



# A PARENT AND CARERS GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY

Everything you need to support  
your child with their next steps

**WARWICK**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

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## INTRODUCTION

Making decisions about university can be a very difficult process for young people. At a time in their life that can be stressful due to exams, it's important to give them as much support as possible. As part of our outreach programme, your child will have received information about university and their next steps. However, we wanted to make sure you are also informed about the application process and key information that could support them in the transition to higher education. Higher education has changed a great deal in the past decade and this guide aims to help all parents and carers - regardless of whether they have a history of university education themselves - assist their son or daughter to make informed choices.

Starting university is a big step in a student's life, but we understand that it can mean many changes for the family too. These pages will provide you with relevant information to help you understand what your new student is going through and how you can help them.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE APPLYING

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There are a few different types of degrees and it's important to understand a little bit about each degree so your son/daughter can make the course selection that suits them best.

### BACHELOR DEGREE

A bachelor's degree is an undergraduate degree awarded by universities upon completion of a course. Typically an undergraduate degree will last three years. There are variations of bachelor titles such as Bachelor of Art or Bachelor of Science and this indicates what subject field was studied - for example if you studied Biology you would be awarded a Bachelor of Science.

### JOINT HONOURS DEGREE

In essence, a joint honours degree is one that allows you to study more than one subject and combine them into a single qualification. For example, History and Politics.



### SANDWICH COURSE

Sandwich courses are degree programmes offered by universities that include a placement, usually during year 3 of university. The student then has one year of study left after the placement, so courses typically take 4 years. Sandwich courses are regarded favourably by employers and are useful for a range of reasons. First, they give you in-depth **experience of the working world** and, more specifically, the industry you or your child hope to enter.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A COURSE

**It's important for your son/daughter to choose a subject they enjoy and which will help them reach their future goals. Here are some things they might want to consider when choosing a subject:**

- ▶ What do they enjoy day-to-day, could this be something linked to a future job role?
- ▶ Explore different graduate career options and consider what they would like to do once they finish education. Would getting a degree in a particular subject help get their dream job?
- ▶ Do they have an interest in a particular area? Learning about something you have an interest in makes studying that subject much more enjoyable.

Courses can differ from university to university, therefore don't just read the course title. Make sure you read the course description and see what modules are available. There are core modules and optional modules they can select to tailor their degree. History for instance can be very broad - is there a particular period in history they are interested in studying?

## HOW TO CHOOSE A UNIVERSITY

There is no right or wrong university to study at, however it is important to do your research about each institution. Your son/daughter might have set their heart on a particular university, while other students just want to choose the course they like the sounds of the best. Some students want to study at a city university, others want to study on a campus university. The biggest tip would be to go and visit different universities so you get a good feel for them - the best way to do this is on a university open day.

### OPEN DAYS

Visiting a university on an open day is the best way to check out all the facilities on offer and ask any questions your son/daughter might have about a particular course. When visiting an open day it is very important to go prepared to ask plenty of questions.

## UCAS

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### KEY UCAS DATES

#### Start of the autumn term

Applicants can pay and send their applications to UCAS, and uni's and colleges can start making decisions on applications.

#### Early autumn deadlines

Applications for Oxford, Cambridge and most courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine/science have an earlier deadline usually mid-October.

#### Start of the new year

Applications for the majority of undergraduate courses close in mid-January.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

All applications to UK Universities are made via UCAS (University and College Admissions Service). There are several key dates to remember and it is worth reading through the parents' section of the UCAS website. Each applicant can apply to 5 courses in their application.

### WHAT ARE UCAS TARIFF POINTS?

UCAS tariff points translate your qualifications and grades into a numerical value.

### WHAT IS A FIRM CHOICE?

An applicant may receive more than one offer and will be asked to choose a firm and insurance offer. The firm offer will be the applicant's first choice.

### WHAT IS AN INSURANCE OFFER?

The Insurance offer is the backup choice should your son/daughter decide not to choose their firm.

### WHAT IS CLEARING?

Clearing matches applicants to university places that are yet to be filled. It's available to anyone who has made a UCAS undergraduate application and doesn't hold any valid offers.

## ADMISSIONS

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Universities will take into account a number of different factors when assessing your son or daughter's application. They will look at academic profile, the personal statement and the academic reference. Within the UCAS application there are 5 main sections: Personal Information e.g. school details, Qualifications, Work History, applicants can include work experience placements in this section, personal statement and finally contact details. To support their application students are also required to nominate an academic referee to write a reference in support of their applications. This is typically a subject teacher, tutor or year head. Requirements differ for each course/university but usually involve achieving three A-levels or equivalent. Typically course entry requirements are stated on the university website/prospectus.

### THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

This is a chance for your son or daughter to impress the admissions staff. The personal statement should focus on what interests them about the subject, academic reading around the subject and any experience they have around the subject.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A UNIVERSITY

### CONTEXTUAL OFFERS

Universities understand that not everyone has equal opportunities due to social or economic factors, contextual offers promote fairness and allow universities to look at more than just exam results.





## FEES AND FINANCES

Whilst at university, your child will have two main costs - tuition fees and living costs. They can apply to student finance England to help with both;

### TUITION FEES

A tuition fee loan is money borrowed to cover the full cost of the fees charged by the university.

### LIVING COSTS

Living costs simply mean the cost of living at university, this includes the cost of food, bills and social activities. To help with the cost of living accommodation, students can apply for a means-tested **maintenance loan** which will help with these costs.

Any loans that are borrowed have to be paid back, however they are not paid back until your son or daughter have finished their course and their income is over the repayment threshold.

A student's university may also offer **bursaries**, **scholarships** and other kinds of financial support. This is money that does not need to be repaid - so it's always worth checking with them too.

## HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD TO BUDGET

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Managing money for many students can be daunting. You can help prepare them before they take their place at university by encouraging them to consider and think about some of the key tips.

### WHAT IS A BUDGET?

Put simply, budgeting involves managing your income and keeping track of your expenses. A good budget will give you an accurate picture of your finances, identifying where your money is going and whether you need to make any changes so it lasts longer. Firstly ask your son or daughter to add up their guaranteed income, such as student loans and bursaries. Ask them to make sure to note the dates they will receive student maintenance loans in their bank account. Keeping accurate records of these will help them budget for each term.



### ARE THERE ANY BUDGETING TOOLS TO HELP STUDENTS BUDGET?

There are a number of online tools to help students budget for university. The University of Warwick has its own **Getting started with budgeting worksheet** that will take you through a step-by-step guide of how to plan a budget. A link to this website can be found on Page 12. To help students budget there is also the **Warwick Budget Calculator** which is available online or as a free app for Apple and Android devices.

The calculator will help you get an idea of how a budget will shape the year, providing a forecast of a student's cash flow.

## HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD INTO YEAR 13

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Year 13 is a very busy and important year for your child. Here are some top tips on how to support your child throughout their last year in school/college.

1. Make sure they take regular breaks between revision
2. Ensure they have a balanced diet, well hydrated and are getting enough sleep
3. Utilise their schools career adviser to create cover letters and CV's for the future
4. Help them stand out! During the summer they can gain work experience, part time work, volunteering, join clubs and take up new hobbies
5. Strengthen their time management skills - it will be their responsibility to get up and get to their lectures on time!
6. Ensure they use their spare time to learn how to cook for themselves, live on a budget and do their own washing!

## HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD FOR UNIVERSITY

The last month before university may seem stressful! Here are some top tips to help your child prepare ahead of time for university:

1. Help them decide on what to take to university - the temptation can be to buy everything your child could possibly need. Check out the link on page 12 to see a packing list.
2. Help them sort out a student bank account - do your research to find the best deal!
3. Ensure student finance and accommodation are sorted
4. Help them to register with the local GP
5. Look at the [budgeting page](#) (link on Page 12) to see some key things your child will need to budget for
6. If your child would like some extra income - they could start looking for a student job
7. They can use social media to connect with students before they arrive.
8. Look at what clubs and societies are available at their university. This is a great way of meeting new people and making friends.

## SUPPORT AT UNIVERSITY

### WELLBEING

Wellbeing Support Services provide a range of services that can help students to develop the personal resources and skills they need to navigate the challenges and opportunities of student life.

### DISABILITY SERVICES

Universities understand that you want your son/daughter to feel able to achieve their best. Each university will have its own support available for students and applicants who declare any disability.

### CARE LEAVERS

The University of Warwick offers a wide variety of support for care leavers both pastorally, academically and financially.

For more information about our support services, please visit the link that can be found on Page 12 of this guide.



## USEFUL SITES

[UCAS.co.uk](https://www.ucas.co.uk)

[which.co.uk](https://www.which.co.uk)

[thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk](https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk)

[warwick.ac.uk](https://www.warwick.ac.uk)

[warwick.ac.uk/outreach](https://www.warwick.ac.uk/outreach)

## STAY IN TOUCH

Keep in touch by following us on our social media accounts.

 [twitter.com/OutreachWarwick](https://twitter.com/OutreachWarwick)

 [instagram.com/outreachatwarwick](https://www.instagram.com/outreachatwarwick)

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

### GAP YEAR

The phrase 'gap year' has traditionally meant a period of time taken out by a student after leaving college and before starting university. Some examples of gap year activities include conservation work, travel and internships. This time is usually used to gain skills and experience.

### APPRENTICESHIPS

Work while you study - an apprenticeship is a way to gain the skills, knowledge and experience you need to get into many careers. They combine work, training and study, letting you 'earn while you learn'. The level of study is typically level 3 or 4.

### DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

The key difference with a degree apprenticeship is earning a full time wage, alongside studying for a degree. The level of study is typically higher than a normal apprenticeship, usually level 6 or 7.

## SOME MORE USEFUL LINKS

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**Budgeting worksheet:** <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/academicoffice/funding/managingyourmoney/budgeting>

**Packing List:** <https://warwick.ac.uk/students/welcome/arriving/whattobring>

**Budgeting page:** <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com>

**Wellbeing Support Services:** <https://warwick.ac.uk/services/wss>