



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM



[www.birmingham.ac.uk/parents](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/parents)



'I didn't go to university – the opportunity never arose for me. But when Hayley said she wanted to go, we supported her all the way. She's inspired her brother and he's applying to universities for next year.'

'Other parents might be concerned, like I was, but I would say you should follow your child's instinct. They know where they want to go in life and what they want to achieve and they will get there with your 100% support. I'm just so proud of her.'

**Mother of Hayley Vernon-Freeth, Business Management graduate**

# Supporting your child with their decision

AS THE PARENT OR CARER OF SOMEONE THINKING OF APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY, IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT YOU WILL HAVE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THE PROCESS WORKS.

FROM GCSES TO UNIVERSITY, THIS GUIDE CONTAINS THE PRACTICAL INFORMATION REQUIRED TO SUPPORT YOUR SON/DAUGHTER AND HELP THEM TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.

## Five reasons your son/daughter should consider university

- 1 To study something they enjoy and learn more about a subject they're passionate about
- 2 To pursue a specific profession that requires a degree-level qualification (such as teaching or medicine)
- 3 To enhance their employment prospects and earning potential
- 4 To develop new skills, knowledge and interests outside their studies
- 5 To meet people from different countries and backgrounds

# Throughout secondary school

## THERE ARE KEY DECISIONS DURING SECONDARY SCHOOL THAT CAN AFFECT FUTURE PROGRESSION TO UNIVERSITY AND EMPLOYMENT

### Years 8 and 9

In Year 8 and 9, students usually choose what they want to study at GCSE and this can affect their options for study post-16. Whilst core subjects (typically English, maths and science) are compulsory, students are able to choose the additional subjects they would like to continue to study. At this age, students usually pick the subjects they enjoy most; however as a parent, you can help your son/daughter think this decision through carefully to ensure they are not limited later down the line. For example, if they want to go on to study science at a higher level and have the opportunity to take three separate science GCSEs (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) then this may be a good choice.

Your son/daughter's GCSE subjects and results will influence their A-level choices; which in turn will affect their options for higher education. Even if they decide not to study at university straight after school, a good set of GCSE qualifications can open doors elsewhere and enhance their career prospects.

### Years 10 and 11

Performance in GCSE exams can affect future options for study at university. For example, many medical courses will expect students to have very good grades (7/8) in English, maths and science. For some degrees, including business and psychology, a grade 6 in maths is often required. So students need to be reminded that GCSEs really matter!

In Years 10 and 11, students will also be deciding which subjects they'd like to study at sixth form/college. The decisions they make here may impact what they are able to study at university.

Generally, the usual university requirements are three A-level qualifications but this may vary depending on the course and the university. BTECs, International Baccalaureate (IB) and vocational qualifications are just a few of the alternative qualifications that can be accepted. If your son/daughter is interested in attending a university like the University of Birmingham then the Informed Choices publication may help them with deciding on their sixth form choices. [www.russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5272/informedchoices-print.pdf](http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5272/informedchoices-print.pdf)





## IF YOUR CHILD HAS A CAREER IN MIND

If your son/daughter knows their career pathway, they should:

- Research if a university degree is necessary for their proposed career path. The government's National Careers Service job profiles are very useful for this: [www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)
- Find out which A-Levels (subjects and grades) are required to join that university course by looking at course entry requirements on university websites. The entry requirements for all University of Birmingham courses are listed on our website: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate)

## WHAT IF YOUR CHILD HASN'T GOT A CAREER IN MIND?

If your son/daughter has not yet decided on a future job or career, they should:

- Choose subjects that they enjoy and are good at.
- Choose subjects that will keep a wide range of options open to them
- Research the breadth of university courses available – there are over 39,000 courses offered by 370 higher education providers. This research may guide your child to a profession that they may not have previously considered.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR CHILD

If you are based in the West Midlands, your son/daughter may be eligible to attend events, courses and summer programmes hosted by the University of Birmingham. These experiences, such as the well established *Your Future Your Choice* Year 10 Summer Residential, are available free of charge and will introduce students to the world of higher

education, help them decide on the best route for their future and provide additional support in reaching their academic goals.

For more information about what we offer, visit: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/uob-opportunities](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/uob-opportunities)

# Throughout sixth form/college

## Years 12 and 13

In Year 12, most students will take end of year exams. The results of these exams will be used by schools and colleges to predict the grades they think the student will achieve at the end of Year 13. Universities will use these predicted grades when deciding whether or not to make an offer of a place. These exams are important for your son/daughter's future progression, so encourage them to work hard and do as well as possible.

Towards the end of Year 12, schools and colleges will begin to prepare students for their applications to university. There will be plenty of opportunities for your son/daughter to hear from university staff at UCAS events, careers fairs and university visits. Universities host open days for prospective applicants to learn more

about the course, the university and student life. At most open days, there are talks specifically for parents and carers so that you can find out more about the process, how to apply and the financial support available to their child. 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)

In deciding which university is right for your son/daughter, you should encourage them to do independent research. Whilst the course name might be the same, the content and structure of the courses will vary considerably between universities. Online university course pages offer lots of information that will help with this decision, such as information about the course content, assessment types and graduate employability prospects.

The University of Birmingham course finder, [www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses), is a great place to start.

## PATHWAYS TO BIRMINGHAM

The Pathways to Birmingham programmes support Year 12 and 13 students in their progression to university and beyond. Students accepted onto any of the Pathways to Birmingham programmes may also be eligible for an alternative offer up to two grades below the standard. For more information visit [www.birmingham.ac.uk/ptb](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/ptb)

## Understanding UCAS applications

Towards the end of Year 12, schools/colleges will introduce students to the university application process. This is completed via UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) and, as part of this application, students will have to submit a personal statement. This statement should show a clear passion for the subject they wish to study and why they deserve a place on the course.

### Three top tips for making their statement stand out:

- 1 Include evidence of work experience undertaken or participation in outreach programmes if applicable. They should explain what they learnt from the experience and how the skills gained will be beneficial during university.
- 2 Write about any wider reading they have done around the subject. This will help them to demonstrate a genuine passion and aptitude for the course.
- 3 Include their current interests outside of study (e.g. music, sports clubs, leadership roles, volunteering) and what the student will add to the university.



## Course-related questions to ask

To help your son or daughter/make informed decisions, you could ask them the following questions:

- 1 What are your thoughts about what you would like to do as a career?
- 2 What subjects have you enjoyed studying at school/college and why?
- 3 Do you know there are more courses available than just the subjects offered at school/college? UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) has a full listing of all courses offered nationwide.
- 4 How do you learn best and what is your preferred method of examination?
- 5 Are you interested in a year abroad or a placement in industry during your course?

## University-related questions to ask

This list contains some questions that you could ask your child to help them decide where they wish to study.

- 1 Would you prefer to live at university or commute from home?
- 2 Do you want to live in a big city?
- 3 What financial support does the university offer?
- 4 Have you looked into what the university facilities are like?
- 5 Does the university cater for your hobbies and interests?

## WORK EXPERIENCE

Work experience can be very useful to help students gain practical experience of a particular vocation or help them to consider where their strengths lie.

It is likely that your son/daughter will have an opportunity to undertake work experience as part of their school/college curriculum. Where this is not the case, it is worthwhile for students to arrange their own work experience in their free time if they are able. Careers advisors at school/college should be able to support students to find valuable and relevant work experience.

Please be mindful that some courses (eg, Dental Surgery BDS), may require a specific period of work experience as an entry requirement.



# Supporting your child with the UCAS process

THIS TIMELINE EXPLAINS THE PROCESS OF EVENTS AND KEY DATES THAT YOU AND YOUR SON/DAUGHTER SHOULD BE CONSIDERING DURING THE UNIVERSITY APPLICATION PROCESS. THE TIMELINE SPANS FROM THE MIDDLE OF YEAR 12 TO THE BEGINNING OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY.

## FEBRUARY TO JUNE

Encourage your son/daughter to visit a UCAS fair for a chance to compare universities and courses and ask any questions they have. Students are also likely to participate in school events where universities will come to your child's schools to talk about what they can offer.

## JUNE TO OCTOBER

University of Birmingham pre-application open days. [www.birmingham.ac.uk/opensdays](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/opensdays)



### 1ST OCTOBER

Pathways to Birmingham applications open  
[www.birmingham.ac.uk/ptb](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/ptb)

### SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Encourage your son/daughter to undertake work experience to support their university applications. It's also a good time for students to start thinking about the content and structure of their personal statement and do some extra reading around the subject. If they need support, encourage them to speak to school careers advisors for guidance.



For more advice and guidance about the UCAS process, visit the Parents and Guardians section on the UCAS website.

### SEPTEMBER

UCAS opens for applications. Students can apply for five courses at this time. Access to Birmingham (see page 13) applications open.

Once your son/daughter has heard back from all universities, they are then required to make their final two choices. A firm choice is their first choice, with an insurance choice being their second; usually this will be an offer with lower entry requirements than their first choice. Once they have made their decision, they must update UCAS Track. Deadlines for when they should make this decision will depend

upon when they receive all their offers, it is advised that they check the deadlines on the UCAS website.

If your son/daughter received decisions from all five universities and was not accepted or chose to decline the offers they received, UCAS Extra is available to apply for additional courses.

**AUGUST**

**Your son/daughter will receive their A level results, determining whether they've gained a place at university.**

On results day, Clearing opens for students to find a place at university if they didn't receive any offers, declined any offers they did receive, didn't meet the conditions of their offers, or applied after 30 June. Adjustment is also available for students who may be thinking about looking for an alternative course or university as they received better grades than expected.

**15 JANUARY**

Deadline for applications to be guaranteed equal consideration. **Access to Birmingham** applications close.

**FEBRUARY TO MAY**

**Applications for student finance open.** Students do not need to wait until they have received offers from the universities they applied to apply for tuition fees and maintenance loans.



**OCTOBER ONWARDS**

Universities will begin to make decisions on applications. Your son/daughter will be able to monitor their application through UCAS Track ([www.track.ucas.com](http://www.track.ucas.com)) and they will be notified when they receive decisions from universities.

**31 MAY**

Students must apply by this date to guarantee a place at University of Birmingham accommodation. (either Birmingham owned or partner accommodation).

**15 OCTOBER**

Deadline for UCAS applications for Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses or to study at Oxford or Cambridge.

**NOVEMBER TO APRIL**

**Some courses interview or audition applicants in order to consider them for a place.** Students might also be asked to provide portfolios of their work if they are applying for art or design courses. If your son/daughter is invited for interview, they will need to prepare ahead.

**UNIVERSITY BEGINS**



## Fees and loans

A **Tuition Fee Loan** is available from the government via Student Finance England to all UK and EU undergraduate students. Students have the opportunity to borrow up to the full cost of their tuition fees, without making any payments upfront.

While your son/daughter is at university, a **Maintenance Loan** is available to cover their living expenses. All eligible students are entitled to a loan, however the specific amount is dependent on where they study and their annual household income.

It is advised that students apply for Student Finance as early as possible. Tuition fees and maintenance loans are likely to increase each year of study in line with inflation as specified by parliament.

## Student Loan repayments

Students will not repay tuition fee or maintenance loans until the April after they have left university if they are in work and earning over £25,000 per year. Repayments will be 9% of income above this threshold, so the amount repaid each month will be dependent on their earnings. If for any reason their income falls below £25,000, repayments will be suspended.

Repayments are based on earning as opposed to what they borrowed and are automatically deducted from their pay through the tax system. If a student loan has not been repaid in full after 30 years, any outstanding payments will be written off.

For further information on fees, loans and the repayment process, please visit the Student Finance website.

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

## Scholarships, grants and bursaries

Most universities offer a range of additional financial support for students in the form of scholarships, bursaries and other awards. At Birmingham, we ensure that fears about finance do not deter prospective students from considering university and that excellence is rewarded. For instance, students are entitled to additional financial support from the University in the form of a Chamberlain Award if their annual household income is below £36,000.

There is also a range of subject-specific scholarships and bursaries to support students who excel in sports, music or are young carers.

For more information about the scholarships, grants and bursaries offered at the University of Birmingham, visit [www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees/index.aspx](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/fees/index.aspx)



## Pathways to Birmingham

At the University of Birmingham, we support local students whose circumstances mean they are less likely to apply to university. Our Pathways to Birmingham programmes are designed to help Year 12 and 13 students in their progression to university and beyond. There are five Pathways to Birmingham programmes to choose from:

- **Routes to Professions** – for Year 12 students who want a career in Accounting and Finance, Engineering, Law, Dentistry or Medicine.
- **Academic Enrichment Programme** – for Year 12 students who want first-hand experience of studying and living at university and live within the Greater West Midlands.
- **National Access Summer School** – for Year 12 students who want first-hand experience of studying and living at university and live in areas outside the Greater West Midlands.
- **Inspired @ Birmingham** – For Year 12 students either looking to study non-vocational courses at university or who are still unsure about which course to study
- **Access to Birmingham** – For year 13 students who are applying to Birmingham.

For more information visit:

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/ptb](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/ptb)

## Access to Birmingham (A2B) Scheme

A2B, our Year 13 programme within Pathways to Birmingham, supports applicants to the University of Birmingham, find out more about what studying at university involves. By applying through A2B, they'll gain access to a package of support and an alternative offer. Benefits include:

- Eligibility for an alternative offer up to two grades below the standard offer for entry to the University of Birmingham
  - Special consideration of their UCAS application
  - A mock interview for their chosen course, if relevant
  - Support in preparing to study at university, including the opportunity to undertake a supervised assignment in their chosen subject and an online study skills module
  - Financial support of up to £4,500
- For more information visit:

[www.birmingham.ac.uk/a2b](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/a2b)

## Contextual offer

At the University of Birmingham, we offer a 'contextual offer' as an alternative route to undergraduate study for talented students whose personal circumstances may have restricted their achievement at school or college.

The contextual offer is normally one grade lower than the typical offer, but can differ depending on the subject your son/daughter has applied to study. To find out if they would be eligible, visit [www.birmingham.ac.uk/contextualoffer](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/contextualoffer)

If your son/daughter is eligible, they just need to submit their UCAS application in the normal way and we will take their circumstances into account when considering their application. An eligible applicant would receive two offers – our typical offer (as seen in the prospectus or online) and a contextual offer.

# Preparing for student life

**AHEAD OF YOUR SON/DAUGHTER STARTING UNIVERSITY, YOU COULD SUPPORT THEM TO BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT.**

WHETHER YOUR SON/DAUGHTER MOVES TO UNIVERSITY ACCOMODATION OR LIVES AT HOME, THERE ARE IMPORTANT LIFE SKILLS THEY SHOULD KNOW.

## MEAL PLANNING

Your son/daughter should understand the importance of a balanced diet. Over the summer before university, you could practise some student-friendly recipes together that do not require a lot of ingredients or equipment. This will give you peace of mind that your child is eating well if they decide to move away.

## PART-TIME WORK

At the University of Birmingham, Worklink offers on-campus work for students throughout the year. Undergraduate students are able to work up to 15 hours per week. Hours are flexible and students can accept or decline work to fit around their studies. For more information visit [www.worklink.bham.ac.uk](http://www.worklink.bham.ac.uk)

## LAUNDRY

Knowing how to wash and iron clothes is a necessity if students are looking to move away for university. Teaching your son/daughter the basics, such as reading clothing labels and knowing the proper amount of detergent to add, will support them in becoming more self-sufficient, confident and independent.

## ACCOMMODATION

Your son/daughter may decide they want to move into university accommodation. If this is the case, they should spend some time thinking about what type of accommodation they are looking for. The cost of accommodation will vary depending on the student's preferences and budget. At Birmingham, we understand that for most students, university accommodation will be their first time living independently, therefore we offer a fantastic variety of living arrangements, all of which provide a safe, secure and sociable start to university. For more information about accommodation, visit: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/accommodation](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/accommodation)

## COMMUTING

It is recommended that students commuting to University use public transport. The easiest way is by train. Birmingham is the only University in mainland UK to have its own railway station on campus, known as University station. The journey takes approximately seven minutes from Birmingham New Street and up to six trains an hour depart for the University on the cross-city line (final destination Bromsgrove or Redditch). The bus service numbers 1, 1A, 48, 61, 63, 76, X20, X21, X22 all travel to the University's main Edgbaston campus.



## CAREER SUPPORT

Our Careers Network offers services that can help students to identify and achieve their career aspirations from the moment they arrive. Services include:

- ❑ Sourcing work experience, internships and jobs
- ❑ Enabling students to be enterprising through bespoke curricular and extracurricular projects
- ❑ Providing one-to-one support with CVs and job applications
- ❑ One-to-one careers advice, mentoring and online resources to give students confidence in deciding their career or next step

By making the most of these services, students will stand out as an impressive applicant as they enter the graduate job market or continue with their academic career. We are committed to providing students with the best opportunities for their future, and are the second most targeted university by top employers in 2017–18. ([www.highfliers.co.uk](http://www.highfliers.co.uk))

## BUDGETING FOR UNIVERSITY

You could help your son/daughter to create a budget plan for them to work to whilst at university. They can learn to identify their termly income and expenditure (eg, food, travel, socialising) and, from this, work out a weekly allowance.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

At the University of Birmingham, we want to make sure that all our students have the best university experience. By telling us about any disabilities as early as possible, we can identify the support that your son or daughter might need, including any financial support they may be entitled to.

Undergraduate applicants can choose to disclose a disability via their UCAS application form. Any disclosed disabilities will not factor into the University's decision as part of the selection process. Upon receiving an offer, students will be contacted and invited to register with Disability, Mental Health and Learning Support services. We can then start to discuss what support or adjustments students will need. We offer a wide range of specialist advice and support to students with physical and mental disabilities, specific learning difficulties and other conditions.

Equally, if students experience any emotional or psychological difficulties during their time here – whether personal, academic or social – our team of professional counsellors are on hand to provide support. Our free, confidential counselling service is available in the form of one-to-one counselling and assessments. Exam anxiety, stress, bereavement and eating disorders are just a few of the topics for which we provide support.



'I didn't go to university myself; I left school and went straight into employment. I think it's important that I encouraged my daughter to go so that she reaches her full potential. She is certainly more mature, outgoing and confident now but she's still the true Poppie I've always known.'

'Anyone with any doubts about sending their child to university shouldn't worry. I had my initial concerns about finance, support and how we'd cope, but it's been such a life-changing experience for Poppie that I couldn't encourage it enough.'

**Mother of Poppie Simmonds, Computer Science graduate and Lloyds Scholar**



'University is for everybody.'

'It's important for parents to encourage their children to go to university for better career prospects and future opportunities.'

**Mother and Father of Matt Wilkes,  
Chemical and Energy Engineering Student**



# UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

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