

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

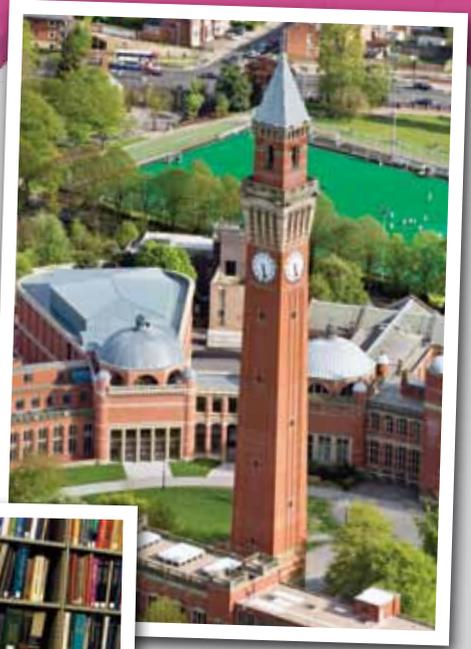


# U PARENTS GUIDE B



From GCSEs to university –  
how to support your  
son/daughter

# WHY GO TO UNIVERSITY?



- ❑ To study something you enjoy
- ❑ To learn about a new subject area
- ❑ To gain high-level qualifications
- ❑ To develop new skills, knowledge and interests
- ❑ To meet people from all countries and backgrounds

## ... and from an employment perspective:

- ❑ Greater choice of careers for graduates
- ❑ Many professions require a university qualification eg, doctors, lawyers, dentists
- ❑ Better promotion prospects in the workplace
- ❑ Over 68% of graduate employers do not mind what subject the degree is in

- ❑ Greater earning potential – according to a 2011 report from the Office for National Statistics, the average earnings of a graduate compared to a non-graduate are £12,000 more per year. For example, average earnings in banking and finance were £37,300 over the last decade (compared to £20,300 for a non-graduate) and £27,000 in public administration, education and health (compared to £14,700 for a non-graduate).

**95% of university students agree that going to university is a worthwhile experience**

# HOW THE RIGHT CHOICES AT SCHOOL CAN HELP

There are key decisions during secondary school that can affect future progression to university and employment.

## Years 8/9: GCSE choices

In Year 9 students usually choose what they want to study at GCSE and this can affect their options for post-16 study. You can help your child think this decision through carefully. For example if they want to go on to study science at a higher level and have the opportunity to take three separate sciences – Biology, Chemistry and Physics – then this may be a good choice.

## Year 11

Performance in GCSE exams in Year 11 can affect future options for study at university. For example, many medical courses will expect students to have very good grades (A/A\*) in English, maths and science. For degrees in business and psychology, a grade B in maths is often needed. So students need to be reminded that GCSEs really matter!

You can help your child with important revision by providing them with a quiet place to study and helping them to develop a revision timetable.

In Year 11 students will also make decisions about what to study post-16. This is a very important decision for future progression to university and career pathways. There are a wide variety of courses available to students – A levels, BTECs, International Baccalaureate (IB) and Vocational Qualifications. Students will usually do well if they choose something that they enjoy and are good at. However if they are unsure about what they want to do in the future, there are certain subjects that will

keep a wide range of options open to them. If your child is interested in attending a university like the University of Birmingham, then the *Informed Choices* publication (available to download from [www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices](http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices)) may help them with deciding on their A level choices. You should also encourage your son/daughter to look at the UCAS website and ask questions before they choose their A levels if they need to. Universities will be pleased to help and you will find that many will visit the school/college to provide advice and guidance in this area.

## Year 12/13

In Year 12 most students will take AS level exams. Universities will look at performance in these to see if they are broadly in line with the grades predicted at A level. They are important for your son/daughter's future progression so encourage them to work hard as it is difficult to make up grades in Year 13 if they are not as good as hoped. Universities will base their offers for places on the predicted grades provided by the school/college, as well as students' performance at AS level. For some courses, such as medicine, physiotherapy or social work, relevant work experience will also be an essential requirement.

There will be plenty of opportunities for your son/daughter to visit universities and hear from university staff. After exams in Year 12, schools and colleges will begin to prepare students for their university applications. Every university holds open days where prospective applicants can visit and find out more. There are also talks for parents and carers so that you can find out more about the process, how to apply and the financial support available. Further information about open days and opportunities to visit the University of Birmingham can be found at [www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/visit](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/visit)

# HELPING YOUR SON/DAUGHTER CHOOSE A UNIVERSITY

Your son/daughter will need to take time to think about and research what course he/she might want to do and then the right place for him/her to study it. Remember everyone is an individual and the choice should be theirs.

The key objective is: **right course + right place = great time + great career.**

There are a wide variety of universities to go to and they are grouped together in general terms that describe what type of university they are:



- **Ancient** – Universities that were founded in the medieval times. Many have a college based system, such as Oxford and Cambridge.
- **Russell Group** – represents 24 leading UK research intensive universities.
- **New/Post 1992** – universities founded more recently and former polytechnics who are now universities.
- **Specialist Institutions** – institutions with particular subject focus, for example, art and design, performing arts, catering, horticulture and agriculture.



## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

It is important that you talk through your son/daughter's decisions with them to ensure they are well thought out. You should also encourage them to visit universities they are interested in applying to; they may find it helpful if you are able to go along with them and there will be dedicated talks for parents to find out more about the application process, financial support and student life.

Visit [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) to search for university open days.

The best way you can help your child is by supporting and helping them, but ultimately allowing the decision to be theirs!

Here at the University of Birmingham, we have a wide variety of videos to help students find out more about university life and help them with their applications to university. Please encourage them to view them as part of their research and decision – making process [www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/birmingham/mybham](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/birmingham/mybham)

# STUDENT FUNDING

## Tuition fees

- Universities can charge up to **£9,000** per annum in fees
- Fees are not paid up front
- Students can borrow up to the full cost of tuition through the student loan, paid directly to the university

## Living costs

- Students can have a loan for living costs, 65% of which is not means tested
- The amount students can borrow is determined by your household income and where they choose to study: up to **£5,500** if living away from home and outside London; up to **£4,375** if living at home
- The loan is paid directly to the student in three instalments

## Loan repayments

- Repayments do not start until the student leaves university, is working and earning more than **£21,000** a year
- Loans are repaid at a rate of 9% for incomes above this threshold and are deducted directly from income – eg, on a salary of **£25,000** per annum, monthly repayments are paid on the **£4,000** above **£21,000** and would be **£30** per month
- If income drops below **£21,000** per annum repayments are suspended
- All outstanding amounts are written off after 30 years



## Financial support

- There are a number of **non-repayable** allowances available to students from **lower-income** backgrounds to help with their living expenses
- The amount they receive is determined by your household income: **£3,250** for household incomes **up to £25,000**; between **£50** and **£3,250** for household incomes above **£25,000** up to **£42,600**
- The grant is paid directly to the student in three instalments

Students apply online for loans and grants at [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance)

In addition to this, universities have their own means-tested bursaries and have scholarships for academic performance, music and sports.

## Please remember!

- Education is still free at the point of entry
- Graduates (not students) repay loans
- Repayment is based on earnings not the amount of loan taken
- After 30 years outstanding debt is written off



# THE APPLICATION PROCESS

All applications to university are made through UCAS (the University and College Admissions Service). There is a section for parents on their website with lots of information on the application process. Visit [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) for more information.

## Some key facts

- All applications are made online
- Maximum of five choices
- There are some choice restrictions eg, only four choices for Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science; you can only apply to Oxford OR Cambridge
- Applications are 'invisible' ie, universities do not know where else the applicant has applied
- Conditional offers – two can be held, one as a first Firm choice and one as a second Insurance choice



## Some key dates

### 1 September

Applications open at UCAS

### 15 October

Deadline for application to Oxford or Cambridge and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine

### 15 January

Deadline for on-time UK/EU applicants to be guaranteed equal academic consideration, but students are recommended to apply before this deadline

### 8 May

Last date for informing UCAS of decisions once offers have been made (UK/EU students)



UNIVERSITY OF  
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Edgbaston, Birmingham,  
B15 2TT, United Kingdom  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk)