and often throughout the weekend, giving students time to compare courses, ask questions, and explore their options. It's helpful for students to have their UCAS ID, qualification types, and grades ready before calling universities. Many institutions also offer visit days over the summer to help students get a feel for the campus and facilities before making a choice.

Supporting with Clearing

Clearing can feel overwhelming, and many students experience stress or uncertainty at this stage, especially if things haven't gone as expected. Your students will often turn to you as their teacher or adviser to help them with these decisions. Most importantly, advise them to remain calm and avoid rushing into decisions.

As their teacher or adviser, you can ring universities on their behalf, but the universities will need the student to confirm they are happy for you to do so. They may also have to confirm certain information themselves and complete an interview if necessary for the course. If emotions are high, it may be possible to arrange this for a later time. It's helpful for students to have their UCAS ID and grades ready before calling universities.

The most important thing is that your student finds the university and course that is right for them. Support them in taking the time they need, speaking to as many universities as necessary, and ensure they consider all their options.

An introduction to student life

By Matt Spink, Graduate Student Recruitment Assistant at the University of Salford

As your students enter the new academic year, the thought of “what’s next?” will start to come to the forefront of their mind. The exciting idea of university and living a student lifestyle often becomes the hot topic of conversation. But what does student life entail? How can you best prepare your students for the next step?

Academic life

The first change is the academic step-up from college into higher education (HE). Making that transition from college to university is something that we want students to do as smoothly as possible. Prospective students often worry about the myth of ‘being thrown in at the deep end’ with university work and the different styles of teaching and assessing. Reassure your students that they will be guided into new teaching and assessment methods by lecturers, tutors, and support staff throughout the course of their studies.

Universities typically assess students in a variety of ways: exams, coursework, essays, practical tasks, and more. Your students can use resources such as university course finder pages to check the method of assessment on a degree programme. This can inform their decision on whether to apply.

Independent study is one of the biggest adjustments for students when they progress to HE. Learning time management skills is incredibly important to stay on top of the new workload they will be given. Each institution will have support teams at a student’s disposal to help make this adjustment. For example, at the University of Salford, our library team offers study skill sessions to teach students important skills like time management, so they don’t leave all their reading to the last minute.

Social life

Stepping into HE may also mean moving to a new location, sometimes on the other side of the country. This is why Welcome Week becomes a vital tool that institutions use to settle prospective students into their new life. Often mistaken as an extra week of lessons, Welcome Week is designed to help your students settle in, make friends, and develop a routine early on.

An independent lifestyle requires lots of new skills. Much like the transition into independent study, your students will need to build their own routines. It takes time to becoming organised and develop these weekly routines: food shopping, laundry, socialising, cleaning, and more. However, support is available for your students. At the University of Salford, our AskUS team offers academic, careers, financial, and personal support all year round.

The step up into HE requires your students to adapt to a new academic and social life, but with preparation and support these changes should be encouraged and not feared.



Exploring unexpected opportunities at university

By Sophie Jones, Regional Recruitment Officer at the University of Essex

University is about so much more than just earning a degree. From joining societies to traveling the world, your students' university years are some of the most enriching and exciting of their lives.

Find their people and try something new

One of the first things they'll hear about at university is the students' union (page 110). It's there to help your students feel supported and part of the community. One of the best parts? Societies! These student-led groups let your students meet new people or try something they've never done before, like joining a sports club or exploring a creative hobby.

They can even get involved in shaping university life by joining campaigns or running for positions in the students' union. Whether they're improving policies or organising events, it's your students' chance to make a real difference while having fun and connecting with others.

Step out of the classroom

Learning at university goes far beyond lecture halls. Summer internships, placement years, and research projects provide amazing opportunities to step into the professional world. These experiences help them develop transferable skills, see how their subject applies to industry, and build valuable connections for their future.

Many universities have partnerships that allow students to work with researchers or companies, contributing to real-world projects before they graduate. These are perfect for CV building.

Study and see the world

Your students don't have to limit their learning to one country. Universities offer the chance to combine their studies with travel. A year abroad lets them study at partner institutions overseas, and your students can tailor the year to fit their plans, whether it's a full year, a term, or a summer. They could even do all three and explore multiple countries.

Traveling as part of their degree doesn't just satisfy their wanderlust. It builds confidence, broadens their understanding of their subject, and leaves your students with memories to last a lifetime.

Create, perform, innovate

University is the perfect place to unleash their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. At the University of Essex, initiatives like Languages for All give your students the chance to learn a new language alongside their studies. Our on-campus theatre provides a space to showcase their talents, and students can pitch for funding to bring their shows to life.

If they're thinking of starting a business, Essex Startups connects your students with experts to help turn their ideas into reality. Many universities offer similar opportunities to help them grow and explore options your students might not have considered before.

Ask the question

University might be about getting a degree, but it's so much more than that. It's about building skills, discovering passions, and growing into the person your students want to be. By the time your students graduate, they'll have an outstanding qualification and unforgettable experiences that will stay with them forever.

So, your students shouldn't be shy at a university fair or open day. Ask the question, "What unexpected opportunities can they explore here?" They'll never know what amazing experiences might be waiting for them beyond the lecture hall.

"University is the perfect place to unleash your creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. "

How to shape the university experience that's right for you

By Dr Marie Clifford, Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience at the University of South Wales

Students turn up to lectures or workshops, do some extra reading, submit their assessments, pass them with flying colours, and get their degree. There might be some socialising thrown in too.

That's one way of viewing university. However, preparing your students for what to expect can shape their university experience. It can become more than a transactional arrangement with some cheap drinks on the side.

Build relationships

Encourage your students to get to know lecturers, their peer group, and other key players. The person who makes the coffee each morning is *really* important. Lecturers welcome contact from students. They want to hear their thoughts and be asked for clarification. This provides strong support for students, both academically and socially.

Peer group support is invaluable: someone to vent with or ask questions over WhatsApp. This provides the guidance and vital human contact that we all need. Attendance at on-campus sessions really helps when building these relationships, especially in a time when more hybrid, remote methods of learning are being used.

Engage fully

There's no point turning up to a lecture if your students aren't actually 'present.' Paying attention to on-campus and online sessions is crucial. Students should take notes to ensure active learning is taking place and limit distractions.

There are apps to disable social media, for example, during teaching time. They should also expand learning outside of the formally arranged sessions by reading around the subject, finding links across subjects, and applying to their day-to-day life, where possible.

Take charge

One of the key aspects of higher education study is becoming an independent thinker and autonomous learner. There is hugely beneficial because your students will have more choice and options than they experienced in compulsory education. But with great power comes great responsibility... attendance may not be monitored as closely, and additional reading and research will need pursuing outside of the classroom.

Organisation and time management are skills that need to be honed. Your students will need to take charge of any feedback received. How can they improve? Are there common areas where they need improvement? How could this help them with future assessments in that subject, but also in different subjects?

Plan ahead

It's never too early to think about careers. What experience do your students already have? How can they get more? All universities have a careers service that will find volunteering and paid positions. These can broaden any CV when it's time for your students to enter the graduate job market. University isn't all about study either. Factoring in socialising, hobbies, and 'me time' is essential for recharging and gaining valuable transferable skills.

By embracing all university can bring, your students will have a successful, enjoyable, and unforgettable experience.



Learn more about what to expect in your first year of university in Episode 40 of The Uni Guide Podcast.



The benefits of joining a student society

By Amberley Hack, Content Officer at Falmouth University

There are many reasons why students join a society when starting university. Societies provide a way for students to celebrate the interests that matter to them, while meeting people who share a similar mindset. They also offer the opportunity to discover a new hobby, find out more about a topic, and learn about themselves in the process. It's a chance for your students to get the most out of their university experience.

Meet like-minded people

Going to university offers students the unique opportunity to 'find their people.' Societies are one of the best ways to discover those people and make life-long friends from the outset.

Each university offers a host of societies that bring together people with similar interests, hobbies, and identities. For instance, the society may celebrate reading, birdwatching, pottery, chess, different cultures, Pride, or being vegan. Joining a society offers a way for students to escape their comfort zone and mix with students who they may not otherwise meet, such as those on different courses in different years.

Enhance the student experience

Societies often host weekend and evening socials designed to bring members together. They can include anything from drinks or game nights to end-of-year balls. These experiences help students settle in, feel included in student life, and be part of something more than just

their studies. Joining a society can also help students feel more confident as they can encourage participation, collaboration, and discussion.

Gain career-boosting experience

Some societies can enhance a student's degree, improve their career prospects, and give vital experience needed to secure graduate roles. For example, if a student studies English Literature, joining the student magazine or newspaper can enhance their editorial and writing skills. Societies also show employers that a student can manage their time effectively, collaborate with their peers, and have interests and pursuits outside of their chosen degree.

Societies also help students to develop their communication, organisation, and management skills when they choose to join the committee. Each society will have a variety of roles, ranging from President to Secretary to Treasurer, which involve tasks that cover everything from managing finances to planning events and organising meetings.

Find balance

Remind your students that balance is key. It may feel tempting to join as many societies as possible, but your students shouldn't oversubscribe or feel pressured to join something that isn't them.

Ultimately, joining a society is a fantastic way for your students to try new hobbies, meet people, and supplement their degree with extracurricular activities. They can even start their own society if they haven't found the right fit for them!



The benefits of joining a sports team

By Tiegan Rider, Captain of the Women's Rugby Team at Bournemouth University

Joining the Women's Rugby Team at Bournemouth University has been one of the most rewarding parts of my three years as a student. It has offered a unique set of benefits that go far beyond the pitch, especially the sense of community at SportBU.

Friends and belonging

Starting university can feel overwhelming, especially if you're away from home for the first time. I found that by joining the women's rugby team, I was instantly connected to a group of people who share a common interest. Within the first few months of starting my degree in 2022, my team and I trained together, played together, and frequently socialised together. I formed close friendships that I will take forward into my postgraduate life.

Health and wellbeing

Being part of a sports team massively benefitted my mental health throughout stressful and challenging semesters. Rugby is a demanding sport that builds strength, endurance, and coordination. My experience of the regular training and matches kept me active and healthy, further alleviating the stress of academic life.

Beyond physical fitness, committing to the rugby training sessions positively supported my mental wellbeing. The focus, discipline, and team environment I experienced was

a powerful counterbalance to academic pressure, improving my resilience and confidence over the 3 years.

Discipline and leadership

Balancing rugby with my degree taught me time management, commitment, and discipline. Regular training sessions and match days required planning and accountability. These are skills that directly translated to my academic studies and future professional success.

Being part of the women's rugby team also offered opportunities for leadership and growth. SportBU provided opportunities to take on leadership roles, whether it was as a captain, coach, or social event organiser. These positions helped me develop my communication, problem-solving, and leadership abilities, all valuable assets on my CV and in life post-university. For example, I gained captaincy in my final year of playing rugby for the university. It has been one of the most incredible journeys and opportunities so far!

Socialising and networking

The women's rugby team hugely benefited my social life and networking at Bournemouth University. Rugby created a sense of belonging through team dinners, charity events, and post-match socials. These connections with my teammates extend beyond university now that we have finished our studies. We have a powerful alumni network that will open doors to my future career and sporting opportunities.

Community and representing

Overall, joining the women's rugby team meant more to me than just playing a sport. It opened up a community, built lifelong skills, and allowed me to make the most of my university experience. Rugby has something to offer everyone, whether you're chasing trophies or just looking for a supportive and fun group to join.

Throughout my rugby journey, I have trained and played internationally, representing my country. I strongly believe I wouldn't have been half as successful without the support from the sporting team and my teammates!



Tiegan Rider



**Bournemouth
University**

Undergraduate Open Days

Sat 25 Oct 25 | Sat 29 Nov 25
Sat 10 Jan 26 | Fri 12 June 26
Sat 13 June 26

**Travel
funding
is available***

- A friendly community of over 17,000 students from all over the world
- All our students have the opportunity to undertake a work placement
- Ranked 8th in the UK for sustainability in THE Impact Rankings 2025
- Best Students' Union in South West England in the Whatuni Student Choice Awards 2025
- Recognised for our commitment to mental health and wellbeing support in the Whatuni Student Choice Awards 2025

LEARN TO CHANGE

www.bournemouth.ac.uk/open-days



*Terms and conditions apply.

The benefits of volunteering at university

By Niall Seenan, UK and Ireland Student Recruitment Manager at Glasgow Caledonian University

Volunteering is one of the activities that your student can do outside of their studies to benefit them now but also in the future. University is about much more than just the academic side. Volunteering can help your student get the most out of their university experience.

Personal growth

Volunteering fosters personal growth by instilling a sense of responsibility, empathy, and compassion. Employers value volunteer experience, as it demonstrates commitment, teamwork, and leadership skills. Many universities hold Volunteering Fairs that connect students with relevant opportunities. These can help develop skills such as communication, problem-solving, and time management. Furthermore, opportunities like volunteering at the NHS provides hands-on experience that are beneficial for future careers.

Networking opportunities

Volunteering provides the opportunity for students to build connections with professionals, peers, and organisations that may prove useful for their future career. Universities collaborate with local charities and other institutions to create excellent networking opportunities. Engaging with like-minded individuals and industry experts can open doors to internships, mentorship programmes, and potentially future jobs for your student.

Mental and physical wellbeing

Volunteering can vastly improve wellbeing. Acts of kindness and altruism have been shown to reduce stress and increase overall happiness. Universities encourage students to participate in initiatives that support mental health, such as befriending programmes and volunteering time to run a university club or society. Getting involved with a club or society also provides an opportunity to develop lifelong friends.

Enhanced experience

University life extends beyond lectures and exams, with extracurricular activities playing a crucial role in a well-rounded student experience. Taking part in volunteering allows students to develop friendships, gain leadership experience, and become more engaged with campus life, enriching their overall university experience.

Making a difference

One of the most rewarding aspects of volunteering is making a meaningful difference in communities. Whatever cause is close to your students' heart, volunteering will provide them with the chance to give back and make a difference. This sense of purpose and impact is incredibly fulfilling. It helps shape a strong sense of social responsibility that can feed into whatever they do after university.

Ready, set, volunteer

Volunteering at university is a valuable experience that goes beyond academic achievements. It enhances personal growth, develops skills, builds networks, improves wellbeing, and allows students to contribute positively to society. With many universities offering structured volunteering opportunities and partnerships with local charities, your students have the chance to make a difference while also benefiting from their experiences.



Making the most of the students' union

By Dominic White, Schools and Colleges Regional Assistant at the University of Derby and Former President of the Union of Students at the University of Derby

A students' union (SU) is more than just a place or organisation. The SU is the gateway to student life at its best. It helps students to settle in, make friends, and get involved by providing support, representing the student voice, and hosting unforgettable events. The SU allows your students to be part of a vibrant student community where everyone feels welcome.

What is an SU?

A students' union is a student-led organisation that exists to represent, support, and bring students together. The SU creates a welcoming, inclusive community where your students can find their people, feel at home, and make lasting memories. The SU works to ensure every student feels part of something bigger through events, societies, campaigns, and support services.

At its heart is a commitment to democracy. Each year, students elect representatives - from course reps to the SU President - to champion the student voice and shape a university experience that works for everyone.

What does an SU offer?

University is more than lectures and assignments. It's about feeling like you truly belong. That's where the SU comes in. At the University of Derby, the SU is home to a thriving community of students, with over 100 sports clubs and societies to explore. Whether you're into poetry or football, academic interests or shared identities, there's a place for students to connect.

The SU brings people together through a packed programme of events: Freshers' Week, cultural celebrations, movie nights, festivals, and more. These moments create shared experiences and lasting friendships that define your time at university. When students need support, the SU is right there beside them.

Its friendly, student-focused welfare team offers free, confidential advice on everything from housing to mental health to money worries. And the SU offers part-time roles and local volunteering projects to help students give back and build their CV.

How to get involved

At the University of Derby, students automatically become a member of our SU - the Union of Students - when they enrol as a student. This means they're part of a student-led community from day one. It allows them to feel part of something bigger, whether they're looking for friendship, support, or a place to explore their interests.

One of the first chances to get involved is at the Freshers' Fair. This is a lively welcome event where students can meet, register for sports clubs and societies, and connect with local organisations and services. It's the perfect way to start feeling at home. The SU offers something for every interest. Students also find meaningful ways to get involved through volunteering and student representation. These give them the chance to shape their university experience and build strong connections along the way.

More than anything, the SU is a space where students can be themselves, meet others, and feel like they belong. When exploring potential universities, your students shouldn't just think about the course. They should think about the community waiting to welcome them.



The benefits of undertaking a study abroad placement

By Philippa Dobree-Carey, Founder of FromHighSchooltoUni.com

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.



Accessing career support at university

By Katie Bateman, Student Careers and Employability Manager at the University of Gloucestershire

When your students start university, they're not just thinking about the next few years. They're thinking about what comes after. University career services, such as our Career Studio team at the University of Gloucestershire, are a vital part in helping to bridge the gap between academic learning and professional application. We ensure students develop the knowledge and practical skills sought by employers.

Career support

Most universities offer dedicated career support through specialised teams. These professionals offer:

- one-to-one career coaching and guidance
- support with placements, internships, and work experience
- CV advice and interview preparation
- connections to potential employers and industry networks
- support with graduate job applications
- career assessment tools to help students identify their strengths and interests.

University careers teams work closely with academic schools to embed career planning into the curriculum. This means students get the support they need when they need it, while connecting what they learn in class with where they want to go next.

Career enhancements

Forward-thinking universities enhance their career offerings with additional benefits. At the University of Gloucestershire, we also offer:

- lifetime careers support, even after graduation
- a paid graduate internship scheme for those needing support to get started
- regular employer events and industry meetups
- a mentoring programme that connects students with graduates working in their field.

These connections open doors. We help students build a strong professional network, whether it's a conversation that sparks an idea, a placement that turns into a job, or a mentor who shares real-world insight.

Career questions

When helping your students choose where to study, these questions can help you compare how universities will support their ambitions. Try asking:

- how are careers and employability built into the course?
- what support is available from day one?
- how does the university connect students with employers?
- what kind of work experience or placement options are on offer?
- what percentage of graduates are in work or further study?
- how are students supported to adapt to emerging technologies and AI?
- is there help for those interested in setting up their own business?

Career proactivity

It's never too soon for your students to start thinking about their future. Encourage them to engage with career support from their first year. This means they'll have more time to explore their options, gain experience, and develop a strong sense of direction.

At the University of Gloucestershire, students are supported from the very start of their course. Through personalised career plans and hands-on experience, they can build a portfolio of skills that grows alongside their learning. We also place real value on reflection. Students are encouraged to think about what they've learned, how they've developed, and how each experience connects to their future. This helps them step into interviews with clarity and confidence, ready to show employers what they can do.

Wherever your students' ambitions lie, they won't be on the journey alone. Career services team will be there to guide and support them every step of the way.

How a degree opens 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.

UNIVERSITY OF STAFFORDSHIRE PRESENTS

DISCOVERY DAY FOR TEACHERS AND ADVISERS

Your Gateway to Careers

Stoke-on-Trent Campus

Wednesday 5 November, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Registration: Catalyt Foyer | Lunch Provided

Join us to Co-Create the Next Generation of University Pathways

We're inviting curriculum heads and Level 3 subject leads to an engaging morning of collaboration and innovation, as we shape the next wave of subject pathway programmes launching in the 2025/26 academic year.

**Following the success of the Staffordshire Nurse,
we're expanding with exciting new pathways:**

- Staffordshire Entrepreneur (Business)
- Staffordshire Games Academy
- Staffordshire Computing Academy
- Staffordshire Lawyer
- Staffordshire Midwife
- STEM

What to Expect:

An interactive morning of:

- Hands-on immersive sessions in cutting-edge facilities
- Insight into our pathway vision and design approach
- Opportunities to shape the future curriculum
- Collaboration with university staff and industry partners
- Exploration of how we can support your CPD goals
- Networking over breakfast and lunch

**Be part of the journey.
Shape the future.**



Spaces are limited – scan
the QR code to register
early and secure your place.

staffs.ac.uk

The place of possibility

Preparing students for their future careers

By Anne Gallacher, Schools and Colleges Regional Assistant at the University of Derby

University is a time of personal and academic growth – an opportunity to learn, explore, and discover new paths. While many students may not know exactly what career path they want to pursue, their time in higher education plays a key role in shaping their future. University offers opportunities to develop skills, gain hands-on experience, and expand networks in preparation for their future career.

Building a future career

Our goal is not only to help students succeed at university but to ensure they thrive beyond it. This means equipping them with the skills, experience, and confidence needed for their future careers. At the University of Derby, we offer a research-informed, industry-relevant curriculum designed to prepare students for the real world.

For instance, our two-year accelerated degree in International Business and AI, run in collaboration with Rolls-Royce, is just one example of how our courses meet the evolving needs of the job market. Through continuous investment in industry engagement and state-of-the-art facilities, we provide the tools necessary for students to succeed.

Our three-year promise

Career services are vital resources for students to explore career options, secure internships, and connect with employers. These services often include CV tailoring, interview preparation, career counselling, and job search resources. Engaging with these services provides students with personalised advice, insights into the job market, and an understanding of the skills valued by employers.

Universities also host career fairs, giving students opportunities to meet employers and develop networking skills. At Derby, we offer career support for up to three years after graduation, ensuring our students are supported as they transition into the workforce.

Real-world learning

Internships and work placements are some of the most effective ways to gain experience, apply academic knowledge, and build a professional network. Many universities, including Derby, partner with local and global companies to offer hands-on opportunities that provide industry insights and practical skills.

These positions enhance student CVs and help develop key skills including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. In some cases, internships lead to full-time job offers, providing students with a pathway to employment even before they graduate.

Engaging in extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities, such as societies, sports, or volunteering, play a significant role in enhancing employability. These activities demonstrate to potential employers that students possess a well-rounded skillset, including leadership, teamwork, and time management.

Participating in clubs or initiatives aligned with career interests also provides valuable networking opportunities with professionals and like-minded peers. These connections can be crucial when seeking a career after graduation.

Building a strong foundation

There is no expectation that your student will have their entire career path figured out during their studies. That is why universities provide a wide range of support to guide them. By taking full advantage of career services, internships, and extra-curricular opportunities, students can build a strong foundation for their future.

Proactively seeking career development opportunities will help your student develop essential skills. It will also ensure they are ready to take on the challenges of the professional world with confidence. Their career starts now.



**Learn more in
Episode 26
of The Uni
Guide Podcast.**



A special thanks to our guest contributors

Ailsa Mackay Heriot-Watt University	Dominic White University of Derby	Kaffe Locke University of South Wales	Robin Schieferstein St Mary's University, Twickenham
Alexandra Roberts University of South Wales	Edward Bartley The University of Law	Katie Bateman University of Gloucestershire	Rosie Glover Durham University
Amanda Moralee University of Sunderland	Eleanor Krawczyk University of Greenwich	Krissie Martin University of Lincoln	Sarah Jones Anglia Ruskin University
Amberley Hack Falmouth University	Emily Jane-Gardiner University of Glasgow	Larissa Eddy Blackbullion	Sarah Shingleton Northumbria University
Ana de Miguel Rodriguez Norwich University of the Arts	Ethan-lee Mackay University of South Wales	Liv Squires Southampton Solent University	Sarah White University of Gloucestershire
Andrew Cooper University of Liverpool	Evie Podmore Keele University	Liz Bailey University of Derby	Sarra Jenkins Loughborough Grammar School
Andy Long Keele University	Frankie Perren-Smart The University of Law	Madeeha Aminuddin University of London	Sheryl Kemp Anglia Ruskin University
Anna Johnston University of Aberdeen	Hannah Coe The University of Law	Dr Marie Clifford University of South Wales	Sophie Craven University of Huddersfield
Anne Gallacher University of Derby	Hannah Vincent University of Staffordshire	Matt Chesters City St George's, University of London	Sophie Hawkins University of Essex
Baasit Siddiqui Siddiqui Education	Heather Black University of Strathclyde	Matt Spink University of Salford	Sophie Jones University of Essex
Becky Sandford Falmouth University	Holly Hayman Falmouth University	Michael Tomkinson University of Wolverhampton	Sophie Robinson Cardiff University
Becky Timmins Falmouth University	Immy Lawlor University of Reading	Morgan Cassie University of Essex	Steph Rimmer Edge Hill University
Beth Curtis Riseholme College	Jack Brown Glasgow Caledonian University	Natalie Bracher University of Exeter	Stephanie Willmott University of Portsmouth London
Beth McGeoghegan The University of Law	Jade Matthews Anglia Ruskin University	Niall Seanan Glasgow Caledonian University	Susan Darlington Go Higher West Yorkshire
Caitlin Shaw Edge Hill University	Dr Jay Rees The University of Law	Nikky Hammond University of Exeter	Teri Garfitt University of Gloucestershire
Caspian Robson University of Exeter	Jen Barton Durham University	Oliver Rossetti Arden University	Thomas Jones Edge Hill University
Charlotte Higgins University of Derby	Jenna Page University of South Wales	Olivia Squires Southampton Solent University	Tiegan Rider Bournemouth University
Dr Clare Dickens MBE University of Wolverhampton	Jerry Ndi Queen Mary University of London	Philippa Dobrée-Carey FromHighSchoolToUniversity	Tom Allingham Save the Student
Damian Connor Queen's University Belfast	Jessica Pieri The Careers People	Rachel Stanley St Mary's University, Twickenham	Will France Go Higher West Yorkshire
Professor Danny McLaughlin University of Lincoln	Jim Calcutt University of Winchester	Reece Buckley Manchester Metropolitan University	Zoe Mason University of Wolverhampton
David Metcalfe Newcastle University	Jon Cheek UniTasterDays	Rob Scott Go Higher West Yorkshire	



Disclaimer

UniTasterDays can accept no liability for the accuracy or otherwise of statements in this publication.
It is a general guide, produced in September 2025, with content provided from multiple sources.