



 UniTasterDays.com

Teachers' Guide to University

The key higher education facts for school and college staff.

Produced in collaboration with HELQA

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“ Teachers and careers colleagues are a vital source of help to students making life changing career decisions. This Teachers' Guide brochure is an invaluable resource to support these practitioners - who are so influential to our young people. ”

Steve Stewart OBE - Executive Director
Careers England.

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Welcome to the UniTasterDays.com Teachers' Guide to University

This guide anticipates a conversation between you (the teacher/careers adviser) and your student (the potential higher education applicant), arming you with solid answers to their questions about moving on to higher education. It has been produced based on the higher education system in England and released in September 2019.

It aims to clarify the current position for you and your students following so many significant sector changes. Crucially, it looks to bring you closer to the institutions that now offer so many ways for your students to look into higher education, before committing to it.

Helping them to make the right choice

As with any of life's landmark choices, higher education is not a decision to be taken lightly. Sound advice and first-hand insight into what students face, at an early stage, provides a smoother path to successful higher-level study, and a better chance of a satisfying and fulfilling career. This guide helps you to provide it.

Universities operate in a more competitive market than ever. It's in their interest to attract students by inviting them to open days, workshops, talks and all manner of familiarisation events. The following pages show you the sort of activities your students will find useful.



“ The Career Development Institute is delighted to endorse the 2019 Teachers' Guide to University brochure. This is just one of many great resources provided by UniTasterDays, to support schools and colleges with their university links. ”

Jan Ellis - Chief Executive

“ The higher education sector has developed drastically over the last 10 years into a fast-paced and, at times, complex sector. HELOA members hold a wealth of information and expertise and are pleased to work with UniTasterDays to share their knowledge in supporting those who in-turn support students to make informed decisions about their future choices. ”

Rebecca Hollington, UK Vice-Chair for Partnerships, HELOA

The simple fact is that your students now have a wider choice than ever of ways to 'try on higher education for size', to see a library/ lab/lecture theatre up close, and to ask any question they want to the university staff member or student best equipped to answer it.

Experts on your side

This guide features contributions from experts in higher education, as well as specialists from outside the sector with fantastic advice and support to share. It has been produced in collaboration with HELOA - and we are very grateful for their support and the contributions made throughout the guide by HELOA members.

I should also add that often in the guide, we use the term 'university' – but it should be acknowledged that not only universities offer higher education programmes – an example of which can be found in the introduction to college higher education piece on page 25. We just use the term 'university' as it avoids another acronym and using repeated references to 'higher education institutions' throughout.

I hope you will find this Teachers' Guide to University useful, and that you'll visit UniTasterDays.com to search or request your next event soon.

Jon Cheek - Director, UniTasterDays.com
Jon@unitasterdays.com



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HELOA

How your school or college can effectively engage with a university

By Rebecca Bowen, Senior Student Recruitment Officer, University of South Wales and HELOA Wales Group Chair

My first piece of advice is please don't be afraid to ask a university for help!

Most universities have a team of enthusiastic and friendly staff who are able to offer a range of services to support schools and colleges in preparing students for higher education - as well as staff who will be willing to travel to you.

I've met many teachers and advisers over the years who have been surprised that I'll spend four hours driving to them to speak to their students about choosing a university. Sat navs, motorway service stations and budget hotel chains all play a big part in the life of a Schools and Colleges Liaison Officer! And, most important of all, there is no charge to schools and colleges for any of these services.

Here are a few examples of the types of support that is available:

Higher Education support

We understand that you're busy, and that supporting your students with their choices might be a very small part of your role - although it might not feel that way sometimes!

Universities offer a range of talks and workshops that can be tailored to your school/college timetable. Topics include; choosing a university; the UCAS process and how to apply; personal statements; preparing students for interviews/ preparing portfolios and student finance. Most universities will be very happy to deliver something more specific if required, such as a session on applying for medicine courses.

The main benefit of these talks and workshops is that the person delivering it will have the most up-to-date knowledge and information from the sector and will be able to offer your students answers to many of their questions. The students will be given the opportunity to ask questions in

front of the group or at the end of the session on a one-to-one basis.

University schools and colleges liaison teams are also available to support with parents' evenings and careers events. You might feel it's worthwhile for a university to deliver a talk to parents on student finance, for example, or you might want to invite a university to have an exhibition stand at your event, where they can offer information and guidance to parents on an individual basis. Students will also have the opportunity to collect a prospectus and other useful materials.

Another useful service many universities provide is mock interviews. This offers your students the chance to practise their interview skills and receive valuable feedback on their interview performance, before they experience the real thing!

Subject-specific activities

With so much choice available to them, it's important that students find out where their Level 3 subject choices can take them. To support this decision-making, universities offer lots of opportunities for students to engage with subject-level activities before they make their application. This could be on-campus or at the school or college. Invitations and booking details will usually be sent to Heads of Subject Areas.

On-campus events such as 'taster days', 'masterclasses' and 'experience days' - are held throughout the academic year, and offer students the opportunity to use first-class facilities and to hear from academic staff, who are often experts in their field.

This offers students the opportunity to consider what studying subject X at University Y might be like.

Where staff and transport costs mean that visits to universities aren't always an option, academic staff are available to visit your school or college to deliver talks and workshops, which can be tailored to support an area of the Level 3 curriculum, where possible.

Your own CPD

Whilst the majority of this activity focusses on school and college students, we haven't forgotten about school staff as well. We want to make sure you feel supported throughout the process, and are confident and able to provide your students with the information they require.

Support for teachers and advisers might include annual higher education conferences which will offer a great opportunity to network with people in similar roles from across the UK, and hear from high profile speakers from the sector.

Universities might also offer subject level conferences for teaching staff, so your colleagues will also have the opportunity to hear from experts, and pick up a few handy tips for delivering particularly challenging areas of the curriculum.

Finally, you may also feel that your colleagues could be called upon to support with an element of the university application process at your school or college, but would benefit from some training provided by a university beforehand, on personal statements and reference writing, for example.

“Universities have a team of enthusiastic and friendly staff who are able to offer a range of services to support schools and colleges in preparing students for higher education - as well as staff who will be willing to travel to you”



University of South Wales
Prifysgol De Cymru



SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES LIAISON TEAM

"I would like to thank the University staff who have provided excellent input to the College's UCAS and HE Support Programme this year. The activities were very well received by both students and staff, and were invaluable in assisting them in the HE application process. The College is currently planning its programme for next year and we look forward to working with you to achieve this."

Jonathan Morgan, Vice Principal, Coleg y Cymoedd

- Talks and workshops on preparing for HE
- Subject-specific activities and support
- Events for teachers and advisers

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How universities can support you to implement the Gatsby Benchmarks

By Jamie Bytheway and Grace Sheldon,
Operations Managers, Greater Manchester
Higher (NCOP) and HELOA members

Employers aren't the only people who can support you to implement the Gatsby benchmarks - universities can too!

Career aspirations play a significant role in decision-making about higher education and although university outreach professionals are not careers specialists, a lot of the activity they deliver can contribute towards the benchmarks.

As the Gatsby benchmarks are prominent in statutory careers guidance, a number of universities and collaborative partnerships (such as the NCOP programme) are mapping their activity to the benchmarks to help schools and colleges easily understand how outreach activities can support towards their statutory obligations.

Please see a summary below for each benchmark and how universities can support you:

1. A stable careers programme

University outreach is most effective when delivered as part of a planned programme, so ensure your Careers Leader knows what is on offer to your school or college! This information will soon be readily available via the Office for Students' outreach hub programme.

2. Learning from career and labour market information

Although university outreach teams are not labour market specialists, some will be working with local organisations such as the Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver activities that reflect the local high-level skills need. An example of this would be a STEM taster day, that brings together employers and academics to highlight industry routes.

3. Addressing the needs of each pupil

Most universities deliver activity targeted at specific groups such as looked after children and care leavers, disabled students, young carers and other specific pupil groups. Some will also deliver 1-2-1 interventions such as mentoring.

4. Linking curriculum learning to careers

The government has been encouraging universities to do more to support attainment-raising in school over the last few years, therefore some universities will offer activities that directly support the national curriculum such as English and Maths tuition or teacher CPD.

5. Encounters with employers and employees

A number of university outreach activities will involve employers (usually alumni) as guest speakers to talk about their journey into employment. Some mentoring programmes will also connect learners with people in industry.

6. Experiences of workplaces

As highlighted in Benchmark 5 above, some university outreach programmes will involve employers and in a few cases, this may include visits to workplaces alongside sessions delivered in school/college and on campus.

7. Encounters with further and higher education

Everything universities do will support this benchmark. However, be aware that most universities do not have the capacity to support whole year group visits and some activities will have specific learner targeting criteria due to how the activity is funded.

Note from UniTasterDays – you can find out more about event targeting on page 20.

8. Personal guidance

Some universities will also deliver 1-2-1 interventions such as mentoring or personal statement support.

“Employers aren't the only people who can support you to implement the Gatsby benchmarks - universities can too! ”



A school and college guide to organising a higher education fair

By Oliver Rossetti, Global Recruitment Officer
(UK and EU), University of Leicester and a
HELOA member

Organising a higher education fair at your school or college may seem daunting. Here are my top five tips to ensure higher education institutions will be able to support you every time you run one!

Top Tip #1: The earlier you book, the more institutions that can attend

The Gatsby career benchmarks state that pupils should 'understand the full range of learning opportunities' and putting a date in the diary up to a year in advance will ensure you can work towards Benchmark 7. Universities and colleges receive a large number of requests so ensuring your date is in the diary first will help the institution best meet your request and allocate appropriate resources.

Top Tip #2: The more details, the better

A common issue institutions experience is that the details about an event can be vague. The following recommended details should be in your first enquiry and then confirmed two weeks beforehand:

- Date, times and location
- Expected size of audience*
- Car parking information
- Schedule of the day
- Lunch/refreshment information
- Anything that may impact the day? E.g. Construction work.
- The main organiser's contact details for the day

**We appreciate audience size can fluctuate so try and be as realistic as possible to help institutions bring the correct amount of literature.*

Tip #3: Organised chaos is better than no organisation

Research into the date. Institutions attend a number of exhibitions, notably within the months of February to July. Communicate with other local schools and share the event to encourage a larger variety of institutions to attend, or schedule your event the day before or after so that institutions from afar can book accommodation and attend both events.

Create a programme of the day including scheduling time slots for each year group, ensuring adequate breaks are given for everyone. The length of the day should not exceed beyond what is necessary as the times of the day also have an impact on institution availability, costs and carbon footprint - a 10am start will typically have less impact on travel and reduce the need to fund overnight accommodation.

The layout of your event can also make a difference. A conveyor belt style – think airport luggage carousels - with stands around the outside facing in and a selection in the middle facing outwards always works well. As a minimum, ensure students are not walking behind stands where the institution will be storing literature and valuables.

Top Tip #4: Ensure speaker efficiency is maximised

Do not book multiple institutions to deliver the same talk during the event to only a handful of students. They have finite amount of resources and they try to cover as many events as possible across the country.

Top Tip #5: Refreshments – try to let universities know

The provision of refreshments will always be budget-dependant! As a general rule, water should be offered for any event. Food is always welcomed of course for longer events, but if this can't be provided, it is useful to know in advance if we need to bring our own lunch – nobody likes a room full of hungry stomachs!



How to support students preparing creative profiles and for university interviews

By Jasmine Gwalter, Student Recruitment Officer, Plymouth College of Art and a HELOA member

Preparing for a face-to-face interview can be daunting for a student, not to mention the added pressure of preparing the perfect compilation of work.

Traditionally, creative portfolios or showreels assembled for a university interview, are viewed as a collective of a students' most prized pieces from their final two years in secondary education, whether this be from a further education provider or a school sixth form.

Studying a creative undergraduate degree is all about trial and error, celebrating, learning from and reflecting on all successes and mistakes. My advice is that these processes can be demonstrated in portfolios, sketchbooks, showreels or digital collections of student work. These can be in the form of written blogs, social media pages, drawings, film, research and critical thinking, poetry and photographic work, just to name a few. It provides evidence of creative thinking and problem solving that sets creative graduates apart in the workplace.

Students should consider the world around them and how this inspires their work and decision-making - and be able to discuss this in a clear and concise manner. Showing a variety of work helps to initiate conversations at interview and prompts further thoughts and reflections.

Many universities will offer bespoke sessions for your students in the form of workshops to help prepare them for interviews and producing a portfolio. I would encourage you to take advantage of this! We are here to work alongside you, and it is a great opportunity to tick off some of the Gatsby benchmarks at the same time.

5 top tips to pass to students preparing a portfolio and for an interview

1. Don't be afraid to bring a sketchbook to show work in progress, the journey and inspirations.
2. We know it can be expensive to travel - ask universities if there's any support available or if interviews are offered online.
3. Consider having a digital platform that showcases work - this can be useful for casual conversations at open days, or online interviews.
4. Find out if your university choices have any specific guidance for showreels or portfolios that must be followed - for example on length, number of pieces, format etc.
5. Be prepared to talk critically about the work - what went wrong, and what would you change? We don't expect perfection, but we do want students to be able to think reflectively and develop their practice.

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A school and college guide to university contextual admissions policies

By Paul Martin, Project Manager, Advancing Access

It can seem like barely a week goes by without a story in the news which refers to a new 'contextual admissions' policy which is being introduced at a well-known university. But what exactly are contextual admissions policies, and what do you and your students need to know about them?

What are contextual admissions policies?

Perhaps the best way to understand contextual admissions policies is to contrast them against a more traditional admissions process. In the past, there were only a small number of factors which universities would typically consider when making a judgement about an applicant. Obviously school attainment was a key factor, but universities would also consider the quality of the personal statement, the UCAS reference and in some cases performance in an interview too. However, as time goes by, universities increasingly acknowledge that they need to understand more about the context in which an applicant's achievements take place. This means that a wider range of different factors are now often being considered during the admissions process.

There are two broad categories of contextual admissions

When it comes to the pieces of contextual information that universities are most interested in, we can divide these in to two broad categories: individual level factors and school level factors.

At the **individual applicant level**, universities might consider the neighbourhood in which the applicant resides. They might be interested in average levels of university participation among young people in that area and the average socioeconomic character of the area.

Universities could also be interested in the level of education of an applicant's parents and whether the applicant has been in the care system at any point during their childhood. They will also

be interested to hear whether a student has taken part in one or more university outreach programmes, such as summer schools or mentoring programmes.

At the **school level**, universities could show an interest in the average level of attainment at the school or perhaps the socioeconomic character of the community which the school serves.

If an applicant is flagged by a university as part of their contextual admissions policy, how they are treated will vary from institution to institution but in some cases they may be made an A-Level grade (or equivalent) offer which is lower than that which would usually be made.

You can make sure that you support your students appropriately by ensuring that all relevant contextual information is communicated to universities. Anything which can't be included in the UCAS application itself can be raised in both the personal statement and reference.

For an overview of the contextual admissions process at some of the UK's leading universities, you can check out the contextual admissions guide on the Advancing Access website.



How to support students with their Oxbridge applications

By Amber-Page Moss, Schools Liaison Officer, Peterhouse, University of Cambridge and a HELOA member.

Despite what some believe, we're not looking for child geniuses from a certain background. The ideal Oxbridge candidate has the sufficient academic knowledge, passion, and independent study skills to thrive through the demands of their course.

Our comprehensive admissions process is designed to identify which candidates will get the most out of our particular teaching style. Therefore, it's important to moderate language. It's nothing to do with being 'good enough' or 'the best'. It's simply about being academic in a very specific way.

No candidate is likely to be deselected on the basis of their personal statement alone. We understand that candidates receive differing levels of support in crafting these. Students should express how they have independently explored their subject, largely through wider reading, and critically reflected on their learning. If they don't enjoy independent research enough to write one page of A4, they need to find a subject that they'd be better suited to! We encourage candidates to consider the range of courses on offer, including the lesser known ones, in order to discover what they will most enjoy studying.

Tips for schools and colleges writing Oxbridge references

Useful school references put achievements in context, explaining where the candidate's attainment sits within their cohort, relevant policies (such as on predicted grades), and the character of the community.

While we can consider socio-demographic contextual data, we encourage teachers to declare if pupils have spent time in care, are young carers, receive pupil premium or free school meals, or are refugees. Disruptions to education can be explained further on an Extenuating Circumstances Form, so that we can take these into account as well.

Pre-interview admissions assessment tips for your students

As well as predicted grades, high attainment on pre-interview admissions assessments may also demonstrate the academic potential of a student. Pupils should use the summer after Year 12 to practice past papers, available online. For Cambridge, these are not entrance exams, but one aspect of a holistic process. Pupils should be prepared for the fact that they will find these exams challenging – particularly students who are used to achieving top grades. They should not be disheartened: for some of these exams, the average mark achieved is around 50%!

Interview tips for your students

Interviews are designed to test if candidates are suited to our discussion-based teaching systems. To thrive in this environment, students need to be able to stay calm and apply prior knowledge when presented with new challenges, thinking flexibly and independently. They can prepare by practicing talking about their subject, thinking through questions aloud using reflective language. Pupils may perform better if given opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills in the classroom early on.



A school and college guide to university CPD opportunities

By Lauren Hughes, Higher Education Adviser, University of East Anglia

As a teacher or adviser, to provide effective information and guidance, you must be equipped with accurate and in-depth information on a plethora of ever-changing subjects relating to higher education. Luckily, help is at hand. Universities offer a number of ways to help you stay up-to-date – from podcasts and webinars to residential conferences. There's something to suit everyone.

Topics covered generally include admissions, personal statements, UCAS reference writing and student finance updates. Other popular sessions may cover specific advice for medicine and dentistry applications, study abroad options, graduate prospects and information on subjects that are not typically offered at A-Level.

Three popular activities:

Teacher and adviser conferences

Teacher and adviser conferences are hosted by higher education institutions nationwide and are often free to attend and CPD accredited. They are usually one or two days, with the latter including accommodation and a networking dinner – giving you the chance to meet other professionals to share challenges and best practice.

The format and content will vary, but you can generally expect a mix of internal and external speakers, workshops and Q&As. Most offer

break-out sessions, enabling you to tailor your programme to maximise personal development in an area of your choice.

Podcasts

Some higher education institutions offer podcasts designed specifically for teachers and advisers. They are a great way to top-up your knowledge throughout the year, listening to episodes at a time and place that is convenient for you.

Podcasts often feature higher education advisers, academics, admission tutors, current or past students and external speakers. You can subscribe to podcasts for free, meaning that you'll get new episodes automatically as soon as they are available.

Interactive webinars

Webinars have come a long way in recent years. Instead of sitting passively or typing in online chat forums, a number of universities now run interactive sessions that offer the next best thing to being in the same room as the speaker. You may have even arranged for some of these sessions for your classroom of students. Register in advance and you'll be sent a link to log-in and join the session as a class. The number of participants is limited, which means you'll be able to ask questions and discuss key points.

Keeping you up-to-date

These opportunities offer you the chance to keep informed about the latest developments in higher education from industry experts, giving you the tools and skills needed to foster the talents and aspirations of your students.

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UK/EU TEACHERS' AND ADVISERS' CONFERENCE JUNE 2020

Are you a teacher, adviser, counsellor or agent working with students applying for higher education in the UK?

The University of Surrey and University of Sussex look forward to welcoming you on their joint teachers' and advisers' conference. This free event is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about two leading institutions based in the south of the UK. As part of the conference, you'll be hosted in Guildford by the University of Surrey and then in Brighton by the University of Sussex.

The conference offers a full day at each institution and you will:

- Learn about specialist course areas
- Tour the campuses and see the facilities
- Speak with admissions advisers
- Meet current students
- Network with colleagues from around Europe and the UK
- Receive advice in how to council students to succeed in the ever-changing market of Higher Education

To register your interest please visit:
surrey.ac.uk/teachers-advisers-conference

For any queries,
please get in touch:

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Graduate employability: key skills for success #1

In conversation with Theo Paphitis, Chairman & Owner of Ryman, and Chancellor of Solent University.

An exclusive interview with one of the UK's most successful and high-profile entrepreneurs to inspire your students. You're welcome to scan and share this page.

Theo Paphitis's business empire spans retail, property, finance and consumer goods, with over 330 stores and 4,000 employees, all serving over 28 million customers a year. But few would have expected this multi-millionaire television celebrity to achieve so much when he left school at the age of 16 with no qualifications.

Theo has kindly offered time to answer some questions for UniTasterDays. We hope his experience and advice will help inspire the next generation of business leaders – even those not considering university participation.

On initial struggles at school and learning barriers:

"I struggled when I was at school as it took me a lot longer to do things than my friends. I had undiagnosed dyslexia which created huge learning barriers for me. In many ways it also helped me to create different workarounds and solutions to problems. This has undoubtedly been integral to the success I have seen since leaving school. For me, my dyslexia gave me the tools to be a problem solver and I have never looked back".

On students securing work opportunities alongside their studies:

"I wanted to earn money from a young age, so delivering marketing flyers, setting up a tuck shop and working in Wimpy were all ways of me doing this. If you want to earn money or get ahead of the game in an area of interest, then it can never be a bad thing to get your foot on the career ladder, start building up your CV and make contacts sooner rather than later."

On the skills and attributes to be successful:

"I often say the harder I work, the luckier I get. Hard work is a big part of success and doing your homework to be the smartest person in the room is also important. Of course, there can also be a little bit of luck too!"



"During my entrepreneurial journey I have luckily had more ups than downs, but I always knew I wanted to be successful and that ambition and drive was ingrained quite early on. Even when things didn't go to plan, I knew there would be another way of making something happen and not giving up is key to being successful."

"When recruiting leaders now and investing in businesses, I want those in my business who have great attention to detail, the capacity for effective decision making, the resilience to deal with the ups and downs and, the ability to have fun!"

On other skills and attributes Theo looks for when investing in businesses on the panel of the hit BBC Show Dragons' Den:

"Passion, resilience and common sense! I learned early on in my time on Dragons' Den that a great person with an average idea was often a better bet than an average person with a great idea. You have to work with the people to make the magic happen. If that relationship is a struggle, then the business partnership will always be harder than it needs to be."

On opportunities for students to take a gap year:

"To take a year out and experience the university of life is no bad thing, but there needs to be a plan in place for what happens after that, before you go. To just travel because you don't know what to do, won't solve that problem. To experience work ahead of university could also help you realise the paths you do or even don't want to take. Taking a year out is a very personal choice."

Finally – a key message for students to maximise their career potential:

"Think about your key strengths, your interests and what makes you tick. You're in work for a long time, so you want to be doing something that keeps you interested and that you are passionate about."

"You're going to progress in your career if you're the person enjoying what you're doing and showing you're adding value. To care about what you're doing is a sure-fire way to progress in the workplace and make the most of your skills."

A school and college guide to the university events available for your student groups

By Elenid Steffan, Sam Levitt, Chris Mullen, Nadine Shanahan and Becky Barritt. Education Liaison Officers at Edge Hill University and HELOA members.

Universities across the UK have friendly and enthusiastic student recruitment teams who run a wide variety of events, with many of these sessions available free of charge. These can be offered before, during or after the UCAS process to aid your students' choices and decisions, including:

Pre-16 campus visits as part of pre-set days or sessions within schools aimed at various year groups. The National Collaborative Outreach Programme is also an excellent resource for pre-16 events. Find out more about these on page 18.

Presentations and workshops including traditional and generic sessions such as an introduction to higher education, personal statement writing, student finance and the student experience. Some institutions may also offer extended project qualification support, interview techniques and study skills support.

Drop-in events allowing universities to provide lunchtime support for advice and guidance - or

even personal statement sessions to assist your careers programme.

Subject tasters including more of an in depth look at courses and what it would be like to study at university, including more practical and interactive sessions. This could also include academics visiting your school or college to deliver a topical lecture, aligning with your students' interests and the curriculum.

Open Day and applicant visit days for your students to visit institutions and meet subject tutors, discuss the course, see student accommodation, and tour the campus/city. Students and parents can also speak to other support teams at the university around finance, admissions, the students' union, extra-curricular support and study abroad opportunities.

Bespoke campus visits can be arranged for subject activity or full year groups within Year 12 and 13 as well. Universities can put together programmes based on your needs for the students, which may be around the UCAS process or more subject based (based on academic availability). Booking these as early as possible is essential as calendars get booked up extremely quickly, especially during June and July.

Some universities may also be happy to part or fully fund your transport if this presents an issue for you as well.

It is always worth asking universities what they can offer to support you. Most will do their best to offer as bespoke an event or session as possible, which meets the needs of your students. They will usually be prepared to travel to you, in order to facilitate it as well.



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How to support students with the transition from school to university #1

By Laura Haveron, Recruitment and Admissions Co-ordinator, Teesside University

The transition from school or college to university can be a big step for many students. Studying at university is very different to how many students have been previously used to learning.

To develop independence, confidence and maturity, it is really important for students to do plenty of their own research and planning before applying for (and starting) university. There are lots of things you can do to guide and support your students towards this mind-set and towards a smooth transition to higher education.

Study Skills

It is a great idea to encourage your students to brush up on their study skills prior to university. Reviewing study skills guides, such as those provided on university websites or the UCAS website, can really help prepare students to sharpen and develop the practice of efficient independent study.

Here are a few key areas to consider:

Time management – this is an essential skill when studying a degree. At university, students are required to take much greater control over when, what and how they study. It's a good idea to make students very aware of this when they are researching university options, and to direct them to think about how they study best, what kind of learner they are and how to create study schedules.

Self-motivation – although university tutors are often extremely supportive, new undergraduates need to be aware that they must take responsibility for their own learning. Ensuring that they choose a degree course that they are passionate about will help here.

Academic writing – assessments can be very different at university to what students are familiar with at school or college, particularly in terms of research and referencing. Encourage your students to check the websites of the universities they're

considering – many will have a section on their course pages about how they will be expected to study, how they are assessed and how to prepare for this. Some universities also offer summer university courses – online or on campus – to help students to prepare for academic writing before starting as an undergraduate.

Top Tip #1: Most universities have dedicated outreach teams who will be happy to deliver helpful sessions for your students on study skills. Get in touch with institutions near you to find out more.

Lots of universities will deliver a series of sessions for new undergraduates when they begin a course. Here at Teesside, our library and student services team offer sessions throughout the academic year to help new students get to grips with areas such as academic writing, referencing, using journals and conducting academic research.

Universities also offer resources and learning tools to help students manage their learning to aid their transition to undergraduate study. Teesside University provides all new undergraduates with support through its Teesside University Advance scheme for example – giving students an iPad, keyboard and £300 of course resources to ensure they begin undergraduate life on a level playing field, with access to all they need to succeed.

Student Life

Your students may have lots of preconceptions about university which may or may not match up to the realities of student life. Inviting universities to your school or college throughout the year is a great way to help your students build up an accurate picture of what university is really like. Here at Teesside, our staff and student ambassadors deliver lots of presentations at schools and colleges to de-bunk myths about student life and help students get a sense of what it's really like to go to university.

Top Tip #2: Check with your local universities if they can visit you to deliver some sessions for your students.

“Universities have dedicated outreach teams who will be happy to deliver helpful sessions for your students on study skills. Get in touch with institutions near you to find out more.”

How to support students with the transition from school to university #2 – a student perspective

By Poppy Hudghton, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Manager, Queen Mary University of London and a HELOA member

Results day and students achieving the grades for university is a massive achievement. Planning a route for the first day of the university term is an exciting next step. Meeting peers and making friends is the start of a new adventure. With so many things to look forward to for your students, it is easy to overlook the step-up from school to university.

We asked our current students at Queen Mary University of London what the key differences were between school and university, in order for us to best advise you, the advisors, when you work to prepare them for it.

Structure and routine

“The school day is very structured, whereas at university you have much more spare time and it can sometimes feel confusing as you may only have a couple of hours teaching a day. My advice would be to make your own routine and stick to it. You will find that by organising your day, you will be more productive and on top of your studies.”

Charlotte Perfect, Masters of Law

Charlotte highlights the importance of preparing students to plan and be organised. By introducing time-management techniques and revision timetables we can ensure that students are ready for the additional responsibility that comes with being in charge of their own routine.

Independent study

“The main difference between school and university is the independence, to study the way you want to, when you want to and how you want to. The independence to learn how to be an adult with support from others in the same boat and support from the university.”

David Ajibade, Biomedical Science

David mentions that despite the differences, the university will be there to support students with

their new-found independence. The ability for a student to complete independent research and work to their own initiative is a key aspect of university life. We encourage students to seek help with this transition and provision ranges from peer-assisted study to personal tutors and workshops.

New opportunities

“As members of our Students' Union, we have the opportunity to join an enormous range of sports clubs and societies. For me, the most rewarding aspect of being at university has been volunteering for a sports club committee so that I can encourage others to get involved in the sport I love!”

Will Stanley, Medicine

Will reminds us that university is full of additional opportunities, with an alphabet full of sports clubs and societies; from Anime Club to the Zoological Society. Students have the option to take part, take on leadership, and even create their own!

Although the difference between school and university is vast, we must encourage students to embrace the change, seize the opportunities and most importantly, not be afraid to ask for support.



A school and college guide to national collaborative programmes: NCOP and the Reaching Wider programme

What is the National Collaborative Outreach Programme?

By Ian Freedman, Hub Manager, Higher Horizons + and a HELOA member

The National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) is a widening access initiative in England - funded by the Office for Students. This programme aims to work with young people in areas where progression into higher education is lower than expected, especially when considering the GCSE results of the people who live there.

There are 29 different NCOP networks spread across England, with each NCOP consortium being a collaborative partnership of different universities and colleges who work together in order to support the progression of these young people.

How is NCOP working?

NCOP is a highly targeted programme, working in ward areas with unexplained gaps in their progression onto higher education. There are set national aims that the NCOP programme is attempting to reach, however each individual NCOP consortium has the autonomy to tailor activity depending on the local geographic need for students. This enables all activity to be relevant for both the schools and colleges in the region, and the young people who live in that area.

Going forward with NCOP - August 2019 onwards

NCOP has been running since 2017, and from August 2019, we entered phase two of the programme. This phase will attempt to build on all of the work that has taken place within schools and colleges for the past two years, but also adds in a new element that is called the outreach hub from Autumn 2019.

What is an outreach hub?

Each NCOP will implement an outreach hub and it will primarily act as a point of contact and information for all secondary schools and colleges

within the relevant NCOP geographic region. The role of the outreach hub will also be to work with schools and colleges in areas of low participation to higher education by facilitating access to current outreach provision with university and college partners. This facilitating access to provision also extends to bodies such as the Careers and Enterprise Company or the National Citizen Service, which enables a joined-up approach to give young people the opportunities to make well-informed decisions.

Introduction to Wales' Reaching Wider Programme

By Alice Davies, South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership Manager, Swansea University and a HELOA member

The Reaching Wider programme is a Higher Education Funding Council for Wales funded collaborative initiative which aims to increase participation in higher education by people from underrepresented groups and communities in Wales. There are three regional Reaching Wider Partnerships in North and Mid Wales, South West Wales and South East Wales and all higher and further education institutions in Wales are members of Reaching Wider Partnerships. Other regional partners vary, but include local authorities, employers, schools, the voluntary sector and Careers Wales.

What do Reaching Wider Partnerships do?

Each partnership has developed a programme of engagement tailored to local need. All three partnerships deliver engagements which are designed to raise attainment; prepare students academically, emotionally and socially for higher education level study and raise awareness of higher education options and the range of support available.

Examples of activities include summer schools, mentoring, after school clubs, study skills support, subject tasters, campus visits, literacy and numeracy interventions, and GCSE support.

What should you do?

Not all school or college students will be eligible to take part as the programme is focussed on areas of Wales which experience multiple levels of deprivation (defined by postcode) and also students who are care experienced or carers.

If you think you work with students who might be eligible, you can find out more by approaching your local university and asking about their Reaching Wider programme.

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- RESEARCHING UNIVERSITIES AND COURSES
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- STUDENT FINANCE WORKSHOPS

Contact outreach@chi.ac.uk to see how the University of Chichester can support your students.



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A school and college guide to university access - why are certain university events only offered to specific students?

By Becky Tomkins, Project Lead - GROWS, the Gloucestershire NCOP partnership

I will begin with a question which you may be already thinking - *shouldn't all pupils have access to university activities and information?*

The answer of course should be yes; however not all pupils access higher education in the same ratios. Research by the Government, by the Office for Students and by UCAS, all point to the same conclusions. Some learners progression rates to higher education are much lower than their peers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Universities have therefore been tasked to identify where access rates (and indeed the student journey as a whole) differ between groups and to undertake work to address this balance. The most common groups of students who are identified by universities tend to be those learners in local authority care, those from postcodes that suggest areas of disadvantage or low progression to higher education, some ethnic minority groups and disabled students, to name a few. One of the groups who are becoming more under-represented in higher education are white, working class boys.

Universities can only charge higher fees if they sign up to delivering an access and participation plan. This details how the university will work towards addressing any success gaps between groups in terms of accessing higher education, attainment whilst studying at higher education level - and the level of job they ultimately end up doing as a graduate.

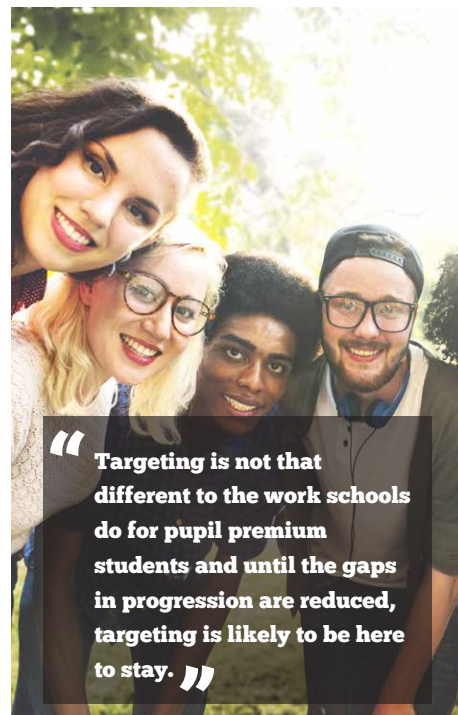
This is why universities and specific projects like NCOP (find out more about this on page 18) may offer some activities and events only to targeted pupils. Usually the university will let you know who to target. Sometimes you might be asked to target those pupils on free school meals or pupil

premium students, as there is a lot of cross-over of these students with the measures used by higher education institutions.

You may also hear terms like 'Polar 4 - Quintile 1'. This is a measure currently used in higher education to identify postcodes of learners who are less likely to progress to higher education based on historical data.

Some schools and colleges have reservations about targeting particular students, in case they feel singled out. Whilst this does happen very occasionally, it tends to be those that are not included where there has been some criticism. Learners do need a clear explanation as to why they have or haven't been chosen to participate, without perhaps being too frank. Often, those who are targeted are told it is because they have been identified as having potential to continue their studies but may need a bit of support to get there, a full explanation is usually better face-to-face where questions can be answered.

Those not targeted can usually be offered alternatives such as guides, videos, or where universities are able to offer them, whole year group or non-targeted activity.



How universities help students in need of additional support

By Vanessa Church, Enhanced Student Experience Team Coordinator, University of Chichester

All universities are legally obliged to ensure that no-one is discriminated against because of a health condition, disability or other 'protected characteristic'. As a result, there will be a wide range of support services available at university for your students.

Some of these, such as disability and dyslexia services, ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place so students with particular learning difficulties or disabilities can study on an equal footing with other students. Other services are there to offer support and advice for a whole range of issues including money worries, health and mental health problems, emotional and spiritual needs, homesickness, relationship issues and academic issues.

There is also special support in place for particular categories of students such as international students, care leavers, estranged students, mature students and LGBT+ students.

It is very important that students let their prospective university know if they will need additional support. This can be done on their UCAS application form and they will have support arranged for when they start. If students discover they have support needs after they arrive at university, they can still get the support they need through a range of support channels.

Here are some of the services available at the University of Chichester as an example; every university will have similar services:

The Support and Information Zone is the first point of contact for many university services.

Wellbeing pop-ups and health drop-ins provide easy access to services without the need for an appointment.

The disability and dyslexia team support and advise students with disabilities or learning difficulties before a student starts university as well as throughout their studies.

Student wellbeing advice service for students seeking support on a wide range of wellbeing issues.

Student counselling service is a confidential service which can help with personal and emotional difficulties that affect academic work and university life in general.

Nurse health advice is an approachable and confidential drop in service offering support and guidance on medical conditions and all aspects of health and wellbeing.

Mental health advice service offers advice, sign posting and short-term interventions to support the development of skills for self-management, wellness and recovery.

Academic skills advice workshops and advice on a range of essential skills such as essay writing, referencing, time-management and revision techniques.

Student money advice service with information, advice and guidance on all aspects of student finance and funding including budgeting and money management. This also helps with grants from the University hardship fund and can support with emergency loans where appropriate.

International student advice is an on-going support and advice service for international and EU students in advance of and whilst studying at the University. A range of social events are also offered.

The Chaplain is here to listen, pray, discuss life and faith and offer spiritual guidance and support.



5 things EVERYONE should know about student finance

By Martin Lewis, MoneySavingExpert.com

Ignore everything you've read in the papers. Ignore the political spittle that flies across Parliament. And in some cases, ignore what parents tell you too. There are more myths and misunderstandings about student finance than any other subject (my polite way of saying there's a lot of bull spoken).

This is a political hot potato. People spin explanations to suit their own arguments. Yet that's about the big picture. When you come to decide whether you can afford to go to university, you should focus only on how it'll practically affect your pocket. And that is radically different to what you usually hear.

Now please don't confuse the fact I want to explain the system, with unblinkered support of it. I do have issues, but frankly that's not relevant here. What counts is that I tool you up to make the appropriate decision.

And a quick warning before I start. There was a radical change to student finance in England in 2012, anyone who started uni before that is on a different system, so beware their student finance war stories, which may not apply to you.

This information only applies to English students in England – in the other UK nations things work differently.

1. The student loan price tag can be £50,000, but that's not what you pay.

Students don't pay universities or other higher education institutions directly. Tuition fees, typically up to £9,250 a year, are paid for you by the Student Loans Company. Over a typical three-year course the combined loan for tuition and maintenance can be over £50,000. But what counts is what you repay...

- You should only start repaying in the April after you leave uni.
- Then you only need to repay if you earn £25,725+ a year (and that threshold is set to rise each year). Earn less and you don't pay anything back.
- You repay 9% of everything earned *above* that amount, so earn more and you repay more each month.

- The loan is wiped after 30 years – whether you've paid a penny or not.
- It's repaid via the payroll, just like tax and doesn't go on your credit file.

2. There is an official amount parents are meant to contribute, but it's hidden.

You are also eligible for a loan to help with living costs – known as the maintenance loan. Yet for most under 25s, even though you are old enough to vote, get married and fight for our country; your living loan is dependent on household (in other words, parents') residual income. The loan is reduced from a family income of just £25,000 upwards, until at around £60,000 (or £69,000 if you're going to uni in London), where it's roughly halved.

This missing amount is the expected parental contribution. Yet parents aren't told about this gap, never mind told the amount. I wrote to the government asking them to change that, a recent government-commissioned report agreed my suggestion should be followed – but that doesn't mean it will happen.

So when you get your letter saying what living loan you get, you'll need to work out the parental contribution yourself. Subtract your loan from the maximum loan available (e.g. for all 2019/20 starters, it's £7,529 if living at home, £8,944 away from home, and £11,672 away from home in London). Of course some parents won't be able to afford it – and you can't force them to pay. But at least knowing there is a gap helps you understand what level of funds are needed. And it's important to have this conversation with your parents and discuss together how you are going to plug the hole.

In fact, while the papers often focus on tuition fees, I hear most complaints from students that even the maximum living loan isn't big enough. Funny isn't it, after everything that's said, the real practical problem with student loans isn't that they're too big, it's that they're not big enough.

So when deciding where to study, look at all the costs, transport, accommodation (will you get into halls?), as that's a key part of your decision.

3. The amount you borrow is mostly irrelevant – it works more like a tax.

This bit is really important to understand, as frankly it turns the way you think about student loans on its head. So take your time (read it a couple of times if necessary).

What you repay each month depends solely on what you earn, i.e. for now 9% of everything earned above £25,725. In other words the amount you owe and the interest is mostly irrelevant. As proof, for a graduate who earns £30,000...

- Owe £20,000 and you repay £385 a year
- Owe £50,000 and you repay £385 a year
- In fact, let's be ridiculous and say tuition fees have been upped to £1m a year, so you owe £3m+, you still ONLY repay £385 a year

So as you can see, what you owe DOESN'T impact what you repay each year. The only difference it makes is whether you'll clear the borrowing within the 30 years before it wipes.

It's predicted very few – only the top 20% highest-earning graduates – will clear it in time. So unless you're likely to be a seriously high earner, ignore the amount you 'owe'.

Instead in practice what happens is you effectively pay a 9% increased rate of tax for 30 years. At current rates, it works like this:

Earnings	Uni goers	Non-uni goers
Up to £12,499	No tax	No tax
From £12,500 - £25,724	20%	20%
From £25,725 - £49,999	29%	20%
From £50,000 - £149,999	49%	40%
£150,000	54%	45%

This doesn't make it cheap, but it does mean that all the talk of burdening students with debt is misleading. The burden is paying 9% extra tax – frankly it shouldn't be called a debt, it really doesn't work like one.

The more you earn, the more you repay each month. So, financially at least, this is a 'no win, no fee' education.

4. Interest is added, the headline rate is 5.4%, but many won't pay it.

Student loan interest is set based on the (RPI) rate of inflation – the measure of how quickly prices of all things are rising and it changes annually each September, as follows...

While studying: RPI + 3%, from September 2019 it's 5.4%.

From the April after leaving: It depends on earnings. For those earning under the repayment threshold



it's RPI, for those earning over £47,835 it's RPI + 3%. For those who earn in between it's a sliding scale.

So many graduates aren't actually charged the full 5.4% rate. In fact many graduates won't actually pay any interest at all. That's because the interest only has an impact if you'd clear your initial borrowing in full over the 30 years before it's wiped. Many won't. And even of those who will, all but the highest earners won't come close to repaying all of the interest added.

5. The system can and has changed

Student loan terms *should* be locked into law, so only an Act of Parliament can negatively change them once you've started uni – but, they're not. And a few years ago we saw a very bad change imposed, though thankfully after much campaigning it was overturned.

So sadly all my explanations above need the caveat of 'unless things change'. However the government recently commissioned the 'Augar' report which included changes to student finance. It proposed many big changes, like reducing tuition fees, but extending the repayment to 40 years.

Whether they'll be put in place is still very much open to question, yet if they are, the recommendation was it'd only be for new starters in September 2021, not for those who are already at uni.

Hopefully that gets you started on student finance. If you'd like to read full info see my detailed 20 student finance mythbusters go to <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes>.

Closing note from UniTasterDays - please do share this information with students. This information is correct in September 2019. Note, in the current system - the student loan repayment threshold rises each April.



A school and college guide to international university study opportunities

By David Hawkins, Director, Hawkins Global Education

We live in an increasingly global world, with students connected to friends, celebrities, news and opportunities all over the world at the click of a button. Today's students have never been more globally connected, tied into a digital economy that knows no borders. Yet, when it comes to university, so many focus only on options in the United Kingdom. As a result, students may be missing out on a huge array of opportunities.

Here, I will guide you through some of the key differences, so you can provide initial support to students considering study opportunities overseas.

Assessment models

One key thing that students need to be aware of is that university in other countries doesn't work in the same way as it does in the UK: on a global spectrum, the typical single-subject, final assessment model that most UK universities offer is quite unusual. In the USA students will study a broader range of subjects and their 'major' will only be about a third of what they study while at university. In the Netherlands (which has over 300 degrees taught entirely in English); the Universities of Applied Science system offers a hands-on style education connected to employers.

Applications

Application procedures vary widely from the UK's UCAS system and from country-to-country. When

applying to other countries, students need to learn new processes, timelines and terminology. For schools, there is a distinct lack of control compared to UCAS, meaning that students need to be more proactive. Students should start the process at least six months earlier than for UCAS (and, for the US, at least a year earlier due to the probable need to take an entrance test).

Where's popular?

The USA dominates, with universities from the world-class names such as Harvard, to lesser-known institutions that compare with the best of the UK. Canada has risen in popularity, with the perception of a more European political and social system, and a favourable immigration regime for post-study work. Europe is popular, from studying in English-speaking locations such as Ireland, to courses taught in English across the continent.

A particular trend is for students to look at well-regarded private universities in Europe, who offer modern education in a global context, drawing in international students from all over the world to study in cities such as Madrid (for IE University) or Bremen (for Jacobs University).

There is support available

Today's schools need to be able to support students with international applications, something with which a range of organisations are now able to assist, with international university specialists able to deliver talks, workshops and consultations to students as well as to directly support with the nuances of their applications.

International universities frequent the UK to meet with students, either at central events in cities or on roadshows to visit schools.

The time is now ripe for more students to seriously consider international universities: the world is out there!

A school guide to college higher education

By David Clapham; Quality, Partnerships and Learner Engagement Manager, University Centre Calderdale College.

You may not realise it, but going to university isn't the only way to get a degree for your students. For some young people, studying at their local college may be the best option. Dozens of colleges dotted around the UK offer university-level qualifications – the numbers make up around 10% of the total higher education student population.

What are the differences between college and university higher education?

The key difference is that the smaller institutions have something alternative to offer to students. Although the university undergraduate experience is great, the supportive and immersive learning experience at a college can be just as transformative because of the unique opportunities that it presents.

There's usually a fantastic age range in college higher education - 70% of our higher education students are mature, some into their sixties! The mixture of ages creates a melting-pot of collective experience. The contrasting perspectives and range of skills can be amazing and inspiring, creating unique and challenging learning experiences for those at each end of the scale.

Because it is usually smaller-scale, college-based higher education is often more specialised. For example, University Centre Calderdale College offers only thirteen undergraduate courses, only six resulting in a BA (Hons) award.

The largest course is Early Years; the high volume of local nurseries and pre-school settings means that there is a demand for qualified Early Years practitioners. Some of those who complete the Foundation Degree in Early Years go on to complete the BA (Hons) 'top-up' year, but many don't, because they don't need a full degree to gain their desired job promotion.

At the other end of the scale, there are only c20 undergraduates completing our BA (Hons) in Contemporary Art and Design Practice programme. However, the studio space for our third-year 'top-up' students at Dean Clough Mills

in Halifax offers internationally renowned art galleries and a thriving community of artists-in-residence who drop-in to share their wisdom about surviving in the professional art world. It's small-scale compared with a typical university cohort for many courses, but the chance to collaborate and share a space within the professional world is invaluable for students seeking a career in the creative industries.

Higher and degree apprenticeships

Colleges lead the way in offering higher and degree apprenticeships because they are a great way to combine a qualification with real work experience. Most colleges' apprenticeship provision is outstanding, because the mixture of hands-on vocational and traditional learning is what colleges have been doing in higher education for decades.

Some students live at home, some with parents, or as mums and dads themselves (or grandparents!), working part-time, full-time or volunteering to gain experience.

Rather than the usual live-away university experience, college-based higher education usually means fitting studies around professional life and family responsibilities, enabling a good work and study balance. The individual flexibility and support is designed to give students the best opportunity to achieve – both academically and after they finish. The majority go on to work in industry, to study on MA programmes, and some even go on to teach and inspire the next generation of students as well.





How to support your students making their university course and career choices

By Andy Cotterill, UK Marketing and Recruitment Officer, City, University of London and a HELOA member

It's a familiar enough question for many people advising young people: *why should I study that at university? What's the point in doing that course? What can I do with that?*

Students are often asking themselves where they want to go and how can they get there. Some have a very clear direction and know where they want to end up: this makes choosing options a little easier for them. For others, the not knowing can be incredibly daunting and they can struggle to see the pathway between their education and their career.

But if it was so obvious, why do all solicitors not all have undergraduate law degrees? Why are there marketers and financiers with no undergraduate education in those areas? The answer is relatively simple: employers are often interested in skills and competencies more so than the course a student will graduate from.

Doctors, of course, will need a medicine degree to end up in open-heart surgery, but the options are so much wider for many other career pathways. Take the accounting profession for example; some

employers will ask for an accounting graduate, others may look for a background in mathematics or finance. But on a generic search engine trawl there are plenty of job descriptions that will look for the individual who *'has or is on course for at least a 2:1 honours degree in any discipline.'*

Students will develop a wealth of skills and competencies outside their degree subject

Employers will be looking for individuals with a certain skillset and that can come from a variety of disciplines. Around 60% of those studying accounting or finance will end up in a business, human resources or finance related role - but there are examples of graduates in the discipline training to be pilots or working as ski instructors as well!

Graduates in the broadest sense are still very attractive to employers. According to Prospects, graduate unemployment is at its lowest level for 39 years, down to just 5.1%, showing the robust nature of the market.

Skills that students should develop through degree level study include emotional intelligence, good written and oral communication skills, the ability to present information in an accessible way and critical analysis skills. Current students are also more likely to have several careers over their working lifetime nowadays, as the world of work becomes more varied and transient.

The key message for students looking to study a degree without an obvious career pathway is that there simply is no such thing. When they're looking down many tunnels with light at the end and they can't pick one, that's where university careers departments and placement opportunities can jump in.



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- How to choose a course and university
- Student life

If you have a group of students interested in a particular subject, get in touch to arrange a visit from a UEA academic to deliver a guest lecture in your school.

Email schools@uea.ac.uk to find out more and book



A school and college guide to providing university information to parents and carers

By Jack Fox, Head of Student Recruitment and Widening Participation, Queen Mary University of London and a HELOA member

Applying for a course in higher education can be a daunting experience. Not only for students, but also for parents and carers, especially if there is no experience of higher education within the family.

Both the Quality in Careers Standard and the Gatsby benchmarks make specific references to involving and supporting parents/carers in careers education, information and guidance. It is therefore useful to be aware of the range of assistance available from universities to support you with this important area of work.

Support available for schools and colleges:

- **Presentations at school or college parent's events** - topics can vary, but typically include information about the benefits of higher education, the UCAS process and student finance.
- **Information stands at a school or college** - these provide a great opportunity to speak to either staff or current university students about entry requirements, progression opportunities and the experience of studying at a specific institution.
- **Online resources** - increasingly universities will provide information written specifically

for parents. The UCAS website also produces a comprehensive guide for parents.

- **Open days and applicant days** - most universities will actively encourage parents to attend open days and applicant days. It can often be reassuring for parents to learn about the environment, course structures and the financial/support services available to students.

The key higher education messages to disseminate to parents/carers:

Many of you will be aware that parental engagement can be difficult. Often, the time you have to disseminate information can be limited. With this in mind, here are three of the key messages that you may find helpful to share with them:

- **The benefits of higher education** – this offers more than a qualification. Students can develop a genuine enthusiasm for a subject, working alongside experts in their field. It can also help develop a student's interpersonal skills, provide a platform to make life-long friends and participate in a range of opportunities such as studying abroad.
- **Start the conversation early** - it is never too early to start talking about choices including university participation and courses with students. Questions focussing on interests inside and outside of school or college and career ambitions can be a great starting point.
- **The support available at your school or college** - ensure that parents are aware of the support available for students. This may include the provision for attending open days, support in completing the UCAS form and information evenings for parents.

How to support your students when writing their university personal statements

By Becci Denmark, UK EU Student Recruitment Manager, University of Surrey and a HELOA member

Personal statements, a task that strikes fear into the hearts of many students! Whether your students are panicking about not having enough content or are concerned that they have too much - they may turn to you for guidance and support.

So how can you best support your students to write a standout personal statement?

Here are my top four personal statement tips to share with your students:

1. **Get started:** the hardest part is often just starting. Writing the personal statement can seem like a daunting task which is easier to put off than tackling. Advise your students to start with a bullet point list or a mind map and literally just jot down a few words describing their achievements relevant to the course they want to study. Little and often is key. Advise them to set aside 10 minutes a day. Those bullet pointed words will soon turn into statements, sentences and paragraphs.
2. **Be sure of their choice:** it is important that your students are sure of what they want to study at university. If they are planning to apply for a Maths course at one university and an English course at another, this could make their personal statement lack focus.

Students only have 4,000 characters to make an impression and universities want to see a commitment to a subject. If you do have students who are unsure then encourage them to research their options, attend open days and other taster activities offered by universities to help them make an informed subject choice.

3. **Super circular activities:** encourage your students to engage with subject specific activity outside of the classroom in their own time. Universities will be impressed when they read a student attended a subject-specific summer school or taster day. It is also a fantastic way for students to work out whether they want to study a particular subject at university. Most universities offer some form of taster activity and a lot of them are free of charge - so encourage your students to take advantage of the amazing opportunities out there!
4. **Do not rush:** the more time students give themselves to work on the personal statement, the better. I think June of Year 12 is a great time to introduce the premise of the personal statement. This then equips your students with the information they need so they can work on the personal statement over the summer.

“ **Advise your students to start with a bullet point list or a mind map and literally just jot down a few words describing their achievements relevant to the course they want to study.** ”

A school and college guide to university decisions and offers

By Chris Rogers, School and College Engagement Officer, University of Chichester and a HELOA member

After the long process of students researching, visiting and applying to universities, they will begin to receive their offers. Here is a simple guide to what each offer means.

Unconditional Offer

This offer usually means that the student has met the university entry requirements for the course and should they accept the offer, they will have a confirmed place at the university.

Some universities may make the student a promise of an unconditional offer should they choose the university as their firm choice. There may be other caveats to fulfil too and these should be explained along with the offer.

Unconditional offers can be great if it is the student's favourite choice, but they should be encouraged to consider that this is definitely the university and course that meets their aspirations. They should also keep striving to reach the best of their academic potential in their post-16 qualifications.

Conditional Offer

A conditional offer is where the student will need to achieve specific conditions in order to secure their place at the university.

This may mean a student is asked to achieve certain grades e.g. ABB at A-Level, DMM in BTEC or 28 Points in the International Baccalaureate; or it could be achieving a specific number of UCAS points (all of these can be found on individual institution websites and on the UCAS website).

Unsuccessful

This unfortunately means that they have not been offered a place with the university. Sometimes the student will be given a reason, but if not, they can contact the university to ask if they will discuss their reason with them.

Interview or audition request

Students may be invited to an interview and/or audition before they are made an offer. Interviews are used more commonly for vocational and highly subscribed courses. Auditions are for those creative courses such as theatre and music.

Then it is response time

Students will then be asked to respond accordingly – and the choices they have are:

Firm acceptance - this is the course and university they most want to attend. Grades for this choice are usually higher than their insurance option.

Insurance - A student's insurance choice is their back up option should they not get the grades they have been predicted. This is usually a lower offer than their firm choice.



How to support students making university applications with vocational subjects

By Ruth Boyce, Schools & Colleges Senior Development Officer, University of Winchester and a HELOA member

Although A-Levels remain the most common qualification held by 18-year-old UK applicants, (according to the UCAS 2018 end of cycle report) there has been a growth in the numbers of students applying with one or two A-Levels or BTECs alongside other qualifications, such as Cambridge Technical Qualifications.

Vocational qualifications are varied and many - but are effective preparation to progress to higher study and increasingly our team sees many schools offering a mixed package of qualifications.

Students undertaking Cambridge Pre-University qualifications, extended projects, the Welsh Baccalaureate and others alongside one or two A-Levels or BTECs are in a great position to draw on the skills gained from different types of study.

Encourage students to include skills developed in their personal statement

Applicants with vocational or mixed vocational and A-Level qualifications have lots to offer because of their breadth of subject, study techniques utilised, and personal skills gained. Many programmes have placements or industry experience, or projects where students have developed their independent study skills. Spending time helping students realise just how much they have learnt and how to reflect this in their personal statement can be very useful.

Broader university course opportunities

When speaking to students, we try to encourage them to think broadly. Completing a Level 3 Public Services course could mean applying for a professional policing degree, but degrees such as law, criminology, event management or sport coaching are also an option dependent on their study and career interests. Having studied one vocational subject doesn't necessarily limit the options open to students at degree level.

In addition, degrees are not all taught and assessed in the same way; some are very similar in structure to Level 3 study with coursework and mixed assessment methods. Choosing a degree which suits a student's learning styles and interests is possible due to the huge range available, it just takes a little research.

Entry Criteria

Entry requirements for a particular course can be shown in terms of the grades needed and/or the UCAS tariff points required. Our entry is expressed in UCAS points but for some universities, details regarding entry grades can be advertised as A-Levels, and information about other accepted qualifications needs researching more thoroughly.

There can also be an issue with students not being certain what volume of qualification they are studying, whether it's a diploma, extended diploma or another. If you can support students to understand what their study is worth in UCAS points, they can see how it translates for entry. Usually the most accurate place to find specific requirements is on the website of the university of interest. Although contacting admissions teams with any queries can be the easiest way to find out for certain what a university requires.



Graduate employability: key skills for success #2

In conversation with Jeremy Darroch, Group Chief Executive, Sky

An exclusive interview with one of Europe's most successful business leaders to inspire your students. You're welcome to scan and share this page.

Jeremy Darroch is at the helm of Sky, one of Europe's leading entertainment companies. He joined Sky as Chief Financial Officer in 2004 and was appointed Chief Executive Officer in December 2007. He later became the Sky Group Chief Executive Officer in 2014.

Prior to leading a global company with over 24 million customers and valued into the multi-billions, Jeremy completed an economics degree at the University of Hull. He later received an honorary degree from the same university in 2010.

Jeremy has kindly offered time to answer some questions for UniTasterDays. We hope his experience and advice will help inspire the next generation of business leaders.

On his university participation choice:

"I am the first generation of my family to go to University and came from a classic working-class background – I just wanted to take one step at a time and keep improving. My step was to go to University so I always aimed and imagined I would do it. I wanted to do something practical that would set me up well for the future."

On studying economics and the opportunity to undertake a gap year:

"I wasn't able to study economics at A-Level, but I thought it would be a good mixture of something new, interesting and relevant. Gap years then were much rarer, but looking back, I wish I had had the opportunity to take a gap year to travel and work. There's a big wide world out there and what's the worst that can really happen? You can always come back."

On his experience whilst at school:

"I grew up being encouraged to better myself and get a good job but with no more pressure than that. One of the first opportunities to demonstrate leadership at school was when I was made head boy – it was



very unexpected and something that just sort of fell to me. Straight away I had to organise things, start to lead peers and friends and represent my school. From the start I enjoyed it - but back then I wouldn't have imagined doing what I've done since."

On the skills and competencies required to be a successful:

"It is important to have the right positive attitude – to try new things, be willing to work hard, show respect and see the world as a glass half full. I can work with anybody like that."

"When I recruit leaders now, I look for strong values always, good self-awareness and a clear idea of what they want to achieve and contribute. These things rather than just a narrower view of 'skills and capabilities' are really important."

Finally – a key messages for students to maximise their career potential:

“Stay open to new possibilities, try things out, don't put too much pressure on yourself and see learning, self-improvement and curiosity as a lifelong journey - not something that ends at University.”

A school and college guide to preparing students for a university open day

By Natalie Freislich-Mills, Collaborative Outreach Officer, Make Happen (NCOP), University of Essex

University open days may be the first time that students have a real say in where they spend the next phase of their education.

There's so much information available online to narrow down the options, but nothing beats first-hand experience to help students make the final decision.

The essentials

When students plan to go to an open day, the first thing they should do is check which campus offers the course they are interested in. Universities often have two or more campuses located a significant distance apart, with subject areas allocated to a single site. Without this basic check, students could find themselves wasting considerable time and money visiting the wrong campus. Also talk to your students about their travel plans. Have they considered road closures or rail engineering works, for example?

Questions

Open days are great fun with lots of exciting activities to get involved in, but it can be easy to overlook the practicalities. Hopefully, students will have done some research for the course and university - but some things you can't find out online! Preparing some questions can give the day a real purpose, ensuring that students focus on what is meaningful to them. It can be a great way to help them engage in conversation with university staff and students, giving them a greater insight into the realities of university life.

Encourage your students to think carefully about their own personal needs and wants, considering their priorities. University is so much more than just the course; students may need to consider accommodation options, transport, affordability, part-time employment opportunities, specific student support services, extra-curricular opportunities and support for obtaining a graduate job.

Taking a notepad and pen (or at least a notes app on their phone) will help them to remember key points about each university. Once they've visited more than one, memories start to become hazy, so making decisions can be much harder.

Reflection

After visiting a university, it's ideal to encourage students to jot down a few thoughts and feelings about their day, preferably on the way home while the day is still fresh in their minds. What did they like about the university? What did they dislike? Did they feel enthused about the course? Can they imagine spending three years (or more) of their life there? Reflections should focus on the practicalities of what life would be like at that specific university.

Decision time

After visiting a selection of universities, students should hopefully be able to compare them using their notes and reflections. It is important that students feel comfortable with both their firm and insurance choices to help minimise results day anxiety, satisfied that they could thrive at either option. All that's left then is to achieve the required entry grades!





A school and college guide to degree apprenticeships

By Sean Threlfall, Student Recruitment Officer (Outreach), Manchester Metropolitan University and a HELOA member

Degree apprenticeships offer students (post-18) the chance to start a career with paid full-time employment. As part of a degree apprenticeship, the apprentice also studies part-time for higher qualifications such as a BA (Hons), BSc (Hons) or BEng (Hons) degree.

The developmental role involves work-based learning alongside studying part-time at a University (the training provider), without having to pay tuition fees. Like traditional apprenticeships and school and college leaver programmes, they enable individuals to develop key skills, knowledge and behaviours in a recognised occupation, while undertaking a substantial programme of on and off-the-job training.

They are a great opportunity for enthusiastic work-ready individuals to gain significant employment experience by taking on real responsibility in a professional environment. This often propels degree apprentices on to a pathway of fast career progression. In terms of starting salaries, there is a minimum wage for apprentices, but most organisations pay more than this, with salaries starting at around £12,000 - £14,000 per year.

Applications and entry requirements

There is no age limit to applying and typically students will have completed a level three qualification prior to starting a degree apprenticeship. Entry requirements for degree

apprenticeships usually reflect full-time undergraduate degrees in relevant subject areas.

Furthermore, students should also have GCSE English and Maths at a minimum of Grade 4. Students do not apply for degree apprenticeships via UCAS and instead will apply directly with their employer. This allows students to keep their options open, and for the same reason, we would recommend that learners consider applying for full-time degrees alongside degree apprenticeships as well.

Various training providers will advertise vacancies on their website and in some instances send vacancy alerts to students who register an interest in their programmes.

Recent developments

This summer has been one of celebration and reflection for these pioneering alternatives to full-time degrees. The UK has seen its first-degree apprentices graduate with excellent results. At Manchester Metropolitan University, 100% of the first cohort of degree apprentices graduated with a minimum degree classification of 2:1. Furthermore, the findings from several satisfaction surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS) ranked highly amongst the University's entire degree course provision. This suggests that degree apprentices are enjoying their student experience.

Over the last four years, the number of new degree apprenticeships have developed significantly with lots of new standards created to meet the needs of industry. Subject choice is now greater than ever - and individuals can apply at a range of universities for a number of roles including a Digital Marketer, Nuclear Engineer or Police Constable - all while studying for a degree.

Universities have also revised their internal structures and increased personnel to support their ever-growing number of apprentices.

As an outreach adviser who is incredibly passionate about these opportunities, it has been a pleasure to inform young people on the benefits of degree apprenticeships, how to find vacancies and most importantly, how to become more employable.

When should your students start to prepare for their application?

Ideally, it would be useful to introduce degree apprenticeships to all first-year level three students regardless of their subject or qualification that they are working towards.

The key to student success in this potentially daunting and competitive application process is work-readiness. As key influencers, it is imperative that we continue to highlight the importance of students taking responsibility to upskill through work experience and volunteering. Students need to have an understanding of the self-awareness and commitment to personal development before engaging with employers at recruitment events. These would typically take place during the second year of their studies.

Working with employers and training providers is crucial in allowing students to build their knowledge of the apprenticeship application process and we encourage schools and colleges to offer multiple interventions to students, in the same way they would receive general guidance of applying to university through UCAS.

To reiterate an earlier point, the application process is very different to applying through UCAS. Generally, students are not familiar with online application forms or writing CVs and require additional support with this. They may

also find it challenging to understand the concept of submitting applications directly to employers - and demonstrating enthusiasm and suitability for the role is key to their success in the recruitment and selection process.

Then of course, applicants are faced with multiple stages to the application process. Usually, students have limited experience of multistage applications (e.g. online application form writing, psychometric testing, telephone and face-to-face interviews) and if they are unprepared it can be difficult to navigate.

However, our roles are to guide students through the multiple stages of the application process and practical application workshops are very effective in supporting learners with their applications.

Final thoughts

Degree apprenticeships are an amazing opportunity for committed, resilient and hardworking individuals who have a clear idea of how their early career may look. It is important, as advisers, that we continue to support social mobility and provide students with every opportunity to access these opportunities regardless of their background. The importance of sustained interventions cannot be stressed highly enough.

I have seen first-hand the impact of sustained interventions on improving a students' ability to secure a degree apprenticeship. During the last academic year, I believe advice and guidance around apprenticeships has improved significantly due to increased awareness and collaborative outreach with employers and training providers.

With further standards expected to develop over the next academic year, it is an exciting time to be considering applying for one.



A school and college guide to university league tables

By Hazel Jessop, Schools and Colleges Liaison Manager, Royal Holloway, University of London and a HELOA member

With over 150 institutions to choose from in the United Kingdom and thousands of courses, prospective students have a mammoth task when deciding on their university and course choices. To make it easier for them, there are several league tables that can be used - but are they truly that helpful?

I believe choosing a university, or more specifically a programme of study, takes time and should be based on far more than just a league table ranking.

For example, course content, teaching style, the staff and student ratio, assessment methods and student satisfaction are good criteria to begin with. There is no point chasing for a place at a highly ranked university if the actual course content does not meet the aims and objectives of the student.

Similarly, the location of the university could be the prospective student's main concern, and let's not forget about the entry criteria. Students will feel downbeat if they are pushed towards a

higher ranked university but fall short of the grade requirements.

It could be said that league tables use layers of data to come up with a single score and the finer details, such as student satisfaction or value added, both important criteria, get lost in the process.

In my opinion, league tables are a valuable tool to see where a university stands in the overall picture of higher education in the UK. Yet, as with any data-driven ranking system, the reader should investigate what constitutes the information given by the league table and look behind the overall university ranking to see how the desired subject is rated. By doing this, students can use the information gathered and come up with their own scoring system to assess if a specific programme at a university fits their personal criteria.

Encourage students not to underestimate the importance of a university visit

Each student is different and visiting the university and the academic department is no doubt one of the best ways to truly assess if the institution is a good match for them. Yes, they should be armed with knowledge and information, but the student should use it in combination with all the other factors they see and feel.

Our role as advisors should be to encourage students to source the very best course and university that is suited to them based on several measures - not just their league table ranking.

A school and college guide to university courses

By Kat Knight, UK Marketing and Recruitment Officer at City, University of London and a HELOA member and Meg Magrath, Campaigns Manager at the University of East London

There are over 35,000 courses available for your students to consider when making their university choices. It's not just the course name and content that students must get their head around; they'll also need to understand the different types of courses, the length of a course and what each choice would mean for them as well.

For example, two courses may have the same title, but students can choose a BA (Hons) or a BSc (Hons) route.

We've broken down some of the typical types of undergraduate degrees to help you articulate the different attributes to your students.

Levels

We use levels to help explain the different degree stages. A-levels, BTEC's and other similar qualifications are usually level 3. Most undergraduate degrees are known as Bachelor's Degrees and usually end at level 6 (1st year level 4, 2nd year level 5, 3rd year level 6). Other degrees may end at different levels. For example, a Foundation Degree ends at level 5 unless the student does a Top-Up to level 6.

Bachelor's Degrees

The standard degree classifications are 'BA' and 'BSc'. All Bachelor's degrees are equal in value; the abbreviations just refer to the type of subject. Honours (Hons) refers to the higher standard of study within a degree; a student can graduate without honours if they don't meet the academic requirements.

BA – Bachelor of Arts – usually arts or humanities focused.

BSc – Bachelor of Sciences – usually more science or maths focused.

BEng – Bachelor of Engineering – a course focused on Engineering, that can be the beginning of the journey towards becoming a chartered engineer.

BMus – Bachelor of Music – The majority of work consists of prescribed music courses and study in applied music, usually requiring proficiency in an instrument, voice, or conducting.

LLB – Bachelor of Laws – This degree allows students to continue to become a lawyer.

Graduates who have a non-LLB law degree may still need to do a law conversion (Graduate Diploma in Law) alongside non-law graduates in order to gain the equivalent of LLB status.

Joint Honours

Joint honours courses are ideal if a student is interested in studying more than one subject within one qualification. A combined course focuses on two subjects in the same timeframe as a single honours degree, but with a level of flexibility and a greater choice of modules.

Integrated Masters

Many courses now offer students the opportunity to study for an extra year and graduate with an integrated masters. Common acronyms to look out for are MEng or MSci from the engineering or science related subjects. These degrees finish at level 7.

Foundation Degrees vs Foundation Years

Foundation Degrees and Foundation Years often get confused given their similar names, but they mean slightly different things. Foundation Degrees go up to level 5 and usually take two years. They are work-focused degrees with a large practical element, and potentially reduced time in lectures.

Foundation Years are usually level 3 or 4 and are a stepping stone to a degree from level 4. Students may take this because they don't meet the entry requirements for degrees beyond level 4, or if they are exploring new subjects and need to gain more specific knowledge in a particular area.

“Always get in touch. There is a wealth of choice available for students as you will see, and university colleagues will always be happy to guide you through their course portfolio.”



A school and college guide to student work opportunities at university

By **Melissa Grindon, Creative Projects Officer at Liverpool Hope University**

One of the concerns your students may have when applying to university, will be the prospect of gaining paid work and voluntary experience alongside their studies. Choosing the right institution that offers at least one of these opportunities is a huge decision for your students.

During the application process, it is important for students to look at the opportunities available. This may be internships (paid or voluntary), placements, along with part-time work or sandwich years in industry.

I have introduced each of these below:

Paid part-time work – most institutions have an employability service, meaning students can earn money whilst they study, working in various jobs across campus. These opportunities include student ambassador positions, catering work, and library roles. This is a brilliant option for students who are keen to earn money, but also wish to remain within the university environment in order to focus on their studies.

Paid and voluntary internships – these vary dependant on the course. Often, art and humanities or business-based courses will offer a summer internship, with the company either being sourced by the student themselves, or by their academic staff. This is similar to work experience, where the students can extend their skills and understanding of their field, whilst developing socially and professionally.

Placements – these are slightly different in that they may contribute to the course modules and allow the student to obtain a grade that counts towards their final classification. Placements are normally featured in teaching, nursing, medicine, and social work-based degree courses.

Sandwich years – also known as a year in industry, these will only be offered by certain institutions and for certain courses. Unlike placements or voluntary work, the student will take a full year out of study, working within their field. This can be seen as hugely beneficial and can involve working abroad or across the UK. The stage in which a student can take their year out of study varies per institution, although normally it tends to be the third year of a four-year course.

Students should explore work opportunities early

If a student is interested in participating in any of these options, it is best to seek advice at the very beginning of their course. This will allow for forward planning and a thorough knowledge of what is ahead, before they make any decisions or applications.



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A school and college guide to university accommodation

By Andrew Cooper, Schools and Colleges Account Manager, Liverpool John Moores University and a HELOA Member

Accommodating the housing needs of your students

For some students, moving away into their own accommodation is one of the main reasons they move to university. For others, it is a sanctuary from the stresses of academia.

Typically, students spend around 12 hours a week contact time at university (of course that is dependent on the course) so there is a large amount of time spent potentially in their accommodation. In both instances, it is important that students make the right choice of where the best place to stay is.

Students should picture what they want in their accommodation choice

University accommodation brings in additional income to the university or companies owning them. So of course, in guides and on the web, every picture is going to show the accommodation at its best.

When advising students, it's important that they start with picturing what they want before seeing the glitzy marketing. For example, do they want to be as close to the lecture halls as possible? Do they want their own bathroom? How many people would they expect to share their facilities with? Having a good idea in advance makes it easier to decide when viewing all their options in the future.

What comes 'as standard' in a university room?

Often rooms are going to be a similar size, with a desk, drawers/wardrobe and of course a bed. Some may have a large kitchen which students share with others. Or perhaps rooms may have smaller kitchens, with a fridge in the student's room. If this is the case, is there a catering package available where meals are provided?

If the accommodation is not on campus, is there a shuttle bus to take students to class? Is there support such as a hall tutor available in the building they are staying in?

Asking in advance what students will get, will mean there will be no unexpected surprises when they arrive.

Encourage students to see university accommodation in person

One way to support this is to take students to open days where everything is available and on show. Alternatively, contact local universities and ask for a bespoke visit which includes viewing the accommodation.

If possible, try and visit a campus-based university to compare with a city centre option. When visiting, also ask to hear from a current student about their own experience of living in accommodation. If you can't visit a university, encourage students to use online forums where they can chat to current students about their own experiences.

Try to ensure your students don't leave it until the last minute!

It is usually better for students to stay in university accommodation in their first year so they can access all the support systems available. So if there is a possibility a student may want to stay in university accommodation, encourage them to apply as early as they are able to do so. It is much better to start the process early than to be left with limited options closer to the start date.

Also try and encourage students to view all the accommodation options available for each university they are interested in, in person - and to ask exactly what they do and don't get with their room.

Of course, universities will be more than happy to provide further advice and guidance too. Do feel free to encourage students to get in touch with their queries.

“ My advice for students is to visit accommodation in advance. One way to support this is to take students to open days where everything is on show. Alternatively, contact local universities and ask for a bespoke visit which includes viewing the accommodation. ”



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THE RESULTS

Mapping the coverage and cold spots in the university information, advice and guidance provided by schools and colleges



UnitasterDays

Finance is the main barrier to arranging university visits for schools

Finance is also considered to be the largest barrier to university for students

Most schools are starting their university engagement between Years 7 and 9

84% of schools and colleges rated the university IAG they provided as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'

Want to know more?

Browse the executive summary and full 35 page report at:

www.unitasterdays.com/nationalreview

How to support your students to make post-16 option choices with university in mind

By The Russell Group, which represents 24 leading research-intensive universities.

The Russell Group believes university should be open to all young people with the desire and ability to attend, regardless of their background. This is essential in the mission to build a stronger economy and a fairer society across the UK.

But if students want to progress to higher education – and particularly selective universities – they need to understand that the subjects they choose at A-Level can have an impact on the degree they may wish to take.

Choosing the right post-16 subjects can be as important as getting good grades for those applying to competitive courses. Some degrees – for example, certain science or language degrees – may have specific subject requirements and, unless pupils meet those requirements, they will not be able to take the course. This may be because they need prior knowledge, experience or skills learned from previous study. Without the right subjects, they risk closing off the path they wish to follow.

The Russell Group has recently relaunched its Informed Choices guidance to help ensure that all young people can access information to help with these decisions.

What is Informed Choices?

The guidance is aimed at Year 10 and 11 pupils to help them make informed decisions about what subjects to study at sixth form or college.

Previously published as a printed document, the new Informed Choices website provides a more interactive way for pupils to understand how the subjects they choose might affect their chances of making a successful application to university.

How does it work?

Users can see which subjects are most useful for the degrees they are interested in, as well as test numerous A-Level combinations, to see which degrees then open up.

This allows pupils to build up a personalised picture of the post-16 subjects that may be best for them, whether they already know which degree they want to study or not.

The site also provides general information on the subject combinations that can best prepare pupils for broad categories of degrees, such as languages, STEM degrees, arts, humanities and social sciences, as well as on the range of post-16 qualifications available – both academic and vocational, which may be accepted by Russell Group universities.

While Informed Choices is a helpful resource for any young person considering a competitive university, it is only a starting point and it is always important for pupils to check with individual universities before deciding what to study.

You can access the resources and find out more using www.informedchoices.ac.uk

Tip from UniTasterDays: Universities will be happy to come in and speak to your students about making university ready option choices, introducing key terms students may run into like facilitating choices.



A higher education jargon buster – a guide to university terms and acronyms

By Victoria Bradley, Regional Student Recruitment Specialist, CU Scarborough and a HELOA member.

This short guide will introduce you to the common higher education terms which institutions will often use.

Adjustment – if students have exceeded the conditions of their offer, they can approach alternative universities/colleges to explore courses, whilst still holding their original confirmed place.

Alumni – Students who have graduated (i.e. completed a course and gained a qualification) from a higher education institution.

Buzzword – a word that links students' UCAS application forms with the school/college they attend.

Clearing – an opportunity for students to apply for courses which still have vacancies if they did not get a place on a course. This may be because they did not receive any offers, they declined their offers, they did not achieve the grades they needed or if they have decided to apply for university later in the year.

Degree apprenticeship – a paid opportunity for students to study up to a Level 6 (degree level) qualification whilst working in industry. You can find out more on page 34.

Entry requirements – these are set by the university/college, which can be found on their website and in their prospectus. Students need to meet these requirements in order to be accepted on to their chosen course. The different types of offer are introduced on page 30.

HE / HEI – Higher education / Higher education institution (which includes universities and other HE providers).

Higher-level apprenticeship – a paid opportunity for students to study a Level 4 and/or Level 5 qualification whilst working in industry.

Lecture – a talk delivered by an academic member of staff. Students usually sit, listen and take notes, but at times there may also be some interaction between the lecturer and the students.

NCOP – The National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) is a project funded by the Office for Students (also known as the OfS) which aims to increase the progression of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to higher education. You can read about NCOP on page 18 of this guide.

NSS – National Student Survey. A national survey which asks final year undergraduates for feedback on their courses and other parts of their student experience.

Russell Group – A group of the 24 most research intensive universities in the UK.

Sandwich course – completely non-edible! Three, four or five year undergraduate degrees with a placement year 'sandwiched' in the middle.

Seminar – discussions that take place in small groups which give students the opportunity to apply what they have learnt from lectures.

Tariff points – these are points that are allocated to post-16 qualifications used for entry to higher education.

Track – UCAS' online tracking system where students can see how their application is progressing. On 'Track' students can also reply to any offers and amend their personal details.

Tutorial – opportunities for students to work through questions/problems with the support of an academic member of staff. These could be in a group or on a one-to-one basis.

UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, which is the organisation who deals with almost all higher education applications.

Ran into any others?

Please ask your local university or higher education provider if there are any other terms not listed in this article that you need clarification on – they will always be happy to help!

Useful links

If you would like to arrange events for your school, you can search through hundreds at:
www.unitasterdays.com/search

If you can't find the event you are looking for on our search pages, do please request one - this request is then sent directly to the universities you select: www.unitasterdays.com/request

If you would like events matching your chosen criteria to be sent directly to your mail box, you can join our events-by-email service at: www.unitasterdays.com/email

Credits

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