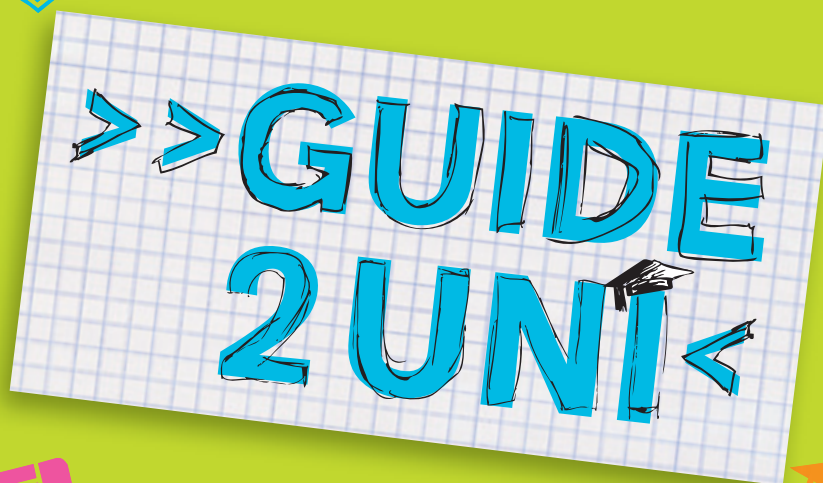


U B



The power to choose is yours:
make the right choice and the
possibilities are endless

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To access the complementary online Resource Pack for this guide to university, visit our website at: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/advice/services/resources.aspx

>>WELCOME

Welcome to our young person's guide to university, a sort of mini-prospectus to give you a taster of what university life is like.



We offer advice and information on a range of issues including:

- choosing your options in Year 9
- making choices about what to do after you finish your compulsory education
- what courses you can study in higher education and what careers these might lead to
- how to finance your studies and deal with debt
- what university life is like
- qualifications and pathways into higher education
- how some of our current undergraduates made their journeys from school to university
- how our former students (alumni) – some of them famous – have made their journeys from university to where they are today

We encourage you to think a lot about yourself because that is where you really need to start – with who you are, what you're like, what you're good at and what you want to do in the future.

As you go through the guide, if there are words you don't understand look them up in the jargon buster at the back.

Your teachers also have some additional fun quizzes that you can try.



>MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES<<

If you are in Year 9 or Year 11, it's a really important time for you. The decisions you make now could affect your future and what you will be doing over the next two years – so you need to think carefully and make the right choices.

Thinking about options

Choosing your options – the subjects you will be taking in Years 10 and 11 for your GCSEs or courses you will be taking in Years 12 and 13 – may be one of the biggest decisions you will have to make in your school life.

GCSE choices can be quite important for future university study. It is important to get a balance of subjects, as this gives you more choice later on when you have to decide on future careers.

You should also be aware of the English Baccalaureate (E-Bac), introduced by the government in 2010. You will be judged to have the E-Bac if you have a C grade or better across a core of academic subjects (eg, English, Mathematics, History or Geography, the sciences and a language); some schools encourage their students to follow these as a core, alongside others.

Some university courses will ask for a specific number of GCSEs at specific grades; eg, some medical courses ask for 5 or more GCSEs at A*. Some courses; eg, Economics or Accounting, may ask for a Grade A or B in Mathematics, if A level Maths is not being studied.

At sixth form, it is important to choose the right courses for your future higher education study and career. If you already have an idea what you want to do, make sure you check out what subjects particular university courses require. If you have no ideas, make sure you keep an open mind; so you do not shut any doors you may want to keep open.

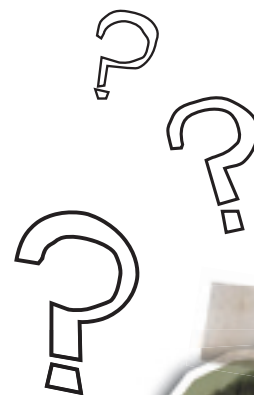
If you make the wrong choices now, it's not the end of the world because there are always things that can be done about it, but it does make life a little more difficult. You don't have to map

out the rest of your life – that would be just too much to think about – but you need to have some idea of what you would like to do.

What should I think about first?

Think about

- **Yourself:** know yourself as a person – your likes, dislikes, skills, aptitudes and attitudes
- **What you want to do:** further study, go to university, have a career or get a job and earn some money
- **How you learn best:** through exams, coursework or practical work
- **The options available for you to take:** the compulsory and optional ones as well as other opportunities other than GCSEs and A levels
- **Specific GCSE requirements:** those needed for any course at university, which you are already interested in
- **Where to get help and advice:** there may be people to help and guide you as well as printed and online resources that you will find useful



>UNIVERSITY LIFE>>

What is a university?

A university is a place of higher education where you continue to learn after you have finished your secondary education. It has lots of teaching and research facilities in many subject areas and has the authority to award degrees at bachelor, masters and doctorate levels. The word is also used as a noun to describe the buildings and grounds occupied by the institution.

What is the difference between further education and higher education?

Further education is study in the sixth form at school or sixth form college where you take courses to further your education after taking your GCSEs. Higher education colleges and universities offer you the chance to study for higher-level qualifications such as degrees.

As a rule, you can think about this in terms of your approximate age as well: further education is something you might do post 16 – between the ages of 16 and 18; higher education is something you might do post 18 – after the age of 18 and after your further education studies.

What is higher education?

Higher education is the term we give to the learning that takes place once you have finished your A levels or equivalent qualifications. A university is just one of the places you can go for higher education study: you can also go to a college of higher education or a college of further education where they offer higher education qualifications.

Higher education is also about making good choices about your future and **taking charge of your learning** so that you can have a more rewarding career.



Why should I go to university?

You don't have to go to university if you don't want to but here are five reasons why you should consider it if you want more out of life.



① **More choices and better chances** - It's a fact of modern life that most employers want their new recruits to have a university degree; sometimes the subject of your degree matters and sometimes it doesn't - it depends on the nature of the job: so having a degree gives you more career options and better chances in the jobs market.

② **More money in your pocket** - Once you have your university qualification you are more likely to land that great job with the terrific salary, so you will have more money in your pocket. Don't forget to pay back your student loan though!

③ **More thinking and decision time** - Going to university will help you find out more about your chosen subject but equally, it will help you find out more about yourself and what you really want to do with your life, especially in terms of your career path: so going to university will give you three or four years in which to think and make better decisions.

⑤ **More social life, friendships and opportunities** - Most people make loads of new friends from all walks of life and from many different countries, and some of these friendships last a lifetime; you also get the chance to explore hobbies and interests you never dreamed of before: so this could be the best time of your life with opportunities not to be missed.

④ **More freedom and independence** - Everyone needs to be able to look after themselves sooner or later and being at university gives you the skills to do just that, looking after your diet, health and fitness, money, relationships and general ability to cope with modern life: so there is some freedom here and you will become much more independent.



Teaching and learning

In school your teaching is probably highly structured and well organised for you. When you study at university you make the transition from this structured approach to the independence and self motivation that you will eventually need for your professional working life.

Taking more responsibility

You will be expected to take responsibility for organising your own work, for working in groups, meeting deadlines and seeking help when you need it: you will need to manage your time so that you have a balance between your leisure activities and time spent in personal study. You will have to do lots of independent research using books and computer-based learning, the internet and original sources of material in the university's library.

Don't worry though; you will be guided by your tutors to work in teams on group projects, and to talk about your work and make more formal oral and written presentations.



Teaching methods

Teaching methods used might include:

- ❑ formal lectures (about an hour in length)
- ❑ smaller group seminars
- ❑ practical classes
- ❑ personal study in libraries or elsewhere
- ❑ personal projects lasting from a couple of weeks to a term
- ❑ group projects which can last a term or more
- ❑ laboratory-based work



Active at Birmingham

At Birmingham, you are expected to take a more active role in managing your learning, as more of your time will be spent undertaking different forms of research to help you discover solutions and answers for yourself. We call this 'enquiry-based learning'. It develops skills sought after by graduate employers who value creativity and independence as well as leadership and problem solving. We will support you to become an enquiry-based learner and use a range of teaching methods to encourage you to develop your own ideas.

Lectures and seminars

Lectures are intended to give you food for thought, and are an opportunity to listen to academic staff sharing their knowledge and discoveries with you. You are expected to build on this, carry out further reading around the subject and use your analytical skills to critically examine the information you are being given.

Seminars offer the opportunity for you to discuss your ideas in smaller groups and listen to other people's opinions. Tutorials are carried out on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, and you can discuss your written work with your tutor.



Library facilities

Our students have access to one of the UK's largest academic libraries at the heart of our Edgbaston campus, containing over two and a half million books and three million archives and manuscripts. A further ten libraries and resource centres cover every subject offered at the University, ensuring you have the opportunity to develop expertise in your chosen field.

All students have free access to email and the internet, with dedicated computer facilities on campus.



Learning support

As a student here you have a personal tutor, who will help you to monitor and reflect on your progress and provide help and advice with any study-related issues. You have regular meetings with your personal tutor in an informal and supportive environment. An additional range of support is available, from the welfare tutor based in your school or department, to members of the library academic liaison teams who can help you find what you need from our extensive libraries, archives and other information resources. Specialised learning support services are available for students with disabilities.

Visit www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/support/disability/index.aspx



<UNIVERSITY LIFE - ACCOMMODATION<<

Where will I live?

Different universities will offer different types of accommodation; so where you live while you are a student will depend on many factors, including what the university has to offer and what you want, for example:

What the University of Birmingham has to offer

- ❑ It is a campus university with accommodation on site
- ❑ It has halls of residence
- ❑ It has catered and self-catered halls
- ❑ It has a housing scheme for undergraduate students, which allows them to live on site in their first year
- ❑ It has access to rented accommodation nearby
- ❑ It has accommodation available within travelling distance of the campus
- ❑ Some accommodation has en suite facilities

What do you want?

- ❑ Do you want to live away from home?
- ❑ Do you want to live at home?
- ❑ Do you want to live on your own?
- ❑ Do you want to share a flat with one other person?

- ❑ Do you want to share a house with several people?
- ❑ Do you want to be in a hall of residence?
- ❑ Do you want to self cater?
- ❑ Do you want to be catered for?
- ❑ Do you want en suite facilities?

New kids on the block

As a first year undergraduate student, if you choose to live away from home, you are usually put into a hall of residence on or very near the campus; so you get to meet lots of people in the same situation as you. Some halls are catered and some are self-catered. The self-catered halls are obviously cheaper because you will be in charge of buying and cooking your own food. If you pay a little extra for a catered hall, your meals will be provided for you as part of the rent.

If you really don't want to go into halls, most universities will help you find alternative housing in privately rented accommodation.

Accommodation at Birmingham

Our student villages (halls of residence) provide a secure and comfortable environment. There are student mentors at each site to help you settle in, as well as all the facilities you will need, such as launderettes, shops and cafés.

All study bedrooms have a telephone, which can be used to make internal calls to friends across campus, free of charge. To give you flexibility in the way you study, 100% of study bedrooms give unlimited access to the internet and University computer network.

With this in mind the University **guarantees a place in University accommodation** to all first year undergraduate home and EU students.

The guarantee scheme is subject to conditions, however, which you will learn about if you apply.





Having your own space

Settling down to University life can be a challenging time, and it is important you have your own space where you feel safe and supported. We aim to provide you with the right accommodation where you can study, eat, sleep and socialise in informal surroundings.

Living at home

Some students may choose not to move into University accommodation due to cost or family commitments. Living at home and commuting to University is a good option if you live locally. It certainly doesn't mean your student experience should be any different from that of students living in halls of residence. You will still have access to all the same academic, social and sporting facilities. The Freshers Off Campus Society (FocSoc), run by the Guild of Students, offers a

tailor-made support service for students living at home in the local area. Like residence-based committees, it organises sports teams and social events such as cinema trips and club nights out.

Private sector housing

If you are not eligible for University accommodation under the guarantee scheme, or choose to live off campus, you may decide to share a house with other students. Housing Services will help you find suitable accommodation in the private sector, from the wide choice of properties in the local area. We also operate a successful flat-search scheme, which enables students to get in touch with one another before they arrive, allowing them the opportunity to rent houses as a group.

The campus

As Birmingham is a campus university, the campus itself becomes your own back yard. The campus has all the facilities of a busy town: bars, cafés, shops, banks, a hair salon, and its own railway station.



Help and advice

All University of Birmingham Villages have a site manager, assistant manager and site co-ordinators; so if you need to report that something needs repairing, require help or have a problem, there is always someone there to listen and lend a hand.



>STUDENT LIFE – MORE THAN JUST STUDY<<

Most universities want you to make the most of your time with them; so what you do in your spare time is just as important as what you achieve during your lectures and seminars.

The best you can be

Your future employers aren't just interested in your academic qualifications – they'll be looking for a well-rounded and experienced person who can contribute in many positive ways to their organisations.

That is why the other really big features of university life are things that help you develop as a person, like sport, the numerous clubs and societies run by students, music and the arts, and the activities and events organised by the student unions.

Sporting life at Birmingham

As at many universities, sport is definitely a big part of life at Birmingham, from inter-varsity competitions (that means we compete against other universities) to taking part in sport just for fun or to keep fit.

We have a School of Sport and Exercise Sciences (SportEx for short) where you can study the subject in great detail, which works closely with University of Birmingham Sport (UBS). This means that we are pretty good in the sports arena. Our teams compete at a consistently high level in inter-varsity sports and UBS is recognised as a centre of excellence for a range of sports, especially hockey, badminton, squash, golf, rugby, triathlon and athletics.

Great facilities

Our high levels of achievement require excellent facilities and we have some great ones for you to enjoy, including:

- international standard water-based synthetic floodlit pitches
- floodlit athletics track
- two sports halls and three activity rooms (including one for martial arts)
- a 25-metre swimming pool

- seven squash courts
- grass pitches for rugby, football, cricket and other sports
- a Cybex Fitness Suite with an extensive range of cardiovascular and resistance equipment, as well as a strength and conditioning facility

We also offer fitness assessments, personal fitness programmes and personal training.

Sports scholarships are available for exceptionally talented athletes.

The great outdoors

Birmingham also has its own outdoor activities centre in an idyllic location on the shores of Coniston Water in the Lake District; any student can visit.

Clubs and societies

Birmingham has over 200 clubs and societies for you to choose from and they cover an incredible range of topics and interests, including:

Sports

American football
Hang gliding
Windsurfing

Arts, Music, Dance, Drama and Theatre

American dance
Cheerleading
Guild Musical Theatre Group

Science, Technology and politics

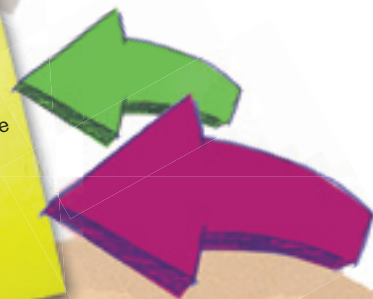
Community Action
People and Planet
Student Industrial Society

And that's just a few of them!





Learn more
www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/birmingham/index.aspx
 There is so much available for you to do as a student it's unbelievable – but it's up to you whether or not you take advantage of all the fantastic opportunities on offer. Student life can be as exciting as you make it.



If you can't find a club or society that matches your interest, you can always get a few other like-minded people together and start one of your own!

Music, arts and entertainment

We continue to invest in music through a number of music scholarships open to promising musicians but we also have:

- two symphony orchestras
- a Big Band
- a number of choirs
- a symphonic wind band
- a brass ensemble
- a chamber choir

We even have our own art gallery – the Barber Institute – which houses an important collection of major works of art, ranging from the 13th to the 20th century and paintings by artists such as Monet, Manet, Renoir, Degas, Rubens, Picasso and Turner. Entry is free!

Students' Union

When you go to a university, you automatically become a member of the students' union. At your chosen university your union representatives will ensure that the views of the students on your campus are considered within the university itself, the local community and on a national level. Not only that but they organise all sorts of fun activities and great entertainment as well.

At Birmingham, our students' union is affectionately known as The Guild, which is also the name of its building.

The Guild of Students

Run by students for students, the Guild of Students is the hub of undergraduate student life.

The Guild at Birmingham was one of the first student unions in the country and

its mission 'to enhance the student experience' is achieved through providing a wide range of activities and services.

Your first contact with the Guild is likely to be during Welcome Week – a week of activities to introduce new undergraduates to student life. The week is designed to make sure you take advantage of the discounts available to students, get to know the campus and the city, make friends, join clubs and get through the process of registering as a student as easily as possible.

Get involved

As well as our sporting activities, clubs, societies and musical activities, you can also get involved in our student radio station BURN FM or the student newspaper *Redbrick*, both run by students as part of the Guild's vital place at the heart of University life.

The Guild's Community Action Scheme (ComAc) gives you the chance to get involved in over 40 student-led community projects, such as working with homeless people and helping refugee children to develop their reading skills.

The ARC

The Guild's Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) is another service run by students for students. Services range from advice on housing, student rights and the law, to individual support and campaigns on housing, finance, sexual health and study issues. Students are welcome to drop into the centre to chat about issues in a safe, relaxed environment.

<STUDENT LIFE - IT'S FUN BEING A STUDENT<<

You have to work hard to get there: you have to work hard when you're there: you have to pay for it. That doesn't sound too good does it? Yet, every year thousands of young people like you choose to go to university and stay for three, four, five or even more years of their lives.

Why? Because it's fun being a student!

Here are 20 reasons why it really is fun to be a student and why going to university can truly be the best time of your life.

- 1 It's not like going to school at all – it's different and much better, especially your relationship with your teachers
- 2 You have a really good reason to be away from home and no one tells you what to do, when to get in, when to go to bed and when to get up
- 3 You really feel like a grown-up – an independent person with a life of your own
- 4 You are studying subjects you love and are really interested in
- 5 You have the option to study abroad for a whole year
- 6 Lectures and seminars are fun and inspiring and you share them with people who like the same things that you do
- 7 You make lots of new friends from all over the UK and abroad
- 8 There's always someone to talk to and go out with
- 9 The social life is fantastic – there are so many things to do and see
- 10 You can see for the first time what your future might be like – and it looks good
- 11 You can learn lots of new skills that will help you throughout your whole life
- 12 There are lots of people on hand to help you out personally and professionally
- 13 You discover things you never knew about yourself
- 14 You gain loads of confidence in yourself and your abilities
- 15 You find out about all the careers that are now open to you
- 16 You become part of a great community of people and really feel that you belong somewhere
- 17 You are exposed to all kinds of exciting experiences and get the chance to do things you would never have done anywhere else
- 18 Even after you finish your studies, your university stays a part of your life
- 19 You may meet your future husband or wife!
- 20 You collect fantastic memories and good friends to last you a lifetime

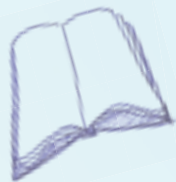


Don't just take our word for it

LAURA

'The University has given me so much... you can learn new things, try new things, work on your personal and professional development outside the boundaries of your course and change yourself for the better.'

Laura, Bachelor of Commerce student



STEFAN

'One of the best things ... is the network you develop, the people with whom you come into contact and the ideas you can bounce around.'

Stefan, Computer Science and Software Engineering

PETER

'It's great to be able to study something you're passionate about.'

Peter, BA in African Studies and Development



NICOLA

'I have learned so much over the past few years, whilst gaining a great rapport with the lecturers and making friends that I will keep for life.'

Nicola, MEng Mechanical and Automotive Engineering



>CAREERS – WHAT CAN I STUDY AND WHERE CAN IT LEAD?>>

There are so many subjects to study now in further and higher education and so many places it can lead that it can be confusing unless you know where to start – and where to start depends on whether or not you know what career you want to do.



I know exactly what I want to do

That's great

- ❑ You need to look at your chosen career and see what degree or other qualifications you need
- ❑ Next you **find a course** that fulfils this for you and see what entry requirements (a list of subjects and grades, and sometimes additional things as well) you need to get on that course at the institution of your choice
- ❑ Don't forget to look at vocational courses, as they may be tailor made for certain professions, if that's what you want
- ❑ Aim to get the required subjects and grades and start applying to get on the course or courses you want at your chosen institutions
- ❑ While you are applying, start looking at ways to finance your study, too

I don't know what I want to do

That's okay – no problem

- ❑ You need to talk to people who can help you, like your careers adviser at school/college or your Connexions adviser
- ❑ With your advisers, put together a list of subjects you like and ones you are good at, as well as noting your personal strengths and abilities (skills); then see what careers might be suitable for you
- ❑ When you have found a career you might like, start looking at courses and qualifications: if you want to keep your options open, go for more general courses and qualifications that would suit several different career paths rather than very specific ones that only lead in one direction
- ❑ Find the right course for you and look at the entry requirements (list of subjects, grades and sometimes other criteria) you need to get
- ❑ Keep it broad – don't forget to look at vocational qualifications and apprenticeships or on-the-job training opportunities as well as degrees
- ❑ Aim to get those subjects and grades and start applying for the course you want at the place you want
- ❑ Start looking at ways to finance your study if you need to

What if I can't find a career?

Don't worry – not everyone knows what they want to do or finds a career straight away. If you still want to get a degree but you don't know what career you want to do afterwards, then go for the more general degrees with a broader sweep. For example – if you take a degree in English, Maths or Science, you will find that they cut across so many other subject areas that they are useful for lots of different careers. 60–70% of graduates go on to work in careers that are not related to the degree they studied at university.

Careers and Employability Centre

At Birmingham, the Careers and Employability Centre has a variety of services that will help you identify options, and develop and work towards your career goals. They can also help you prepare your CV (curriculum vitae) and find internships. Internships give you practical experience in a wide range of professions and can often be a key way into a future job. They can last anything from a week to a year and are a good way of gaining experience during university holidays.

>>CAREERS - SUBJECTS, CAREERS AND QUALIFICATIONS>>

You might find that subjects are grouped differently at university from how you are used to seeing them at school. Individual universities may also group the subjects they offer in ways that are different from one another, which may be confusing but don't let it worry you!

Here's how we do it at Birmingham.

Arts and Law

- ❑ Archaeology and Antiquity (includes Egyptology)
- ❑ English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies
- ❑ History and Cultures (African Studies)
- ❑ Languages, Cultures (related to languages), Art History and Music
- ❑ Law
- ❑ Philosophy, Theology and Religion

Visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/index.aspx

Key factors

What you can study and where it can lead is also going to depend on a number of key factors:

- ❑ the subjects you like and are good at
- ❑ your choice of career
- ❑ the qualifications you need to achieve it

Engineering and Physical Sciences

- ❑ Chemical Engineering
- ❑ Chemistry
- ❑ Civil Engineering
- ❑ Computer Sciences
- ❑ Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- ❑ Mathematics
- ❑ Mechanical Engineering
- ❑ Metallurgy and Materials
- ❑ Physics and Astronomy

Visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/eps/index.aspx

Life and Environmental Sciences

- ❑ Biosciences
- ❑ Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
- ❑ Psychology
- ❑ Sport and Exercise Sciences

Visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/les/index.aspx

Medical and Dental Sciences

- ❑ Medicine (includes Cancer Sciences)
- ❑ Dentistry (includes Dental Hygiene)
- ❑ Health and Population Sciences (includes Nursing and Physiotherapy)

Visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/mds/index.aspx

Social Sciences

- ❑ Business (includes Accounting and Finance, Economics and Marketing)
- ❑ Education (includes Initial Teacher Training)
- ❑ Government and Society (includes Political Science and Sociology)
- ❑ Social Policy (includes Health Management)

Visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/socsci/index.aspx

There are many other areas within these subjects that you can study and you will find a complete list of the undergraduate courses on offer at the University of Birmingham at www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/undergraduate/index.aspx

But, as we've said before, you should also remember that 60–70% of graduates go on to find jobs that are not related to the degree they studied. Next we will try and show you how subjects link to careers.



>SUBJECTS – THE STATUTORY OR COMPULSORY<<<

There are some subjects that you have to study for GSCE, but after this it is for you to choose the ones you want to do. However, further study of English, Mathematics and Science can lead to a range of careers; some of which you may not have considered before.

MATHEMATICS

If you love Maths, here are just some of the jobs you might consider:

- ❑ Accountant
- ❑ Banker
- ❑ Business Manager
- ❑ Economist
- ❑ Financial Consultant
- ❑ Statistician
- ❑ Tax Inspector
- ❑ Teacher

ENGLISH

If you would like a career involving English here are some of the jobs you might consider:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| ❑ Actor | ❑ English Teacher |
| ❑ Advertiser | ❑ Journalist |
| ❑ Archivist | ❑ Librarian |
| ❑ Broadcaster | ❑ Proofreader |
| ❑ Curator | ❑ Publisher |
| ❑ Editor | ❑ Writer |

English is such a broad subject that it has an application for almost any job because it involves written and spoken communication and most jobs have an element of these in them. So a degree in English could be extremely helpful.



SCIENCE

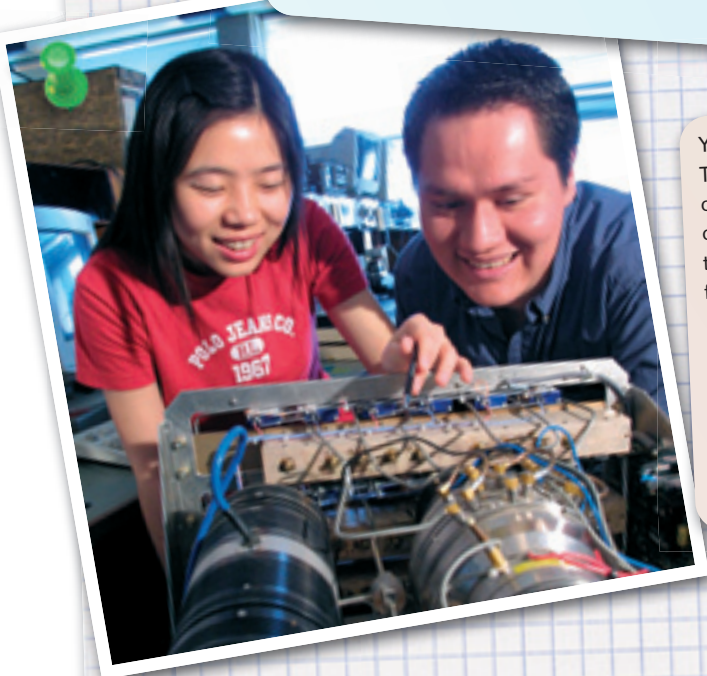
If you enjoy Science find out more about the following jobs:

- ❑ Biochemist
- ❑ Biologist
- ❑ Chemist
- ❑ Dental Hygienist
- ❑ Dentist
- ❑ Doctor
- ❑ Earth Scientist
- ❑ Engineer
- ❑ Environmental Scientist
- ❑ Geologist
- ❑ Marine Biologists
- ❑ Physiotherapist
- ❑ Psychologist
- ❑ Sports Scientist
- ❑ Surgeon
- ❑ Teacher
- ❑ Vet
- ❑ Zoologist



ENGLISH BACCALAUREATE (E-BAC)

You may be encouraged by your school to follow the E-Bac pathway. This will involve you studying English, Mathematics, Science, History or Geography, and a foreign language, as well as a number of other optional subjects. This is a good range of subjects for future entry to university, but there are lots of other subjects that are also useful for the future.



>>SUBJECTS - THE ENTITLEMENT OR OPTIONAL<<<

It's good to be able to choose the subjects you want to study and there are lots of them to choose from. You can do a degree in most of the optional subjects you will find on your school curriculum, too. You can study them on their own or with another subject.

Here are just a few examples

GEOGRAPHY

This is a huge subject and an extremely popular one at that because it is so varied and relevant to our world today. With a degree in Geography, you could go into any of the following professions:

- ❑ Cartography (map making)
- ❑ Climatology
- ❑ Environmental Management
- ❑ Land Management
- ❑ Social Services
- ❑ Health Services
- ❑ Law
- ❑ Planning
- ❑ Sales and Marketing
- ❑ Surveying
- ❑ Teaching
- ❑ Tourism
- ❑ Water Management

COMPUTER AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Here's a subject you can't get away from anywhere! It affects us at school, at home and at work. It's HUGE!

The computer industry is not only one of the most popular but it is one of the fastest growing with new technologies emerging all the time. This is where the big money is, if you are willing to work hard and go for it.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| ❑ Computer Engineer | ❑ Graphic Designer |
| ❑ Computer/IT Manager | ❑ IT Consultant |
| ❑ Computer Programmer | ❑ Software Designer |
| ❑ Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineer | ❑ Systems Analyst |
| | ❑ Web Designer |

HISTORY

History has always been a popular humanities subject and like Geography it has many potential areas of study from archaeology and ancient history to the present day. With a degree in History you could be any of the following:

- ❑ Archaeologist
- ❑ Archivist
- ❑ Curator (in a museum)
- ❑ Genealogist
- ❑ Historian
- ❑ Heritage/Historical Site Manager
- ❑ Lawyer or Solicitor
- ❑ Media worker
- ❑ Researcher
- ❑ Teacher
- ❑ Tourism Guide or Manager
- ❑ Writer/Publisher

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Modern foreign languages are also incredibly popular and linguistic skills are very highly valued by employers. The entry requirements for many university courses often stipulate that you need at least a GCSE in a foreign language, but if it is your favourite subject and you are taking A levels in several languages, then you might want to become one of the following:

- ❑ Civil Servant
- ❑ Interpreter
- ❑ Linguist
- ❑ Financial Adviser
- ❑ Foreign Correspondent
- ❑ Language Teacher
- ❑ Lawyer or Solicitor (European Law)
- ❑ Local Government Officer
- ❑ Public Administrator
- ❑ Translator

If you combine your language skills with other subjects like IT or Business, you will be much sought after in the jobs market.

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS

There are lots of other subjects you can study that develop really useful skills, much sought after by employers. So, if you do fancy something new and exciting, take a look at the following:

If you are interested in science, you could study for a degree in these subjects:

- ❑ Environmental Management
- ❑ Natural Sciences
- ❑ Bioinformatics (Biology and Computer Science)
- ❑ Medicine
- ❑ Dentistry

Or, if you like history or languages:

- ❑ Archaeology
- ❑ African Studies
- ❑ Russian Studies

If you are interested in the arts, you could study degrees like:

- ❑ Classical Literature and Civilisation
- ❑ History of Art
- ❑ Creative Writing
- ❑ Music
- ❑ Religious Studies

And for budding athletes:

- ❑ Sport and Exercise Sciences
- ❑ Sport, PE and Coaching Science
- ❑ Applied Golf Management Studies

There are over 50,000 higher education courses you can apply for through UCAS; many of which you have not yet even heard of. Visit www.ucas.com to see the huge variety available.

Learn more

For further information about subjects and careers check out these websites:

- ❑ www.ajobin.com
- ❑ www.bbc.co.uk/schools/studentlife/careersandchoices

For advice on options for study in Years 10 and 11 visit:

- ❑ www.connexions-direct.com
- ❑ www.direct.gov.uk/en/educationandlearning/14to19/years10and11

To help you choose the best course for your interests and skills – and to find which subjects you are best suited to study and at what level, check out the UCAS website below. Here you will find some great advice and useful tips.

www.ucas.com/students/choosingcourses/choosingcourse/chooserrightcourse

Happy hunting!

<<FINANCE – THE COST OF GOING TO UNIVERSITY>>

Many people worry about how much it will cost to go to university. However, help and assistance is available. The other good news is that you don't have to pay your fees up front either.



Support, loans and grants

There are two types of loans to help new students cover the costs of university or college: tuition fee loans and living cost loans.

Tuition fee loans are available to help pay the cost of your tuition fees and contribute to the cost of your learning at university. They are paid directly to your university or college by the government.

Living cost loans – sometimes called maintenance loans – are available to full-time students to help pay for living costs, such as food, travel, and accommodation.

You don't have to pay your tuition fee loan and your living cost loan back until you finish your course and have left university, and are earning over £21,000 a year.

You repay your loans back at a rate of nine per cent of your income over £21,000. So if your salary is £25,000 a year, you pay

nine per cent of £21,000 – which is £4.41 a week. The repayment process is simple, as it is taken automatically from your wages through the tax system.

Most universities also have a range of grants and scholarships on offer that students can apply for. Unlike student loans, grants and scholarships do not have to be paid back. Each university will have its own range of support; so you'll need to see what is on offer and whether you are eligible to apply for them.

The website www.yourfuture.direct.gov.uk has lots of information about university finance.

Supporting yourself

Part-time work

You can of course support yourself in all sorts of ways and approximately nine out of ten students find paid work during their time at university.

Some take part-time jobs and others take temporary jobs during holidays. Job vacancies are usually advertised by the students' union and/or university, and are rarely for more than 16 hours per week during term-time. There are usually jobs at the university as well as within the local environment.

It's a good way to earn some extra money but you do need to be able to manage your time well so that you can study and do your part-time work without getting too tired. If you have had a part-time job while at school, you will have gained some good experience towards managing this.

Budgeting

Learning how to handle your money and manage on a budget is a good skill to start acquiring now – even if you are just managing your pocket money on a weekly basis. Keep a notebook or account book if it helps.



Never be afraid to ask for help in managing your money. You can get helpful advice from your family and other trusted adults but also from your university.

❑ Disabled Students' Allowances

Students who face extra costs as a result of a disability may be eligible for help from their local authority in the form of a Disabled Students' Allowance.

Supporting yourself at Birmingham

❑ Grants and scholarships

Birmingham has both a grant and scholarship scheme. There are also scholarships for studying particular subjects. For more information on all financial help available visit www.as.bham.ac.uk/studentlife/finance

❑ The Job Zone

Job Zone, run by the Guild of Students in partnership with the University Careers Service, helps you to find a job to fit around your studies. This service, based on campus and staffed by students, will help you to find a part-time or temporary job. Vacancies advertised are rarely more than 16 hours per week during term-time and you don't have to waste time searching.

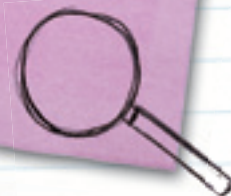
❑ Money Matters

The University of Birmingham has a great website for you to visit to make sure that you have the right financial knowledge before coming to the University. Have some fun and play the Money Matters game where you can experience a virtual life as a first year student at Birmingham.

Will you make the right financial choices? Come and find out at:

www.moneymatters.bham.ac.uk

For more details of the scholarships on offer, visit: www.undergraduate.bham.ac.uk/finance/scholarships.shtml



>>>QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS>



I have a disability: can I still come to university?

Yes you can and the Disability and Learning Support, and Counselling and Guidance services are there to give you a hand. We are here to provide support for all disabled students at the University; support that meets your individual needs. Our aim is to help you to achieve your full potential while you are studying. We have teams of people trained to help and offer support and advice: the Counselling and Guidance team (visit: www.as.bham.ac.uk/studentlife/counselling), and the Disability and Learning Support team (visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/support/disability/index.aspx).

I want to come to University but I don't think I will do very well in my A levels. What happens if I fail them or don't get very good grades?

There is always something that can be done. You could ask for extra tuition and help in preparing for your A level examinations at school or ask your teachers to take advantage of the University's subject-specific support given to schools by our undergraduates who try to help pupils improve their exam performance (visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/advice/west-midlands-schools/student-mentoring.aspx). If you don't achieve the A level results you need, you can always go through Clearing (see page 33 for more information) or you could defer your entry and resit your examinations at a college of further education.

I am really close to my family and worry about getting homesick if I go to university.

Lots of students get homesick at first but then they make new friends during Welcome Week and through the incredible number of events, clubs and societies on campus, and soon settle down. When the going does get tough, there are student mentors to talk to and we have a 24-hour student-run telephone counselling service. An alternative is to go to the university closest to where you live so that you can stay at home; you'll still have access to the same academic, social and sporting facilities as those students who live on or near campus. For information about Welcome Week visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/welcome/index.aspx

No one in my family has ever been to university, so I don't know much about it and don't know whether I'll fit in.

Birmingham welcomes students from a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds and is committed to encouraging more applications from families and communities who have little or no experience of higher education. Our Access to Birmingham (A2B) Scheme (visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/a2b) was created in 2001 to do just that and is designed to help students from the West Midlands find out about what studying at university involves. A2B students will also be invited to an enhanced induction day before starting university to offer information, advice and guidance for the important first term. You'll soon fit in as you make new friends and find lots of things to get involved with on campus.

I love both History and English and really don't know which one to study at university. What should I do?

It is important to make the right choices about what subject or subjects you want to study and what degree you want to take at university, especially if it is specifically linked to your chosen career. However, if you can't choose between two favourite subjects and you want to keep your career options open, apply to do a Joint Honours degree (see page 36) where you study two subjects for 50% of your time – or a Major–Minor degree where you study one subject for 70% of your time and the second subject for 30% of your time.

I want to be an engineer but don't know which area of engineering to go for. How do I find out which area of engineering is best for me?

You should visit the University on undergraduate open days (visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate) so that you can meet staff and existing engineering students. You can ask questions, get advice and see which of the engineering disciplines most appeals to you. You can look out for taster courses and masterclasses (visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/advice/west-midlands-schools/masterclasses) to make sure that you have chosen the right engineering discipline for you – and we have a lot to choose from. You may also like to visit our engineering website at: www.eng.bham.ac.uk

My family don't have very much money but still want me to go to university. Is there any financial help available for us?

The short answer is 'yes'. Financial support is available from the government and from universities to assist with paying your tuition fees and your living costs. Student loans can be used to pay for your fees and a maintenance loan is available to cover your living costs while you are studying. You only have to start repaying the loans once you have graduated and are earning an annual salary of more than £21,000. You could also apply to your Local Authority for financial support, get sponsorship, take a health-linked course with NHS funding, and also get yourself some part-time work to help support yourself through your studies. See our finance section on pages 22–23 and visit our website at: www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate

<<WHO'S BEEN TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM?>

Ben Shephard



Subjects studied: Dance and Drama: Sport and Recreation Management (Joint Honours)
Graduated: 1997
Current position: Presenter on ITV1's GMTV programme and on Sky sports; also known for Krypton Factor, Xtra Factor, Dance X, Dancing on Ice, having a cameo role in Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince, and climbing Mount Kilimanjaro for Comic Relief in 2009

My experience at uni also taught me so much about getting on with people from completely different backgrounds to me - being able to communicate with people with whom I have nothing in common - and also allowed me constructive time to really work out what I wanted to do career-wise.

I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life when I left school. Just over three years later, I had started work for Channel 4 and my TV career had begun. By taking a chance at uni, I met all sorts of people, experienced all sorts of things and was able to figure out what I most wanted from life.

It's a big commitment choosing to carry on learning, spending money not earning, not getting on the career ladder. But unless you have a cast iron idea of what it is you want, which rarely if ever happens, going to university could well be the single most important thing you ever do.

The fringe benefits weigh up too! I met my wife in my first year and now we have two kids. I have made life-long friends who I still see now ten years later. They were the best years of my life and I wouldn't want anyone to miss out on that experience.

I did a joint honours degree in dance, drama and sport and recreation management so I certainly don't have the background or training that many of my colleagues do in journalism or politics. Instead, I learned the performance side of what I do and being comfortable in front of people at university, which is a vital part of my job.

I kind of fell into presenting:

I worked as a runner for the weather department and the Weather Network in Hockley, doing everything from buying presenters' sandwiches to picking up their dry-cleaning. One of the producers suggested I give it a go, so every now and again they'd let me practise presenting the travel and weather when we weren't on air and I really enjoyed it.

I hadn't thought about being a TV presenter before that, but once I'd decided that was what I wanted to do, I worked hard to get as much experience and meet as many people as I could. There isn't one set route into television so the most important thing is building up contacts and getting to know the industry.

Once you have had the experience of presenting live television, you thrive on it and you don't want to do anything else. It's the most exciting, thrilling thing in the world - there's nothing like it. It's terrifying because you have no safety net - you can't do it again if something goes wrong - but that's also the thrill of it.

The other thing I enjoy the most about my job is communicating with people. I love meeting people from different walks of life, from politicians to ordinary people who have had something extraordinary happen to them - every single person that comes in has a story to tell.

Paul Manning

Graduated: 1996

Subject studied: Earth Sciences (Geology)

Current position: Retired professional cyclist who, after winning a gold medal in Team Pursuit Cycling at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, was inducted into the British Cycling Hall of Fame and awarded an MBE in 2009

Young people need to realise that life is one long learning experience and a good education at school and university is an important part of that. Today there is a much wider range of places to do that study and a vast range of subjects to allow people to follow a particular career path or just study a subject they enjoy. Do some research and you are sure to find something that will excite you.

Living and studying in Birmingham best lived up to my expectations in the excellent education that the University provided. The knowledge, enthusiasm and friendliness of the personalities in my time there was really infectious and made study a really enjoyable experience.

My education has no obvious link to my sporting career as it was a different subject area. However, it provides you with the important skills such as **time management**, goal setting and working towards deadlines. In addition, being self sufficient in your general life or career becomes a lot easier after spending three or more years getting through your studies.

Bearing in mind it is over ten years since I left University you realise that getting where I am today hasn't been an overnight success! A lot of dedication and focus on the goals in mind has allowed me to fulfil my ambitions; while the support of a well funded and structured sport has undoubtedly made it easier for me to achieve so much.

I have really enjoyed the challenge of working with a team of riders aiming to perform to the best of our ability in major championships over the years.

>>>HOW THEY DID IT<<<

Four of our former undergraduate students speak about how they made their journeys from school to university.



Daniel – Biosciences

Daniel, an A2B Biosciences student, graduated with a first class degree and then chose to stay on at the University of Birmingham to study Dentistry as a postgraduate student. Daniel came from Baverstock School, a mixed comprehensive in the Druids Heath area of Birmingham.

'I found studying for my A levels and making my UCAS application very stressful. Whilst at college I became aware of the Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme and was encouraged by both my college head teacher and the admissions tutor of my degree course to apply through it.

'The A2B scheme provided several very useful experiences and outcomes. It gave me the opportunity to experience what being at the University of Birmingham would really be like. I had two assignments to complete; an individual written essay and a group presentation. Working on these two assignments enabled me to have an ID card for access to the main library and an academic tutor. In a way it provided me with my very own individual mini tour of the University. This demonstrated how important it was for me to study here and encouraged me to maintain high standards of committed study during my stressful revision period.

'Secondly the A2B scheme relieved a lot of stress during my A level examinations because upon successful completion of my two assignments, my A level entrance requirements were reduced by one grade. I genuinely believe that this helped me to achieve A level grades greater than I required. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time spent at the University of Birmingham. The A2B scheme is a very

successful and useful scheme, which definitely has a positive impact on bringing local students to one of the major UK universities.'



Cath – Law

Why I Chose Birmingham

To be honest, it was more like Birmingham chose me in the end. I didn't do my research properly when choosing universities, and so I ended up applying to basically where my parents told me to, which is a route I'd never recommend to anyone now! It turned out when I went to start uni that where I'd chosen just wasn't right. I'd seen the University of Birmingham before, with some friends who were thinking about coming here, and it just felt right when I was here. The campus was exactly what I pictured uni should be, the facilities were brilliant, I love the city and it seemed like a great place to be, so I just naively assumed all universities were like that. Instead, I realised that Birmingham had kind of chosen me, and if I'd visited the other universities I'd picked on my UCAS form, I'd have realised much sooner that not every university just 'clicks' with you the way the right one will. Because of this, I ended up applying during my gap year, whilst I was working. It wasn't the best way to go about it, as I kept having to pop back into my old college to pick up references and chase up information. As you can imagine, this would have been even harder if I was away travelling then, so I still often wish I'd done my research properly and applied to Birmingham when I was still at college so I could have relaxed more during my year off, knowing that I'd got my place already through deferring.



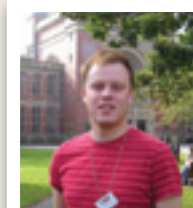
Eleanor – English

I started looking at universities when I was about half way through my first year at sixth form college doing AS levels in English Language, English Literature, History and Drama. I wanted to make sure that I was well researched so that in the end I applied for courses and unis that were right for me.

I had always known that I wanted to study English with a view to teaching it so I thought it would be easy to find a course. On starting my research, however, I discovered that there was a huge difference between the same degree at different institutions. After looking at courses and talking to teachers, I realised that I didn't want to give up my literature or language studies which narrowed my search down to courses that offered both or joint honours. The UCAS website was really helpful with this, it gave me a full list of all the unis that offered both.

Many universities I disregarded because they were too close to home, too far or the grades needed were too high or low but it left me with a large range to look at. I spent a lot of time looking at websites and prospectuses for more specific course and university information. I knew I wanted to live in a city because home is a small town and that ruled out a few more. It was then that the course became the full focus of my attention and I spent time again reviewing, right down to module level, what I'd be studying at each uni. Open days were really helpful and so were my teachers who sat and looked at courses with me to see which ones would suit my strengths and interests. I eventually decided and sent off my UCAS form – it was really important to have done the research beforehand so I could tailor my personal statement and send it off early.

The main piece of advice I'd give to anyone considering uni would be to do your research carefully and thoroughly and talk to the teachers who teach the subject you want to do – they'll have done the degree and will have loads of useful knowledge.



Gary – International Relations and Political Science

Originally from Cadbury College in Birmingham and a former A2B applicant, Gary graduated in International Relations and Political Science and was President of the University's Guild of Students during his time here.

Gary strongly believes that everyone has the right to fulfil their potential through education and that the student's voice should be heard. He succeeded in doubling the resources spent on student representation while at the Guild and enjoyed being involved in shaping student life at Birmingham.

He chose to stay on at the University, becoming a postgraduate student, taking a part-time Masters degree in Local Government. He also began working in Training and Development for the National Union of Students as the West Midlands Area Convenor, helping local colleges set up and develop their own student unions.

Gary's university experience helped him develop the confidence and skills needed to work in an area that really motivates him.

>FIND OUT MORE>>>>>



EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Useful information

The Directgov public services website (www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm) has some really useful information for young people about their education, learning and careers (see: www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm); also check out their special section for young people (see: www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/index.htm) where you can find advice on qualifications, further study and careers.

UK UNIVERSITIES, HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

UK universities and colleges

To search for courses at UK universities and colleges go to www.ucas.ac.uk

Active map of UK universities and higher education institutions

The University of Wolverhampton has developed a UK active map of universities and HE institutions (visit: www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo) – once there you can click inside the map on the name of the institution you want to find out about (or in the right-hand panel) and you will be transferred to your chosen university website.

Complete University Guide

For information on all UK universities and advice on which university to choose visit: www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

DEVELOPING SKILLS FOR UNIVERSITY

skills4uni

If you have extended projects and assignments to do, visit our website www.skills4uni.bham.ac.uk. Here you will find interactive activities, videos and resources, which help you through a project and also help you to develop the independent learning skills you will need for university study.





COURSES AND CAREERS

Leaving school, college or university

Courses & Careers UK is a free service for young people who are about to leave school, college or university. It provides detailed university and college opportunities together with careers advice, job vacancies, vocational guidance and gap year choices. There are also free electronic magazines and prospectuses available. Visit them at: www.courses-careers.com

CAREERS AND JOBS

Careers and educational opportunities in the UK and worldwide

GET from Hobsons is a terrific site for young people, giving information and advice about careers and educational opportunities at home and abroad. Visit: www.get.hobsons.co.uk

BEING A STUDENT IN BIRMINGHAM

If you want to know what it's like to be a student in Birmingham, visit: www.visitbirmingham.com/student_birmingham or if you want to find out more about being a student at the University of Birmingham, visit our You Tube channel (www.youtube.com/user/unibirmingham) to find lots of information and great videos. You can also join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/unibirmingham) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/unibirmingham>).

>>A-Z JARGON BUSTER<<

Jargon is a type of shorthand language used by people who work in a certain profession that can be very confusing for people who don't. Higher Education is full of jargon; so, if you've ever wondered what all those words, initials and acronyms mean, here's your chance to find out with our A-Z jargon buster.

A

A level – Advanced level qualification you usually take after doing your GCSEs and offered in a whole range of subjects: you will need two or three (sometimes more) A levels to get into a university.

Access schemes – some universities encourage young people from their local areas – who normally wouldn't attend their institution – to think about and work towards applying to take a degree; it's about giving opportunities to those people whose backgrounds may not support their entry into higher education: at Birmingham the scheme is called Access to Birmingham or A2B for short.

Admissions – the Admissions Office of a university or college handle your application and enrolment into the place; so that's who you need to ask for when you phone up to talk about getting in.

Admissions tutor – a person, such as a lecturer, who decides whether or not you will be offered a place at the university/college you have chosen; there is usually an admissions tutor for every subject or course.

AS level – stands for 'Advanced Supplementary' level and is a qualification you can take at the end of the first year of your A level course; so the AS level is equal to one half of an A level.

Assessment – this is the process of measuring your progress by looking at such things as your written work, exam results, presentations and interviews.

Assignment – a piece of work you must complete and hand in by a given date for marking and grading; assignments in higher education are usually much bigger than they are at school.

B

Bachelor degree – the degree most students go for first; it takes three or four years to complete and can be taken in lots of subject areas such as arts (BA), music (BMus), science and technology (BSc), education (BEd), engineering (BEng), and law (LLB): when your degree is awarded you can put the letters after your name, for example – John Smith BSc.

BTEC – stands for the Business and Technician Education Council, the body that validates the BTEC qualifications (Award, Diploma and Certificate); the BTEC qualifications prepare you for work or for higher education.

Bursary – this is money you might be given as an award, grant or scholarship if you have the right qualifications and experience to qualify for it.



C

Campus university – a university where everything you need is on one site, including all the buildings used for teaching, administration, facilities and living accommodation: Birmingham is a campus university; in fact it has two – one in Edgbaston and one in Selly Oak.

City & Guilds – nationally recognised qualifications in vocational (work-based) and skills training but these are not generally used to meet university entrance requirements, so you need to check whether the university you want to attend accepts them or not.

Civic university – one of the universities established in the 19th and early 20th centuries in major industrial areas and big cities – and basically meaning 'of the city and its people'; Birmingham is one of them.

Clearing – this is about putting the right person in the right place at the right time; it is a system operated by UCAS in August each year that matches students who have not yet been placed – or have not met the terms of their offer, to a suitable university (or other institution) and degree programme.

Core modules – these are modules that are compulsory, so you can't opt out of them; you just have to grin and bear it and accept that you really need to know this stuff!

D



Degree – a higher education qualification usually taken after doing your A levels or equivalent and split into undergraduate or first (Bachelor) degrees, and postgraduate or second (Masters and Doctorate) degrees.

Department – most universities divide their subject areas into departments so students belong to the department that teaches their course; some universities have colleges, schools or faculties instead – some even have a combination of these, but you'll soon get used to it.

DipHE – Diploma in Higher Education; a qualification approximately equal to two years of a three-year degree; often available in vocational (work-based) subjects like Nursing.

Diploma

A new qualification for 14–19 year olds that offer a mix of classroom learning, creative thinking and hands-on experience. It can be studied at foundation, higher and advanced level. See www.directgov.uk/en/educationandlearning/qualificationsexplained

Dissertation – every student's favourite piece of work, a dissertation is a long (10,000-word), sometimes very long (80,000-word), essay that contributes to the final mark or grade awarded for your degree.

Doctorate – taken after your first degree, this is any research degree (PhD, DPhil), that allows you to use the title 'Doctor' before your name, or the letters PhD after it; some people prefer to use PhD after their name to avoid being mistaken for a medical doctor!

E

E-Bac – this stands for English Baccalaureate, which will involve you studying English, Mathematics, Science, History or Geography, and a foreign language, as well as a number of other optional subjects.

Enquiry-based learning – this puts you right at the centre of your own learning, so instead of sitting quietly and listening to someone tell you what you need to know, you are encouraged to be active and go and find out for yourself – this way you become an independent learner and a great detective!

F

Foundation course – a one-year full-time course that prepares you for entry to a degree programme in a particular subject; you usually take this when you don't quite have the right qualifications or experience to start the full-length degree programme straight away.

Fresher – a student in their first year at university/college is called a 'fresher' because they are new and fresh.

Freshers' Week – sometimes called 'intro week' or 'welcome week' as well, this is the first week of your first term of your first year at university and is packed with fun events and entertainments organised to help you settle in, make new friends and find out everything you need to know about your chosen university and its students' union.



Further Education (FE) – this comes after secondary education when you have taken your GCSEs; you need Further Education qualifications before you can go on to Higher Education.

Further Education College – an educational institution you can go to after you finish your secondary school education that offers academic and vocational (work-based) courses; some offer degrees validated (checked and approved) by a university.





G

Gap year – this is when you decide to take a year off after finishing school or college before going to university; you might spend the time getting work experience, earning money, travelling or doing something else you really want to do.

Graduate – (pronounced 'grad-u-at') this is the name you are called when you have successfully completed your degree; for a few months before that time you are a 'graduand' (pronounced grad-u-and).

Graduation – usually refers to the ceremony where you are officially given your awards, but it can also mean the successful completion of a degree, so you graduate (pronounced 'grad-u-ate').

Guild of Students – the union of students at Birmingham is the Guild of Students, sometimes just called 'The Guild', which is also the name of its building; as the first purpose-built students' union in the country, Birmingham's Guild of Students is the centre of University life; their main aim is to help students have a better experience while at Birmingham by offering a wide range of activities, services, societies and social events.

H

Hall of residence – accommodation (living quarters) for students providing kitchens, bed linen and other facilities: some halls also provide meals while others are self-catering.

Higher Education (HE) – after secondary school you can go on to further education and then higher education where you study for a degree or higher-level qualification at a higher education institution, such as a university.

HEI (Higher Education Institution) – an educational establishment that offers academic and vocational courses and qualifications; some offer degrees validated by a partner university.

Honours degree – most Bachelor degrees are honours degrees, but a degree may be awarded with or without honours depending on how well you do in your final assessment; the classification of honours degrees are First-Class, Upper Second-Class, Lower Second-Class and Third-Class, but if you don't achieve enough marks to achieve any of these, you are awarded an Ordinary degree instead.

HNC (Higher National Certificate) – this is a vocational course roughly equal to two or three A levels.

HND (Higher National Diploma) – a vocational course approximately equal to the first two years of a three-year Bachelor degree.



I

Independent learning – this is about learning how to learn for yourself rather than relying on someone else to tell you what you need to know.

International Baccalaureate – (pronounced 'back-a-law-e-at') this is an exam, roughly equivalent to A levels, taken at the end of secondary education; the two year International Baccalaureate is recognised as an acceptable qualification by universities around the world.

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) – English test for those who do not have English as a first language; it is managed by the British Council and partner organisations and is one of the most widely accepted qualifications by British universities.

J

Internship – a fixed period of time spent in an industry finding out more and helping with specific projects for anything from a week to a year.

ITE – stands for Initial Education Training and is a step you need to take if you want to become a qualified school teacher. You can take the Postgraduate Diploma in Secondary Education (QTS), or the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Education (PGCE Advanced). Study is usually for one year, full time.

K

Joint Honours – a type of first (Bachelor) degree where you study two subjects, say English and History, in equal depth; you would study English for 50% of your time and History for the other 50% and your degree would be a BA in English and History.

KS – stands for Key Stage; after Key Stage 4 you go on to post-16 education.





L

Lecture – an educational talk given by a member of teaching staff to a group of students, usually a much bigger group than you are used to at school.

Lecturer – apart from being someone who gives a lecture, a lecturer is a well-qualified person, perhaps even a specialist in their particular subject.

Live in – living on campus, for example in a hall of residence.

Live out – living off campus, for example in a private house, or rented flat.

M

Masters degrees – once you have completed your first undergraduate Bachelors degree, you can choose to do a second postgraduate degree qualification and this is known as a Masters; so you can have a Masters qualification in the arts (MA) business (MBA), engineering (MEng), science (MSc), philosophy (MPhil) and law (LLM); however, in some subjects you can also take a Masters qualification while you are an undergraduate – the MSci in Maths and Physics, for example.

Mature student – older than most other students (above the age of 21 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or above 20 in Scotland) and have probably not come straight from school; some mature students are very mature indeed and might be in their 40s or 50s when they take their degrees.

MFL – this stands for Modern Foreign Languages and is a popular subject at many universities; it might include the study of French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese and Japanese.

Modern universities – these are higher education institutions that have been granted university status since 1992.

Module – a short course taken as part of some degree programmes; some are compulsory (you have to do them) and some are optional (you can choose to do them); a programme that is made up of a number of separate short courses where you are given a mark or grade for each module is called modular.





N

New universities – these are any of the universities established in the 1960s; the term is also used to describe former polytechnics and colleges of higher education that were given university status in 1992, or colleges that have achieved university status since then.

Nightline – a telephone counselling service, usually run by students for students, with the purpose of offering help and support with a range of problems.

NUS – stands for the National Union of Students; run by students, it provides research, welfare information and services to its members and is also the national body that represents and campaigns on behalf of all students in the country.

O

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification; qualifications that are work-related and cover the skills and knowledge needed to do a particular job.

Old universities – these are our oldest higher education institutions, like Oxford and Cambridge, established between the 13th and 15th centuries and historically linked to the Church.

Open days – when higher education institutions open their doors to those who want to attend in the future; it's a great opportunity to be shown around the university or other education institution and meet some of the staff and existing students.

Oxbridge – the collective (joint) name for the two oldest universities in the country, Oxford and Cambridge.

P

Personal development planning – this is a means by which you can record, monitor, build and reflect upon your educational, personal and career development; it can now be done online, too: at Birmingham we have an electronic facility called >>Progress>> which enables you to do this.

Personal tutor – a personal tutor is there to help you and is responsible for looking after your personal wellbeing as well as your academic progress while in higher education.

Plagiarism – pronounced 'play-jer-iz-um' this is where you copy someone else's work and pretend it's yours; it's a sort of cheating or stealing when you don't acknowledge the real source of



R

the information, and universities and colleges take a dim view of it – they may even prevent you from completing your degree: to see what the University of Birmingham says about it visit www.as.bham.ac.uk/study/support/sca/plagguide.shtml

Portfolio – a collection of your original work that may have to be submitted as part of your course assessment; it also refers to the carrying case in which you keep the work.

Postgraduate student – sometimes called ‘postgrad’ for short, this is a student who already has their first degree and is now doing another higher one such as a Masters, a Doctorate (PhD) or a PGCE.

Professor – a very senior tutor with expertise and experience in a certain subject who may be the head of a department, often carrying out important national and international research work.

Prospectus – a printed and online brochure (a bit like a catalogue) produced by a university or college advertising their institution (especially its facilities and life in the local area) and courses (degrees and other programmes) to encourage students to apply.

Reading list – a list of books and other material (for example; journal articles, articles on the internet) that you are expected to read in preparation for your degree course or programme – BUT please don’t rush out and buy everything in advance; try to access the material first through libraries and second-hand book shops and, if you’re not sure, check with your chosen university before doing anything.

Reading week – a week during term-time when there are no or few lectures and seminars so you can do lots of reading and studying for your course; it is not an excuse for a week off – sadly!

Redbrick university – these universities may well be built using nice red bricks but the term ‘red brick’ originally referred to six civic British universities that

were founded in the industrial cities of England in the Victorian era and which achieved university status before the Second World War – they are Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield.

Refectory – a posh name for a university or college cafeteria, restaurant or dining room where anyone can go for refreshments.

Reference – usually a written statement (although it can in some circumstances be given over the phone) prepared by a person who knows you, such as a teacher or employer, about your abilities and character; this person is known as a ‘referee’ and they will receive enquiries about your academic and other achievements and will hopefully say nice things about you as a person!



S

Research-led university – research-led universities, like Birmingham, are those where a very high proportion of staff and students (usually postgraduates) are engaged in research of some kind with some projects being of international stature.

Russell Group – this is an association of 20 major research-led UK universities formed in 1994 with the aim of promoting the interests of these universities where teaching and learning take place within a culture of research excellence; they then share new thinking and ideas with one another – Birmingham is a member.

Sandwich course – nothing to do with bread and fillings, although the principle is the same as the sandwich you eat; it is a four-year course that involves 12-months work experience as well as academic study – so the study is the bread and the work experience is the filling.

Scholarship – money awarded to students with high academic achievement to help support their education.

Self-catering/Self-catered halls – halls of residence with shared kitchens where students have to prepare their own meals.

Semester – this is another word (American usage) for 'Term' and is used to describe those terms that are about 15-weeks long rather than the shorter 8–11 week ones; some

universities have two semesters and some have three terms.

Seminar – another form of teaching at university, overseen by a lecturer in which smaller groups of students discuss and work on particular subjects together; it is less formal than a lecture.

Single honours – a type of undergraduate first degree awarded for study in one main subject, such as Law or Medicine.

Sponsor – a person or organisation that accepts the responsibility for all or part of your student fees or expenses.

Student societies – groups where you can get together with like-minded fellow students and have fun doing something you enjoy, such as archery, hang-gliding or chess.

Students' Union (SU) – most universities and colleges have a students' union and you automatically become a member when you begin your higher education studies; these unions organise and offer a range of helpful services and represent all students at their particular establishment – it is also the name of the building where the student's union is housed: SU – the abbreviation for Students' Union, also sometimes abbreviated in reverse as 'US' – Union of Students.

Summer school – courses and lectures held at a university during the summer vacation; they are also held to give school pupils a taster of what life might be like at university.



T

Tariff – the list of points you score for each of your Further Education qualifications, so that with the right number of points you can get into your chosen university to do a particular degree programme.

Term – the academic year in universities is normally split into three terms of between eight and twelve weeks long, with a long vacation (about three months) in the summer. (See also Semester)

Thesis – a dissertation (a very, very long essay) containing the results of an original piece of research to support a particular argument, usually written by a student for their degree.

Transcript – a detailed list of classes or courses a student has taken at college or university, with marks or grades for each subject.

Tutor – an academic who supervises the work of individual students (tutees); so a tutee is a student whose work and/or wellbeing is supervised by a particular tutor.

Tutorial – another university teaching tool where a small group of students meet a tutor to talk about their studies; some tutorials may be offered on a one-to-one basis.

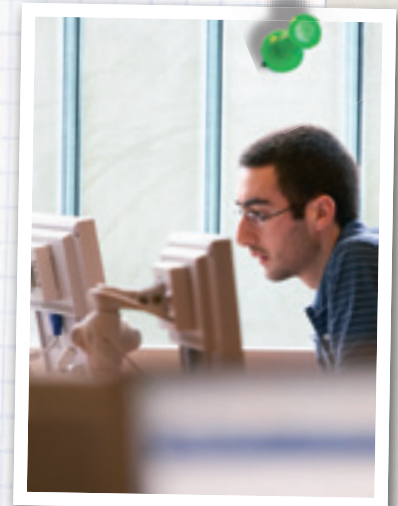
U

UCAS – Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the organisation that handles most university applications; students fill out an online UCAS form; UCAS then forward it to the universities the student wants to apply to – it also oversees the process to check that no student finds themselves with more than one place and it does try to match students with vacancies as efficiently as possible.

Undergraduate – sometimes called 'undergrad' for short, a student doing their first degree.

University – an educational establishment for higher education that has been awarded university status by Parliamentary Statute and which grants academic degrees at all levels, in a variety of subjects;

the word is derived from a Latin phrase meaning 'a community of teachers and scholars'.



U

Vocational course – any course that is intended to train and prepare you for a particular career or job; they often involve practical work experience, or doing projects similar to what goes on in the workplace: a vocational qualification therefore, is specific to the world of work rather than academic study.

Y

Year abroad – a Year Abroad can be one of the most exciting parts of some degrees offered by universities; it means that you spend one year of your programme studying at a university in another country; it is especially good if you want to develop your languages skills or if you want to work abroad when you have finished your studies – but not all programmes offer a Year Abroad.

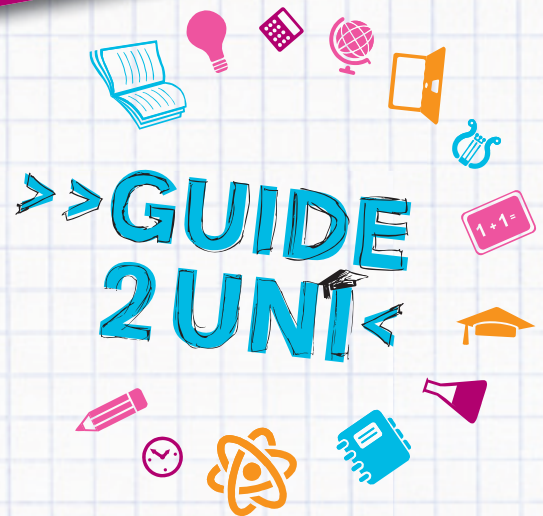


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