

How the right choices at school can help



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

Year 8/9

In year 9 students usually choose what they want to study at GCSE level and this can affect their options for study post-16. 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 and A*) in English, maths and science, and 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 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 do something they enjoy and they 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 you son/daughter is interested in attending a university like the University of Birmingham then the [Russell Group's Informed Choices publication \(/Documents/students/teachers/informed.pdf\)](#) (PDF - 3.7MB) may help them with deciding on their A level choices. Also, encourage your son/daughter to look at university websites and prospectuses 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. Encourage your son/daughter to attend presentations and talks that might be available.

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 and do as well as possible. 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 in year 13 on the school/college's predicted grades and performance at AS level.

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 applications to universities. Every university will hold Open Days when prospective applicants can visit and find out more. There will also be talks for parents and carers so that you find out more about the process, how to apply and financial support available. Further information about Open Days and opportunities to visit the University of Birmingham can be found on our dedicated [visit us \(/undergraduate/visit/index.aspx\)](#) web pages.



Also, helping your son/daughter to gain some work experience, particularly if they wish to study a vocational course at university such as Medicine, Dentistry, Law or Business.