



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

PARENT AND GUARDIANS' GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY



WELCOME

Is your son or daughter thinking about going to university? We understand that there can be lots of information and things to think about at this time, so our guide explains it all, from selecting the right course and institution through to application timelines, advice, plus an in-depth look at student finance.

Whether it's been a while since your own university days, or you don't have direct experience of going to university yourself, we know things change so we want to help you through this important and exciting time for your son or daughter - and for you!

To find out more about what Birmingham City University has to offer, go to our dedicated parent and guardian pages on our website:
www.bcu.ac.uk/parents-and-guardians



WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION?

Higher education (HE) is the phrase used to describe study following on from A Level, BTEC or an equivalent qualification.



While typically referring to universities, the term 'higher education' can also include a range of qualifications offered through college and apprenticeship providers.

With many qualification types and levels to choose from, there are hundreds of different pathways that your child can choose from in order to progress into a successful career.

EXAMPLES OF COMMON QUALIFICATIONS

Higher education - postgraduate

- Master's degree (MA, MSc etc)
- Doctorate study
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

Higher education - undergraduate

- Bachelor's degree (BA, BSc, BEng etc.)
- Top-up degree
- Degree Apprenticeship
- Foundation degree
- Higher National Diploma (HND),
- Higher National Certificate (HNC)
- Higher Apprenticeship

Further education

- A Levels
- Access to Higher Education Diploma
- BTEC Level 3
- BTEC National
- Advanced Apprenticeship

School level

- GCSEs
- BTEC Level 2
- BTEC Level 1
- Apprenticeship
- Traineeship



Find out more

For more details on levels of study and the options available for your child, take a look at the info on the UCAS website: www.ucas.com



WHY UNIVERSITY?

For some professions (teaching, nursing, law, and so on) it is a minimum requirement to have a degree-level qualification in that area, while an increasing number of others require a degree, but do not specify in which subject.

With today's career landscape changing rapidly, highly skilled graduates are increasingly sought after across every employment sector. This means that whatever career your son or daughter is interested in, degree level study could help them to build skills, experience and employability that will be highly valued by their future employers.



Isn't it better to just get a job?

In today's competitive jobs market, increasing numbers of employers expect candidates to have both a degree **AND** substantial experience of the workplace; however, it is possible to have both!

Our practice-based approach combines academic study with opportunities to gain workplace experience, ensuring that our graduates are prepared for the world of work.

Our students have enjoyed placements with companies like the BBC, Cisco, IBM, NHS, Microsoft, Dolby, Selfridges, ASOS and more.



What else can university offer?

As well as receiving a degree and becoming more employable, going to uni makes your child become much more independent. For many students, university is a key time to figure out some important life skills such as how to cook, clean and manage their money!



Foundation years

Foundation years are perfect for those who don't meet the entry requirements for a degree course, as they enable students to develop their learning to an appropriate standard in preparation for the first year of the degree. Most of our undergraduate courses now have a foundation pathway.



Why study on a Degree Apprenticeship?

Essentially, you get the best of both worlds – all the academic challenge of a highly regarded degree, alongside a full-time wage and your first step on the career ladder with a prestigious employer.



WHEN TO START THINKING ABOUT UNIVERSITY

Going to university isn't a last minute decision, and some students even start thinking about whether they want to go into higher education as early as Year 8.

Here's some guidance on what your child can be doing and when, to help with that all important decision making.

YEAR 8/9

Which optional subjects to study at GCSE (or equivalent).

This decision can impact on options for post-16 study. However at this point, it is unlikely that your son or daughter will have clearly defined ideas about their future career path, so it is advisable that choices are not too restrictive at this early stage.

How can you help?

Maybe encourage them to try a new subject that they are interested in or to start up some extra-curricular hobbies to broaden their experiences.

Where to apply for work experience.

This is a valuable opportunity, enabling your son or daughter to gain first-hand experience of a career sector they are interested in. If embraced fully, it can be a useful tool to find out about the skills, experience and practicalities needed for the job, even if they later decide it's not right for them.

How can you help?

Get involved with the process early on, encouraging them to be ambitious with their applications and not to settle for the easiest option.

YEAR 11

Whether/what to study at college or sixth form.

What your son or daughter chooses to do now will have a direct impact on their future career prospects. While there are many routes into different careers, it is important to make an informed decision as choosing the wrong subjects or qualifications can mean lots of extra work later on.

How can you help?

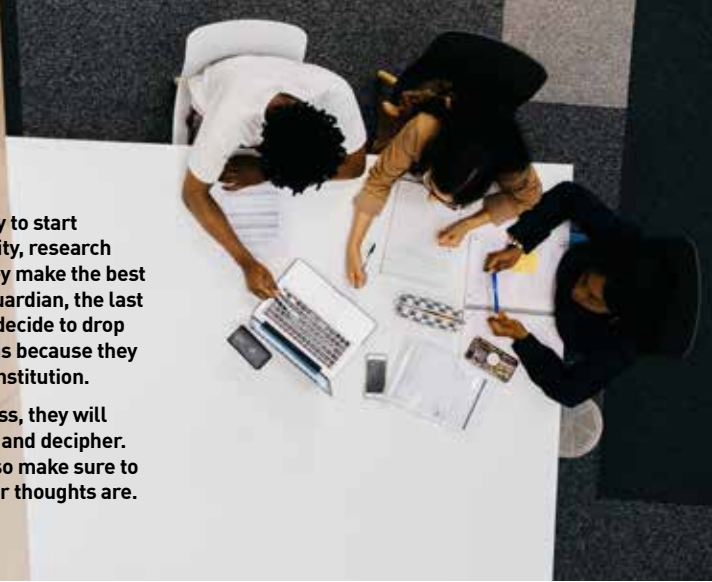
Encourage your child to speak with school careers staff and to find out what qualifications are required to study at university.



SUPPORTING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Once your son or daughter is ready to start thinking about applying to university, research will be key to making sure that they make the best choices. After all, as a parent or guardian, the last thing you want is for your child to decide to drop out of university after a few months because they are unhappy with their course or institution.

During the decision-making process, they will have a lot of information to take in and decipher. Talking it through can often help, so make sure to check in regularly to see what their thoughts are.



Your child may have come to the stage when they know they want to go to university, but here's a few questions to ask to help them decide on the right course for them, and the right institution for

them. For more help and advice, and to find out more what BCU offers, go to www.bcu.ac.uk/parents-and-guardians

Choosing a course	Choosing a university
Do they have a specific career in mind? Does this require certain qualifications?	Do they want to stay at home or move away?
If not, what subjects do they currently enjoy studying? Could this link to a possible career?	Do they want to study at a small or large institution?
Do they want to stick with a subject they have studied previously or try something new?	How much does it cost to live in the university's accommodation?
Would they prefer a joint honours degree (studying two subjects, rather than one)?	How much does it cost to travel to the university?
Would they want to study a sandwich course (which includes a one-year placement in industry)?	Does the university offer scholarships or bursaries?
Is it important to them that the course offers the chance to travel or study abroad?	What are the course facilities like?
Are they interested in a practical, hands-on course, or one more like A Levels?	Does the university cater for their hobbies and interests?

Check out our reasons to choose BCU
www.bcu.ac.uk/parents-and-guardians/how-to-apply/why-bcu

UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

Open Days are the best way to explore what's on offer at a university. They also provide the perfect opportunity to chat to staff and students, and check out university facilities.

OPEN DAYS

Your son or daughter will receive lots of information relating to higher education during their time at sixth form or college. Each university will also hold Open Days throughout the academic year, which will allow your child to find out more information about the courses on offer.



At a BCU Open Day you can expect to meet current students and teaching staff as well as being able to tour our state-of-the-art facilities and accommodation. There will also be talks offered on finance, student life and our courses.

For further information about Open Days at Birmingham City University, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/open-days.



WHY GO TO OPEN DAYS WITH YOUR CHILD

With lots of Open Days coming up, you might be wondering whether it's worth going along with your children – isn't the day just meant for them? Well, yes and no! Although Open Days are designed for students to work out which university and course is right for them, you'll feel at ease having your questions answered and having a better idea where your kids will be spending the next few years.

1. Course, staff and facilities

At an Open Day, you can ask your kids' potential future tutors questions about the course so you can understand what they'll be up to. On top of that, you can have a nose around facilities and buildings to make sure they're top notch. Did you know BCU has spent £340 million revamping our campuses?

2. Accommodation

If your child is leaving home for the first time and moving into university accommodation, it's good for you to have a look around on a guided tour during an Open Day. It can put your mind at ease to know they'll have access to a clean kitchen and spacious room.

3. Explore the area

Your kids may well be going to a uni away from home, in an area you and they don't know very well. Open Days are an ideal opportunity to take a look around the local area to make sure it's safe and somewhere your children would like to live and study in for the next few years.

4. Transport links

Connected to the exploration of the local area, it's a good idea to take a look round after the Open Day to make sure the uni is easily accessible so that a) you don't have to come and pick your kids up all the time and b) it's easier for them to come home to visit for some pampering! For example, BCU's City Centre Campus is less than 10 minutes' walk from all the city's main transport links.

5. Practical questions

At our Open Days, we have plenty of talks and people for you to talk to about the practical things: finances, term dates, deadlines, and so on. If anything's confusing you or you want some questions answered, the Open Day is the perfect day to get this all straightened out with our friendly and helpful staff.



Why not watch our guide on "What do you do at an Open Day"
youtu.be/QU7l03NMM88



PARENT PROBLEMS

So, your son or daughter has decided to move 300 miles from home? Or have they decided to go to the same uni as their best friend to do TikTok Studies?! Try not to panic during the decision-making process as a lot is still up in the air at this stage. Here are our tips for dealing with the unexpected!

STAY CALM

It will not help your cause to fly off the handle. So, take a few deep breaths before entering into a considered conversation about their choices.

BE OPEN MINDED

So, they may not be choosing the route that you had originally envisaged for them, however that isn't necessarily a bad thing! Embrace their choices and get involved in the process – you may find that they have given it more thought than expected.

TEST THEIR REASONING

Find out whether they have actually thought their idea through fully. Help them to explore the practicalities of living far from home or question what skills they can gain from their chosen course. They may soon change their mind once the reality becomes clear.

DON'T DRAW ON JUST YOUR EXPERIENCE

Avoid basing advice purely on your own experiences or assumptions of university life. Things move very quickly in the education sector, with courses, facilities and universities changing all the time.

DON'T ASSUME CERTAIN COURSES GUARANTEE BETTER CAREER PROSPECTS

Search for the latest statistics on graduate employment to find out what your son or daughter can expect to earn after graduation.

THE UCAS APPLICATION PROCESS

Nearly all applications to UK universities are made online through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) via www.ucas.com/apply.

There are eight sections to complete, including a personal statement, which is the opportunity for your son or daughter to tell universities and colleges about their suitability for the course(s) that they hope to study. They will need to demonstrate their enthusiasm, passion and commitment for the subject and, above all else, ensure that they stand out from the crowd.

8 SECTIONS OF A UCAS APPLICATION

- 1 Search for courses
- 2 Save courses to favourites
- 3 Complete your profile
- 4 Make an application
- 5 Order courses by preference
- 6 Submit application
- 7 Select firm and insurance choices
- 8 Receive offers and make choices!

Personal statement tips

Writing a personal statement is one of the most important parts of a university application - and can be one of the hardest. Download our free personal statement guide

www.bcu.ac.uk/personal-statement-guide



APPLICATION TIMELINE

Date	Process
Year 12 - Summer term	Students should be doing research and attending university Open Days to try and decide which course is right for them. Now is also a good time to secure additional work experience to include in their personal statement.
Start of September	The UCAS 'Apply' system opens to new applications. Students should be working on drafting (and re-drafting) their personal statements ready for submission.
15 October	Deadline for applications to Oxford or Cambridge, plus medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and veterinary medicine at all UK universities.
November / December	Sixth forms or colleges may set an internal application deadline which must be met. This will allow staff time to check, process and attach a reference to the application before the UCAS deadline.
15 January	Deadline for applications for most undergraduate courses (except specific art and design courses, where the deadline is 24 March – check the UCAS search tool)
January - April	<p>Some universities may invite applicants to attend an interview/audition, or ask to see a portfolio of work before making offers on courses. The interview process will vary depending on the course and university.</p> <p>Your son or daughter will be able to monitor their application through UCAS Track and will be notified when they receive offers from universities.</p>
February 25	UCAS Extra opens. If your child has used all five choices, but they're not holding any offers, then they will be able to add another course choice (on courses that still have places available).
May/June	<p>Once your son or daughter has received all of their offers they, will have to reply and decide their firm and insurance choice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm acceptance is your child's first choice. If it's an unconditional offer, they have a confirmed place. • Insurance acceptance is your child's second choice, if their first choice offer is conditional. It might be a good idea for them to pick the course that has lower offer conditions. • Decline: Your child will need to decline the other courses they've applied to once they've made their firm and insurance decision.
July / August	BTEC Level 3 results are released and places begin to be confirmed.
Mid-August	A Level results are released and remaining places are confirmed by universities.
Clearing	If your child failed to get in to their firm or insurance choice they can go through Clearing. Universities will release any remaining places through Clearing and these will appear on the UCAS website during August.
Late September	Your child will start their first week at university – with a range of welcoming induction activities and enrolment onto their course.



OFFER TYPES

CONDITIONAL

The place is subject to your son or daughter meeting the entry requirements — usually exam results.

WITHDRAWN

A course choice has been withdrawn by either your son or daughter or the university/college.

UNSUCCESSFUL

The university has decided not to offer your son or daughter a place on the course.

UNCONDITIONAL

Your son or daughter has a place, and they have already met the conditions.



Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Please note that applications to some of our music and acting courses taught at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, our £57 million teaching and performance facility, are made through a different process (UCAS Conservatoires).

www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire



To find out further information on the UCAS application cycle, visit www.ucas.com/apply.

FEES AND FINANCE

Thanks to loans, financial support and low repayments, funding a degree isn't as difficult as you might think! Here's an overview of all the help out there.

Studying at university is a significant investment and as a result can initially seem expensive. However, it is important to read past the headlines to find out how the system would work on a practical level for your son or daughter.

Graduates earn an average of £10,000 more per year, or £400,000 over a 40-year working life, than someone without a degree (Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2018, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills).

There is a range of student finance packages available, plus grants, bursaries and scholarships to help make university a much more achievable goal.

LOANS

Tuition Fee Loan

Universities can charge up to £9,250 a year for tuition fees to full-time UK and EU students. However it is important to consider that this money is not paid up front by the student; it is paid directly to the university by the Student Loans Company, with repayments only beginning once the graduate is in work and earning above a set amount.



Maintenance Loan

Maintenance loans are paid to help with living costs, such as accommodation, food and travel. A portion of this loan is available to all students and the amount your son or daughter is entitled to depends on where they decide to study (with a higher loan available for students in London) and if they live at home.

The remaining portion of the loan is means-tested, which is when Student Finance England will require documentation to confirm the student's household income to determine how much more they're entitled to receive.



Why not watch our money saving tips video
www.bcu.ac.uk/money-saving-tips



OTHER SUPPORT

Extra support for students with a disability and for those with children and dependants may also be available. These include Parents' Learning Allowance, Childcare Grant, Adult Dependants' Grant, and Disabled Students' Allowances.

For up-to-date information on how much your son or daughter is entitled to, visit www.gov.uk/student-finance.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

Some universities offer their own scholarships and bursaries and it's important for your son or daughter to check what extra financial support is available. We offer both academic and means-tested scholarships.

PARENTAL SUPPORT

Everyone's situation is different, however as your son or daughter prepares for university life, it is important to have some frank conversations about financial matters.

Will you be able to provide any extra support? If so, to what extent and how often? Will this be expected to be repaid and are there expectations on how should this money be used? Would you be happy to act as a guarantor for accommodation or help with initial deposit payments? These discussions are essential in helping students to prepare a realistic budget for their time at university.

REPAYMENTS

If your child accessed a student loan, repayments start from the April after they have graduated, but only once they are earning over £25,725 (figure correct as of February 2020) per annum. Typically repayments are automatically deducted from their salary via the tax system.

Student loan repayments are directly linked to how much a graduate earns, not the amount they borrowed. Meaning that regardless of whether they borrow £1,000 or £50,000, the monthly repayment cost would be the same.

HOW IT IS WORKED OUT

Your son or daughter will repay 9% of any income above £25,725. If at any point during their career earnings drop below £25,725 they stop repaying. After 30 years, any outstanding payments will be written off.



For further information on what scholarships and bursaries we offer, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/financial-support.

ANYTHING YOU NEED TO ASK US?

Here is a list of useful contacts:

For prospective students:

Course Enquiries +44 (0) 121 331 5595

For applicants:

Admissions +44 (0) 121 331 6295


Other enquiries:

Switchboard +44 (0)121 331 5000

For more information, go to:

www.bcu.ac.uk/parents-and-guardians

www.bcu.ac.uk
+44 (0)121 331 5595

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