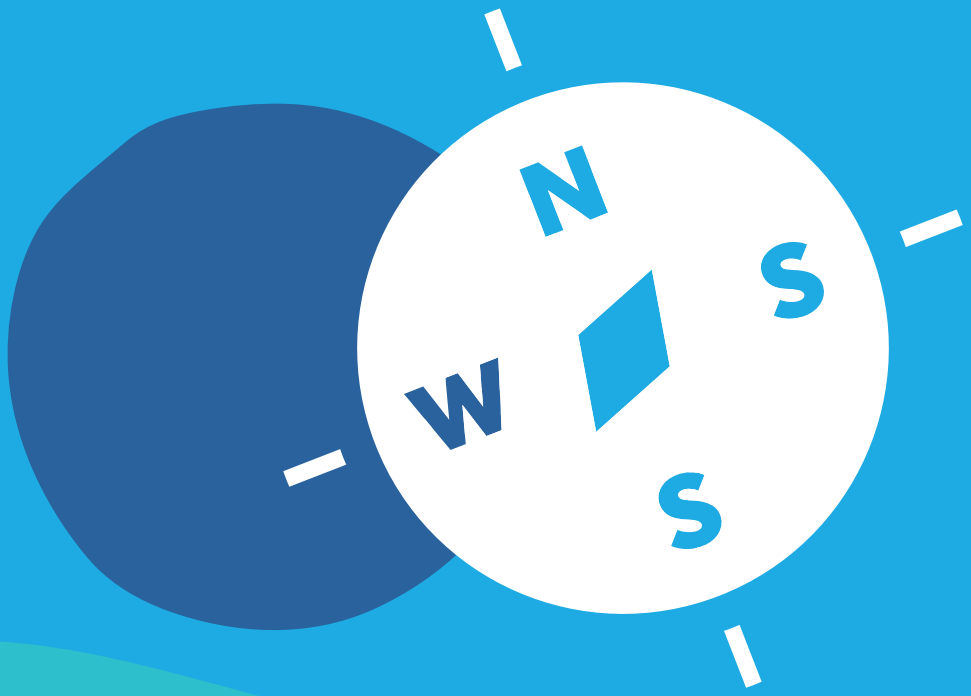


HIGHER EDUCATION PARENTS AND CARERS GUIDE

Next Steps South West

About us

Next Steps South West (NSSW) is a collaboration of 14 partner universities and colleges throughout Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, funded by the Office for Students (OfS). As the region's Uni Connect Programme, we help young people navigate their own personalised journey to higher education (HE). Throughout the region, we hold events and activities designed to inspire students aged 13-19 years old to fulfil their potential. We aim to build aspirations, awareness and access to HE, helping the students we target make an informed decision about their future.

What is Uni Connect?

The Uni Connect Programme brings together 29 partnerships of universities, further education colleges and other local partners to deliver outreach programmes to young people aged 13-19. The project started in January 2017, and its aim is to double the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE by 2020, increase by 20% the number of students in HE from ethnic minority groups, and address the underrepresentation of young men from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE.

For more information on Uni Connect, visit **officeforstudents.org.uk/adviceandguidance**

OfS Uni Connect Programme

CONTENTS

Introduction [2]

What is higher education? [3]

What are the benefits of higher education? [4]
Transferable skills [4]
Health, wellbeing and resilience [4]
Social benefits [5]

Supporting your child to make informed decisions [6]

The journey to higher education [7]

Funding higher education and paying it back [8]
Tuition fee loans and maintenance loans [8]
How much can students borrow? [8]
Who can apply? [9]
Apply for a loan [9]
How and when does it get paid back? [9]
How much are monthly repayments? [10]

Your child's options – things to think about [11]
Choosing GCSEs [11]
Choosing level 3 options (e.g. A-levels) [11]
Sixth form or college? [12]

Choosing a course, and university or college [13]
What to look for in a course [13]
Where to study [14]
Open days [14]

UCAS and the application process [16]
Key dates [16]
Personal statements [17]
Results day [17]
Clearing and adjustment [17]

Support for students in higher education [19]
Academic support [19]
Students' union [19]
Library services [19]
Employability and careers services [19]
Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) [19]
Financial support [19]
Counselling [19]

Glossary [20]

INTRODUCTION

When your child nears the end of their compulsory schooling, they will have to make some big decisions about their next steps. As a parent or carer, the advice and guidance you provide throughout their educational journey will have a significant impact on their long-term future.

In recent years, the higher education landscape has changed with more young people heading off to university or college than ever before. However, many parents and carers feel unsure if this is the right pathway for their child, and find the whole topic of higher education quite daunting.

Familiarising yourself with the information in this guide will get you up to speed wherever your child is on their journey. This will enable you to provide the right support at the right time, ensuring your child is well placed to make informed decisions about their future.

Throughout this guide, you'll find facts and stats, FAQs, useful charts and guides and much more. There's also a glossary for any confusing terminology!

WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION?

Higher education (HE) refers to study at level 4 and above. HE is voluntary and is an option for those who have completed a level 3 qualification, such as A-levels and BTECs.

Commonly, HE takes place in higher education institutions (HEIs), such as universities or colleges, although distance learning (study from home) opportunities are available in some cases. For students who are unable to meet the requirements of full-time study, there might be a part-time route available. Courses are usually three years in length, but sometimes four, depending on the type of qualification and whether there's a placement year.

Teaching is usually delivered through lectures and seminars, but the real learning takes place through the process of independent learning, or self-study. Some courses might involve field trips, or a placement year in industry; these could take place locally, nationally, or even overseas!

In the UK, there are around 400 HE providers and around 50,000 courses to choose from. HE qualifications include:

- foundation degrees
- bachelor's degrees
- higher national certificates (HNCs)
- higher national diplomas (HNDs)
- higher apprenticeships
- degree apprenticeships
- national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 4 and above

With an emphasis on independent learning, being a student in HE is very different from being a pupil in school. HE students are required to manage their time and workload themselves. By the end of their course, students will have developed these skills to a high level and this is one of the reasons why employers value HE graduates.

Higher and degree apprenticeships

Higher and degree apprenticeships are a relatively new initiative. They are for people who wish to study for an HE qualification while learning 'on the job'.

Apprentices receive the same benefits as an employee, including receiving a salary, holiday pay, a pension, and they have a high chance of being taken on full-time once they've finished their studies.

Oh, and did we mention that the employers pay the tuition fees?

The amount of apprenticeship programmes available is currently low compared to traditional courses (making them competitive to get onto), but the number is increasing all the time.

To see what apprenticeships are available in your area, visit **gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship**

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION?

There are numerous benefits to having an HE qualification. As well as increased earning potential, graduates have an advantage in the job market. Studies have also shown that they experience better health throughout their adult life with increased resilience.

DID YOU KNOW...?
On average, graduates earn £10,000 per year more than non-graduates.
Universities UK, 2018

Transferable skills

The skills that students develop from being in HE are skills that suit a range of jobs. Because of this, graduates have more career options available to them; they don't necessarily have to work in the same field that their qualification is in – in fact many don't.

The transferable skills that HE students develop include:

- time and project management
- communication
- independent and teamwork skills
- organisation and planning
- problem solving
- leadership
- research skills
- IT skills

When you combine these skills, it becomes clear why employers value graduates over non-graduates, and why they are able to climb the career ladder faster.

Health, wellbeing and resilience

A lesser-known benefit that graduates enjoy is increased happiness and well-being. Research highlights that graduates tend to be happier and more satisfied with their lives than non-graduates. The same research shows that graduates are typically more resilient and cope better with life's challenges.

DID YOU KNOW...?
It's been estimated that by 2024, half of all jobs will require a higher education qualification of some kind.
Universities UK, 2016

Social benefits

Where we go in life is largely influenced by what and with whom we surround ourselves.

As well as being a fantastic experience, spending three or four years in HE surrounded by people who want to better themselves has long-lasting social benefits for the individual.

Throughout their time in HE, students get to work and socialise with people from a diverse range of backgrounds. As a result, graduates leave higher education with a strong network of friends, mentors and industry contacts.

THE BENEFITS THAT GRADUATES ENJOY INCLUDE:

- higher earning potential
- more career options
- a competitive edge in the job market
- transferable skills
- increased happiness and wellbeing
- increased resilience

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

In an ideal world, the earlier a person starts thinking about their future the better, but we know that this is easier said than done.

The more a parent or carer knows about higher education, the more support they'll be able to offer. The following pages of this guide will get you up to speed with the information you need to know, from choosing GCSEs right through to the application process.

In addition, a simple, yet effective exercise you can do with your child is to research as many different careers as possible. Try having them think about the different factors, such as:

- the required skills
- the working environment
- the working hours
- a typical working day
- qualifications required
- career progression

They don't have to decide on a particular career at this stage, but by developing their knowledge of what's out there, and where their interests could lead, they will start to see the bigger picture of how their education becomes a platform on which they can build. They will be able to start identifying their own skills and strengths, and the subjects and environments that they enjoy most (indoors, outdoors, in laboratories etc.).

When seeing the relevance of what they are doing in school, the whole process becomes a lot more meaningful. They'll also be much better prepared when it comes to choosing GCSEs and post-16/18 options!

↗ You can research over 800 jobs at **nextstepssw.ac.uk/plan-your-future/find-your-career**

THE JOURNEY TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The earlier your child starts thinking about their post-16 and post-18 options the better, but your support will be beneficial wherever they are on their journey.

1. Year 8/9 – Discuss

- Your child will be choosing their GCSEs. Do some research with your child prior to this. If they're thinking about HE, certain courses will require specific qualifications. Some investigation will ensure they think carefully about this decision and future implications.

2. Year 10/11 – Plan

- A chance for year 10 pupils to plan ahead.
- For year 11 pupils, time to decide on a post-16 pathway (A-levels, BTECS, apprenticeships, diplomas etc.). If considering HE, what course is your child interested in studying, and what are the entry requirements? Will they stay on at sixth form, or go to college?
- GCSE exam time!

3. Year 12 – Refine

- Post-16 study or training begins.
- For those interested in HE, start researching courses and universities (or colleges). This is also a good time to start planning open day visits and trips to UCAS fairs.
- Begin thinking about the UCAS application process. Could your child engage in any extra-curricular activities or work experience? How about summer schools or residential trips? These would really enhance the personal statement.

4. Year 13 – Apply

- Time to apply to HE through UCAS, or through an employer for a higher or degree apprenticeship. ↗ **ucas.com/undergraduate**
- Apply for student finance: ↗ **gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance**
- Complete A-levels, BTECs, or other qualifications.

FUNDING HIGHER EDUCATION AND PAYING IT BACK

One of the popular misconceptions surrounding HE is that it's for the wealthy few. This is certainly not the case as HE is an option for anyone with capability and motivation. The majority of students in England fund their studies using the student loans system.

Tuition fee loans and maintenance loans

To cover the costs of HE in England, there are two types of student loan available: a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan.

Tuition fee loans are there to cover the cost of the course, while maintenance loans are available to help with the everyday costs of living, for example: accommodation, food, utility bills and socialising etc.

Applying for student finance can be done online at **gov.uk/student-finance**

How much can students borrow?

Tuition fees

Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can apply for a tuition fee loan to cover the cost of their course. The amount being charged for the course is the amount an applicant would apply for. Payments for tuition fees are made directly to the HEI, not the applicant.

Maintenance loan*

For maintenance loans, the amount students can borrow depends on their family's household income and whether they'll be studying inside or outside of London.

If they'll be living away from home (and outside of London), a maintenance loan of up to £9,706 per year is available for households earning £25,000 per year or less.

If they're going to university in London, the maximum loan amount available is £12,667. This is to account for the higher cost of living in the capital.

If they plan to live at home it is up to £8,171.

If the household income is more than £25,000, the amount they will be eligible for will be lower. Due to the higher household income, it is expected that parents or carers will help. Another option that many students choose is to work part-time.

** Figures may be subject to change.*

For a general guide to household income and how it works, visit **nidirect.gov.uk/articles/income-assessment-full-time-students**

For more detailed information on Student Finance, visit **nextstepssw.ac.uk/a-guide-to-student-finance**

Who can apply?

Generally speaking, if the applicant is a UK national, or has 'settled status' in the UK, they can apply for a tuition fee loan and/or a maintenance loan.

Apply for a loan

For most courses, applications should be made by the end of May in the year that the course will begin; however, it is possible to apply for a loan up to nine months after the course start date.

How and when does it get paid back?

When it comes to repaying these loans, both are added together – that's if the student has borrowed both. Repayments start in the April after they have finished their studies and are earning over a certain amount. The threshold currently stands at £27,295.

Repayments are not linked to how much a student borrowed; they are based on how much they earn. This figure is calculated by HMRC and automatically deducted from a person's pay packet.

After 30 years, whatever amount is outstanding is written off.

FAQs

Q What if they earn under the threshold?

Then they won't repay anything until they're earning above it.

Q What if they never earn over the threshold?

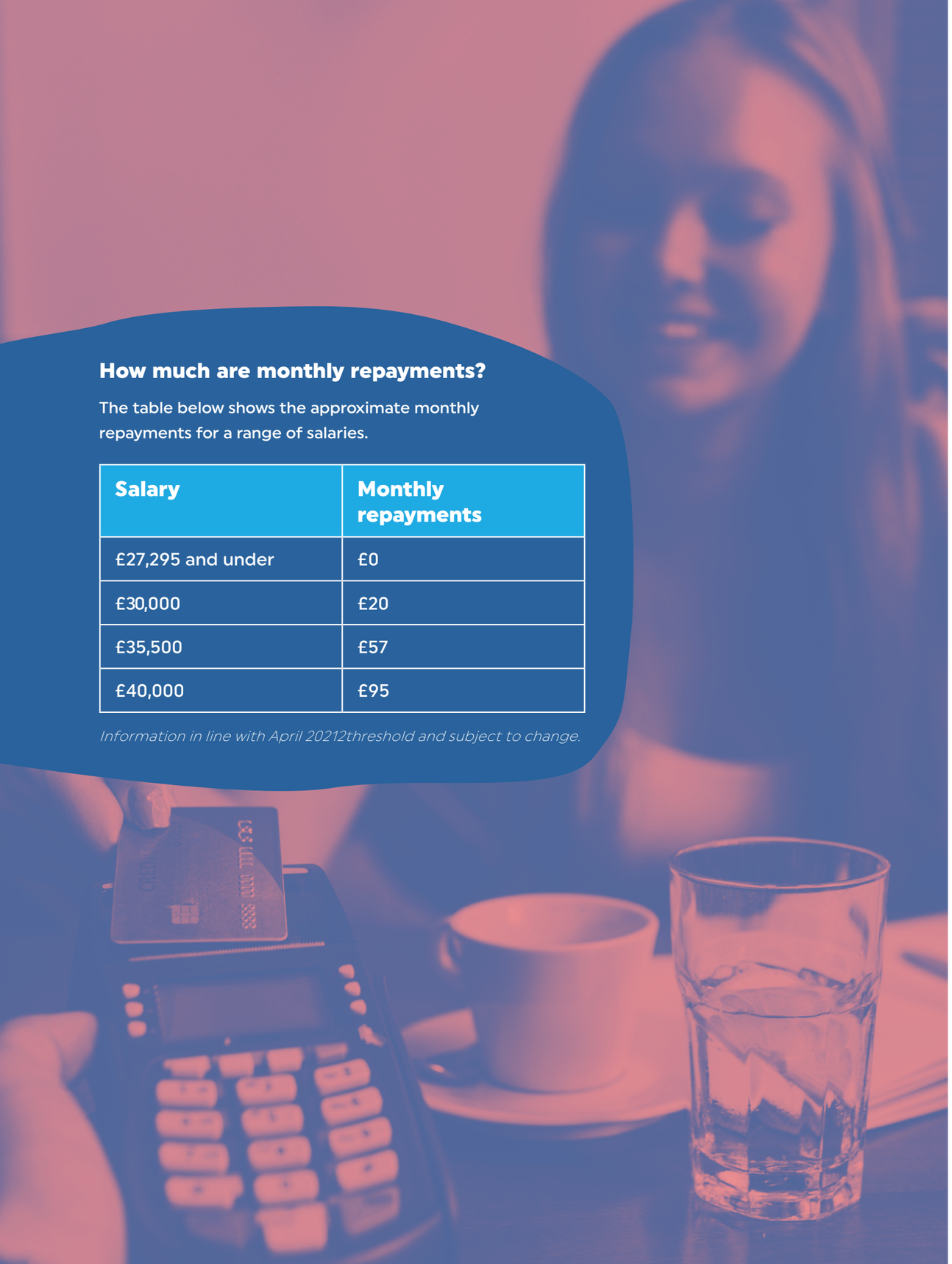
If they never earn above the threshold, they'll never make a repayment!

Q What if their wages rise above the threshold?

Should a person's income rise above the threshold, their repayments will be 9% of whatever they earn above it (not 9% of all of it).

Q What if they lose their job, or their wages drop below the threshold?

If for any reason their income drops below the threshold (for instance, a change of job or a reduction in hours occurs), the repayments stop until their income rises to above the threshold again.



How much are monthly repayments?

The table below shows the approximate monthly repayments for a range of salaries.

Salary	Monthly repayments
£27,295 and under	£0
£30,000	£20
£35,500	£57
£40,000	£95

Information in line with April 20212threshold and subject to change.

YOUR CHILD'S OPTIONS – THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

The choices that young people make at school can have a huge impact on the options available to them in future years. By supporting your child in making these choices, you will ensure they don't hinder their chances later on in life.

Choosing GCSEs

A pupil in year 8 or 9 might not have considered HE, or a particular career yet, but this doesn't mean they won't consider it later on.

Perhaps most importantly, it's wise to choose subjects that they enjoy as they'll be studying them for the next two or three years. It's also worth keeping the future in mind as some A-level subjects require certain GCSEs – just like some university courses require certain A-levels.

Choosing level 3 options (e.g. A-levels)

If your child has already decided that they want to go on to HE, they should base their level 3 choices on the requirements of their chosen course.

If they are unsure at this point, but wish to keep their options open, then they should consider choosing facilitating subjects. These subjects have been identified as ones that are commonly asked for by universities for a whole range of courses. They include:

- English Literature
- History
- Modern languages (e.g. French, German, Spanish etc.)
- Classical languages (e.g. Latin, Ancient Greek)
- Maths and further maths
- Physics
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Geography

Choosing at least two of these subjects will ensure that many university-level options will remain open to them.

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

As well as A-levels, the International Baccalaureate (IB) and BTEC qualifications are recognised by universities and allow for progression onto HE courses, as do many apprenticeships.

NVQs (at level 3) are sometimes promoted as being equivalent to two A-levels; however, the majority of HEIs won't accept these for entry onto degree courses on their own. In some cases, they will be accepted if accompanied with A-levels, but it would be wise to check with the HEI in advance if your child has a particular course in mind.

Sixth form or college?

Depending on your child's choices for post-GCSE study, they may be considering staying at their school's sixth form, or moving to a further education (FE) college to continue their studies. So, what are the differences between the two?

The table below provides a side-by-side comparison of the main differences.

School sixth form	VS	FE college
Students usually required to wear uniform		Students not usually required to wear a uniform
Similar surroundings and familiar faces		New places, new faces
Days structured around a timetable, similar to a day in school		Students treated as young adults and given more responsibility for themselves and their studies
Surrounded by students aged 13 - 18		Surrounded by students aged 16+

What works for one person, doesn't necessarily work for another. Some young people may prefer the structured approach and the familiarity of their school's sixth form, whereas others may relish the opportunity to try something new.

CHOOSING A COURSE, AND UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

The success that a student has in HE, and how much they enjoy the overall experience, is largely influenced by what and where they study.

What to look for in a course

Ultimately, those thinking about what to study should consider the subjects they enjoy and where certain courses could lead.

Here are some of the common questions and answers relating to HE courses:

Q Are all courses structured and delivered in the same way?

Courses can vary in terms of what content is covered and the way it's delivered. Much of the content will be delivered through lectures, seminars and workshops, but many 'hands on' courses will have varying amounts of fieldwork or lab work.

Q What if my child wants to study more than one subject?

Some institutions allow students to study two subjects at degree level. These courses are known as joint (or combined honours) degrees. In these cases, the two subjects will be ones that complement each other, such as Business with Spanish, or Psychology with Criminology.

Q Are all courses assessed in the same way?

Most courses will adopt a range of assessment techniques, including exams, assignments, presentations and reports. Students might also be assessed on practical work conducted in laboratories or in the field. If this information isn't stated on an HEI's website, email or call them to find out.

Q My child wants to study in higher education, but can't decide on a course. What should they do?

Some courses are more vocational than others, such as, nursing, dentistry, architecture, and engineering. These courses are designed to prepare students for specific careers as opposed to courses with a more academic focus.

Vocational routes are a good option for those who know what career they want to enter into, as they are designed to prepare students for specific careers. However, for those who want to keep their options open, they could consider a more general course – for example, mathematics, sociology, psychology, geography etc.

Q How can I find out what a university or college is really like?

The best way to find out what an HEI is really like is to hear from past or current students. Websites such as **thestudentroom.co.uk** and **thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk** provide a great platform for this. You'll also get the chance to speak to current students if you attend open days.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS A COURSE IN MIND, ASK THEM:

Why would you enjoy a particular course?

What previous experience of this subject do you have?

What would you do with a qualification in this subject?

Where to study

Some students decide to study locally as they are able to save money on accommodation and other living costs by staying at home. However, many students use HE as a chance to leave home for the first time and experience living in a different environment from what they're used to.

For many students, living in halls of residence or shared accommodation is a major part of the student experience as it provides the opportunity to meet new people and develop independence.

For holiday periods, and a variety of other reasons, many students will return home, so they should consider the distance that they will need to travel and what the transport links are like between their hometown and place of study.

Open days

Before making any decision on where to study, attending an open day is a great way to get a feel for a place and to find out more about the course and facilities. They also provide the opportunity to tour the campus and speak to current students and staff.

It's normal for parents or carers to attend open days with their children – in fact it's encouraged. By doing so, you'll be well placed to support your child in making the decision of where to study. It can also put your mind at rest, as once they move away, you'll be able to visualise their new surroundings.

Top tip:

Attending more than one open day will allow your child to make comparisons and be sure that they are making the right decision about the course and institution.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Students often move into halls of residence for their first year, then move into shared accommodation with friends that they have made.

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT AN OPEN DAY

- Is the campus all in one place or spread across multiple sites?
- Is the campus close to local amenities such as supermarkets and shopping centres?
- What kind of accommodation is available? Often, official accommodation providers will have stalls at open or applicant days.
- What facilities do they offer students? (on-site GPs, bars and cafés, recreational sports clubs and gyms, libraries?)
- Where is the Student Union, and what clubs and societies do they run?
- What support is available to students?

Thinking of studying in the South West? For a regularly updated list of open days, visit **nextstepssw.ac.uk/events-and-activities**

UCAS AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS

UCAS is the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. Almost everyone who applies for an undergraduate degree in the UK will apply through this service.

Once an application has been submitted, its progress can be monitored through the online service, UCAS Track. For other types of HE qualifications, such as HNDs, HNCs and full-time foundation degrees, applications are usually made directly to the institution, and not through UCAS. Familiarise yourself with the UCAS timeline below.

KEY DATES

September
Applications can now be submitted to UCAS

October
Application deadline for Oxford and Cambridge, and for courses in medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine

January (usually 15th)
Application deadline for most other undergraduate courses

February
UCAS Extra opens

beginning of May
Deadline to reply to offers received by 31 March

beginning of June
Deadline to reply to offers received in May

mid June
Deadline to reply to offers received by 06 June

end of June
Applications received after this date are entered into Clearing

July
Last chance to apply through UCAS Extra. Clearing opens

mid July
Deadline to reply to offers received in July

mid August
A-level results day

end of August
Deadline day to meet remaining offer conditions. UCAS Adjustment ends

September
Deadline for apps for that year

mid October
Deadline for universities and colleges to accept applicants in Clearing

** Information correct at time of print.*

Personal statements

The personal statement gives applicants the chance to sell themselves and demonstrate why they have what it takes to be successful in their studies.

Contrary to what you might hear, the personal statement is a critical part of the application process. In fact, with the more popular courses, such as psychology, it can make or break an application.

When writing a strong personal statement, it helps if the applicant has engaged in extra-curricular activities during their time in school or further education. These could include:

- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Ten Tors
- volunteering
- sports or music clubs
- part-time jobs
- summer schools or residential trips

Admissions tutors love to see these types of activities, as they show commitment, teamwork, time management skills and much more!

Results day

A-level results day will be one of the biggest occasions in a student's life so far. It can be a stressful day for both pupils and parents, especially if the results are not what were expected.

Familiarising yourself with the possible outcomes below will help ensure your day is memorable for the right reasons.

Clearing and adjustment

When a student doesn't achieve high enough grades to get onto their firm or insurance offers, UCAS Track will show their status as being in Clearing, along with their Clearing number.

Clearing gives applicants a chance to apply for a different course at the same, or different, institution. It's also a chance for universities and colleges to fill empty spaces.

Remember, thousands of students get into university or college each year through Clearing. Many report that although they were initially upset about not making their first choice, going through Clearing worked out best for them in the end.

Adjustment is for applicants who have surprised themselves by exceeding their results. It allows them to apply for a course that has higher entry requirements, if they so wish.

> 'Over 60,000 students secured a university or college place through Clearing in 2017' – **UCAS**

For those that have been accepted to university or college, but have decided to take a gap year, **deferred entry** might be an option. This is when a place on a course is held for a person to start the following year.

THERE ARE A FEW POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FOR THE STUDENT ON RESULTS DAY:

- **They receive the grades required for their firm (first) choice.**
  Well done! Check with UCAS Track (online) to ensure the system has updated (this might take a day or two), then start planning for the exciting times ahead!

- **They receive the grades required for their insurance (second) choice, but not their firm choice.**
  This is still a reason to be cheerful! Although not their first choice, they will be going to university or college. Check that UCAS Track has updated, and then start planning.

  If the applicant only just missed out on the grades required for their first choice, it might be worth contacting the HEI, as sometimes (but not always) they will make an exception.

- **They receive higher grades than expected.**
  In this case, applicants will have secured their firm choice, but have the option to make an **Adjustment** (see page 17) and apply for a course that has higher entry requirements. This could be at the same, or a different HEI.

- **They don't receive the grade required for their firm, or insurance choice.**
  Don't panic! All is not lost.

  Check in with UCAS Track, or contact the first and second choice HEI, as there's still a chance of being accepted. If not, the applicant will be automatically entered into **Clearing** (see page 17).

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

There are various support services on offer to students in HE. Knowing your child has access to a community of trained professionals can put your mind at ease.

Academic support

Usually, students in HE are allocated a tutor. Tutors are often members of teaching staff who are there to provide academic guidance and support. Meetings with a tutor are scheduled throughout the year, but students have the option to book a meeting with a tutor at their own request.

Students' Union

The Students' Union is an organisation in HEIs that is made up of current students. Student unions are on hand to offer advice and signpost to relevant services. In many cases, they should be the first port of call for students with any issues, queries or ideas.

As well as offering advice and signposting support, student unions are responsible for creating social events, clubs and societies.

Library services

Despite a move towards more digital content, such as online journals and books, libraries still play a key role in HEIs. Libraries provide a quiet place to study, a place to copy and scan documents, and staff who can support learners to improve their independent learning and research skills.

Employability and careers services

Employability and careers services are becoming increasingly popular in HE. They can offer a range of support, from CV writing and interview techniques, to highlighting activities and placements that will give your child an advantage in the job market.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

HEIs have a range of support for students who have a disability, learning difficulty, mental health condition, or other long-term condition.

In many cases, students can apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to cover some of the extra costs they might have because of their condition.

More information can be found at **gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas**

In addition to DSAs, students with particular conditions might be eligible for other forms of support, such as car parking, or special exam provisions.

To find out more about support at a specific HEI, we recommend contacting them directly.

Financial support

For students who are struggling financially, many HEIs have hardship funds available. In the case of a successful application, students could receive a loan or a grant. Bursaries are also available for students who may face more barriers to attending full-time education, enabling them to access university.

Counselling

HE is a fantastic experience, but there are times when we could all use a little support. Should your child find themselves struggling for any reason, most institutions offer a counselling service, or will be able to signpost towards external services.

GLOSSARY

Adjustment
A period of time, and a process where applicants to higher education have the chance to change to a different course as a result of achieving higher A-level grades than expected.

Apprenticeship (inc. higher and degree apprenticeships)
A way of learning on the job while working toward a qualification. Apprentices on higher apprenticeships receive a higher education qualification (HNC, HND etc.) at the end of their training, while degree apprentices work towards a full degree.

Bachelor of Arts (BA)
A bachelor's degree with a focus on the liberal arts, social sciences or humanities.

Bachelor of Engineering (BEng)
A bachelor's degree with a focus on engineering.

Bachelor of Science (BSc)
A bachelor's degree with a focus on the sciences.

Bachelor's degree
An undergraduate degree that usually takes three years of full-time study to complete.

Campus
The grounds and buildings of a university or college.

Clearing
A second-chance process for higher education applicants who did not receive offers, declined their offers, or did not meet entry requirements.

Combined/Joint honours degree
A degree programme usually made up of two or three main areas of study.

Foundation degree
Combines academic and vocational skills in a higher education course. Equivalent to two years of a bachelor's degree.

Foundation year
An additional year of study at the start of a university course that prepares students to go on to an undergraduate degree programme.

Graduate (noun)
A person who has successfully completed an undergraduate course.

Halls of residence
Accommodation for students, usually on campus or nearby. First year students are often given preference for a place in a hall of residence (halls).

HE
Higher Education.

HEI
A higher education institution such as a university or college.

Higher national certificate (HNC)
A higher education qualification similar to a foundation degree. Subjects are vocational and include engineering, business, and horticulture. HNCs generally take one year to compete, full-time, and are equivalent to one year of a bachelor's degree.

Higher national diploma (HND)
A higher education qualification similar to a foundation degree. Subjects are vocational and include engineering, business and horticulture. HNDs generally take two years to compete full-time and are equivalent to two years of a bachelor's degree.

Independent study/learning
Time spent learning alone or in a group that is not led by a member of teaching staff.

Joint/Combined honours degree
A degree programme usually made up of two or three main areas of study.

Maintenance loans
A loan for students to help them pay for their living costs while studying. Maintenance loans may or may not be means tested (based on household income).

Placement
A period of paid or unpaid work experience with an organisation that is related to a course of study.

Postgraduate
Higher Education study for those who have already completed an undergraduate course.

Single honours degree
A degree programme based on one main subject of study, e.g. BSc Physics.

Tuition fees
Tuition fees are set by higher education providers. Currently, the maximum they can charge per year is £9,250.

Tariff (points)
A scoring system used by UCAS to measure students' post-16 academic achievements. They also show if a person qualifies for specific higher education courses.

Transferable skills
The skills, experience, and attributes a person has developed that are applicable to a range of jobs; for example, teamworking, communication and organisation.

UCAS
The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service: the central organisation that processes applications for entry onto higher education courses.

UCAS Extra
An online service for those who have used their five choices on their original UCAS application, but are not holding any offers or waiting on a decision. UCAS Extra allows applicants to continue applying for other courses.

UCAS Track
An online system that allows applicants to check the status of their UCAS application.

Undergraduate
A student who is studying for a bachelor's degree.

Vocational courses
A course designed to train you for a specific job or career.

GET IN TOUCH

Higher Education is an adventure! Where will you go?

We hope you've found this guide useful. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact our friendly team.

nextstepssw.ac.uk

nextstepssw@plymouth.ac.uk

01752 587505

Join the conversation

@NextStepsSW #Uniconnect

Our partners

University of Exeter

University of Plymouth

PETROC™

STRODE College

exeter college

city college plymouth

Plymouth College of Art

Falmouth University

Plymouth Marjon University

University Centre Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

Cornwall College

UCSD University Centre South Devon

Truro College

Penwith College

Yeovil College University Centre

OfS Uni Connect Programme

Next Steps South West

2018CAMS162