

University applications

your essential guide



Benefits of higher education

A university experience is an investment in your future; with all the opportunities available both within and outside of the academic experience, you will not only develop your knowledge and employability skills, you will also benefit from better job prospects and choice. Many graduates say that their time at university is one of the most memorable and enriching times of their life; an opportunity to develop personally, experience new things, make friends and make the most of all that university life has to offer.

Choosing a course and university

Deciding which course you wish to study, and at which university, is an exciting challenge requiring time and effort. It is important to choose a subject that you are genuinely interested in and will enjoy studying. There are many things that you should consider and research when choosing a course and university.

Think about the **course type and content**; would you prefer to study a single subject in depth, or perhaps study two or more subjects as a joint or major/minor honours (eg, History with French or Music and English Literature)? It is important to look at detailed course information as some subjects can vary from university to university. You might also want to explore the possibility of undertaking a sandwich year (a year-long work placement) or studying abroad for a year.

Look at the **entry requirements**; are they realistic and are you capable of achieving them? Look closely at any specific GCSE and AS/A2 level requirements, work experience or entry tests that might be required.

Research your **employability and career prospects**; university websites will give you an idea of what jobs graduates from that degree go on to. Will you have the opportunity to work with and meet potential employers through internships, recruitment fairs or alumni mentoring? Find out what opportunities there are for skills development, and if the university has a careers support network.

Location is an important consideration for most students. In particular; how far from home you want to study and whether to choose a campus or non-campus university. It is important that you are going to enjoy living at university as well as studying. Some students will find living at home and studying locally to be the best option for them.

Research what **facilities** the university has to offer. Find out what is on offer in terms

of sports, music, library and computing facilities. Is there a lively and proactive Students' Union? Is there a job shop where you can look for part-time work?

How about **extra-curricular opportunities** in which to develop skills? Does the university offer opportunities to be involved with the student newspaper/radio/TV, music/drama, volunteering opportunities, mentoring, clubs and societies? These types of activities help you get the most out of your time at university and are increasingly important to employers.

The application process

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

Applications to UK universities are made online through UCAS www.ucas.com It's an easy online process and the website enables you to research courses, complete your application and check the progress of your application once submitted.

You can select a maximum of five courses/universities to apply to and UCAS will forward your application to these universities. The universities will not know which other courses or universities you have applied for.

When you have received your offers from the universities you have applied to, you will need to make a firm choice – this should be the course you most want to study at the university you most want to go to. You can also make an insurance choice which is your back up option but still a course and university you want to go to. Ideally this university will be asking for slightly lower grades than your firm choice. You may



Which course and university is right for you is a very personal decision and time spent researching and considering your options will help you make the right decision. All the information you need is widely available through:

- University prospectuses
- On the internet via university websites
- Unistats: <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>
- Which? University: <http://university.which.co.uk>
- UCAS: www.ucas.com
- Social media sites
- University open days
- Talking to current students

Don't worry, with over 38,147 degree courses in the UK you will find the perfect course for you!

want to take this into consideration when choosing your five courses to apply to.

Key dates in the application process:

Mid September	Applications can be sent to UCAS
15 October	Last date for receipt of on-time applications to Oxford University, University of Cambridge and courses in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science or veterinary medicine
15 January	Deadline for on-time applications from UK/EU students to be guaranteed equal academic consideration
8 May	Last date for informing UCAS of your decisions once offers have been made to you (UK/EU students)
30 June	Last date for receipt of applications from international students



Personal statements – what are universities looking for?

Firstly, ensure you meet the entry requirements of all the universities you are applying to. However, entrance to some courses at some universities is competitive and meeting the entry requirements alone does not guarantee you an offer of a place.

The personal statement can also be an important part of the admissions process and is your opportunity to tell admissions tutors why they should offer you a place. Particular skills and attributes that universities are looking for will vary, but all will want to be persuaded that you have a genuine academic interest in the subject and that you have the motivation and enthusiasm to succeed.

Showcasing your skills

- A really good personal statement should provide **strong evidence of your interest in the subject**. This might be through wider reading, attendance at university summer schools or lectures, volunteering or perhaps you are undertaking the Extended Project Qualification in a related subject.
- You could also **discuss what you enjoy** in any related subjects you are currently studying.
- **Work experience** might also be a useful way of demonstrating your interest, motivation and transferable skills as well as providing you with a useful insight into potential future careers. For some vocational courses work experience might form part of the entry requirements, so check them carefully. Remember to talk about what you gained from the experience, the skills that you developed and how it has affected you, not just what you did.
- **Extra-curricular activities**, including music, drama, sport, volunteering and part-time work may also form part of your personal statement, but again remember that the Admissions Tutor is looking for evidence of your interest in the subject and ability to do well on the course. Make sure you draw

out the relevant skills and attributes these activities have helped you to develop, not just list everything you do outside of school/college.

- It is a good idea to read through the **entry profiles** on the UCAS website for each of the courses you are applying for. These provide details of the entry requirements and give you an indication of the **skills and attributes required to do well on the course**. This will help you decide if it is the right course for you and help you think about what to include in your personal statement.

Learn more

For further information and advice about applying to the University of Birmingham, go to www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/advice/applying which includes useful video clips on what we look for in the personal statement and how to showcase your skills.



Supporting students

Student funding

Studying at university requires you to pay for your tuition and cover your living expenses. Funding is available from both the government and the University in order to help you meet these costs. **Tuition fee loans** and **maintenance loans** do not need to be paid back until you have graduated and are earning over £21,000 per year. Depending upon your household income, some students will be eligible for a non-repayable **Maintenance Grant** from the government.

All universities will offer additional funding through bursaries and scholarships. The University of Birmingham offers enhanced financial support for students from lower income backgrounds. We also offer specific **scholarships** based either on subject, music or sporting ability. Subject-based scholarships are judged on academic performance and/or financial need. For more information visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate/funding

Accommodation

Moving away from home is a big step but university **accommodation** offers a safe environment to meet new people and learn new life skills. The **Freshers' Guarantee Scheme** guarantees a room in university or third party accommodation to first year undergraduates (subject to conditions). For further information about accommodation at the University of Birmingham visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/accommodation

Students with a disability

If you have a **disability or learning difficulty** it is important that you contact the universities that you are applying to so that you can discuss your support needs. Information about support available for students at the University of Birmingham can be found at www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/support

Experience life at Birmingham

The University of Birmingham offers an inspirational student experience at a leading global university. Our students are challenged to think, discuss and engage critically with their subject. Outside of their studies, students have the opportunity to get fully involved in university life. With over 200 active student groups and societies to choose from, covering interests from archery and surfing to Harry Potter and Brum Dine with Me; there really is something to suit everyone. Being part of a student group is a great way to meet like-minded people, take on additional responsibility and broaden your horizons.

Birmingham is one of the **UK's leading sporting universities**, regularly finishing in the top three of the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) league. Whether our students want to compete at a professional

level or just have some fun, Birmingham offers sporting opportunities to suit all tastes and levels of ability. Furthermore, there is plenty of opportunity for our students to take part in theatre, music and dance during their time at university. Birmingham has three orchestras, a number of choirs and a huge range of student ensembles, while the Guild of Students offers the chance to be involved in activities such as drama, Latin dance, circus skills or hip hop, to name but a few.

Learn more

www.guildofstudents.com
www.sport.bham.ac.uk



Find out more about Birmingham:

Visit us –

for Open Day dates and information visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/opendays

Listen to our students –

attend a campus tour which takes place each Tuesday and Thursday at 11.00am and 2.00pm. To book a place telephone us on 0121 414 2242, email c.abbey@bham.ac.uk or book online at www.birmingham.ac.uk/campustours

Find us on:



University of Birmingham



www.twitter.com/unibirmingham



www.youtube.com/unibirmingham

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Edgbaston, Birmingham,
B15 2TT, United Kingdom

www.birmingham.ac.uk

Learning resources

Tips4Uni is an interactive eLearning website with modules and useful resources on all aspects of the applications process including university life, choosing courses and preparing your application.

Learn more

www.welearn.bham.ac.uk/tips4uni



Skills4Uni is an engaging and interactive study skills website that takes you through the lifecycle of a project from planning and research through to final draft and presentation of the work.

Learn more

www.skills4uni.bham.ac.uk



Your ticket to Birmingham



www.birmingham.ac.uk/vip

Birmingham VIP is a regularly updated, personalised web page made available to all prospective undergraduate students that features all the latest news about life at the University.

As a Birmingham VIP you can:

- Request a prospectus or course brochure
- Register to visit us on an open day
- Download the latest videos and podcasts
- View all the latest hints and tips on applying to university
- Join us online at www.birmingham.ac.uk/vip