



PARENTS', CARERS' & SUPPORTERS' GUIDE

ABOUT US

HIGHER EDUCATION – WHAT IS IT?

Most people progress to **Higher Education** after completing their BTEC, A-level or equivalent qualification. Higher Education courses are graded at level 4 and above. You can study a higher education course at a **university**, college or as part of a higher or degree level apprenticeship. It is never too late to go to university and lots of colleges offer **access courses** which support mature learners back into education.

WHAT ABOUT UNIVERSITY?

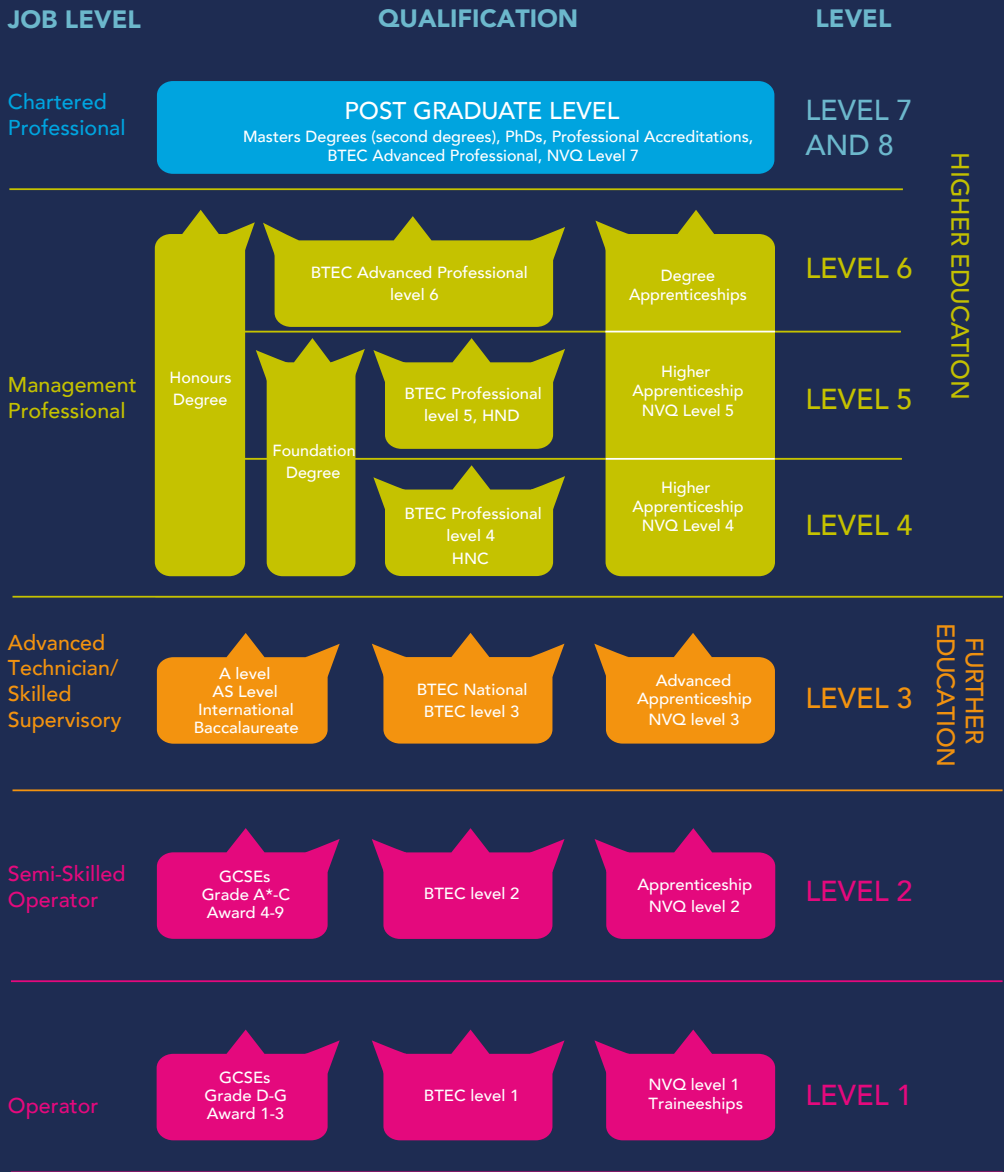
University is a place where people study for their **degree**, or other higher education qualification. Students choose which subject they'd like to study and which university they would like to study at, there are over 160 universities in the UK and more than 280 colleges with higher education courses.

"Being part of Aimhigher made me realise how the world of work works, helped me plan ahead and gave me an idea of what career I want to go into"



NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

There are thousands of qualifications to choose from and they can all help your son or daughter climb a ladder to a successful career. This map shows how they all fit together.





WHY UNIVERSITY?

"University gave me the opportunity to work abroad in Disneyland, Florida. I met so many new people and I've made memories that will stay with me forever"

Why should my child go to University?

A university education is much more than the qualification you get at the end. Adapting to life at university is one of the most rewarding challenges a student will face in their lifetime. Whatever subject your child decides to study, going to university will equip them with key skills that can

be applied to their academic work, their career and their personal life.

University gives people the opportunity to study a subject which they really enjoy, get out of their comfort zone, expand their horizons, try out new hobbies and interests, build independence and make friends from all over the world.

On average graduates earn more money over a lifetime than non-graduates and have access to a wider range of rewarding career opportunities.

"I completed a placement year at a leading bank in Birmingham. I now have great work experience and I know what job I'd love to do when I leave university!"

BUT THERE IS SO MUCH CHOICE!

Universities

There are hundreds of higher education providers to choose from. Your local college or university may offer the perfect course for your child or they may want to leave home and go further afield. There is no right or wrong university but it is important to research all of the options and make sure your child chooses an institution where they will be happy, well supported and successful.

What to consider:

- How does the university score in the league tables?

University league tables allow you to see which universities rate highly for certain courses, student satisfaction, and graduate employment. They can help students narrow down choices between similar courses and universities.

- How far is the university from home?

Think about how your child will travel to and

from university or whether they'll need to stay in accommodation nearby. Universities have long holidays so your son or daughter may spend quite a bit of time at home throughout the year.

- What facilities and teaching resources do they have?

Does the institution have the spaces and resources for your child to reach their full potential? (e.g. well-equipped science labs, a sports performance centre or a careers service)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Supporting your child to attend university open days will help them to make the right decisions. Meeting teaching staff and current students is a great way for your son or daughter to find out if they would fit in and love it there. You can support them with planning their journeys, preparing some questions to ask or going along with them.

Courses

Selecting the best possible course is a key decision for any student and the choice is often a challenging one. There are over 30,000 courses at UK universities, and the same subject will not necessarily be taught in the same way, or cover the same material, at every university who offers it. Some courses offer a clear career path (Nursing, Teaching etc.)

whilst others like history and English are more broad and have several employment options available after completion.



SO HOW DO PEOPLE CHOOSE A COURSE?

Some people have wanted to be a doctor since they were 10 years old or have always had a passion for dance and theatrical arts. Their choice is a little easier to make. Most students aren't sure yet and the variety of courses can seem overwhelming.

Support your son or daughters decision making by asking them these questions:

- What interests you?
- Do you like any of your current subjects enough to study them in more depth?
- Do you have a dream job in mind?
- What course would help you to get there?
- Do you have a passion which you could pursue further at university?
- What are you really good at?
- What courses will accept the grades you're likely to achieve?

Have a look at [UCAS.com](https://ucas.com) to discover the wide range of courses available (it's never too early to begin the research!)

The Buzz Quiz helps students to identify what careers they'd succeed in based on their personality. This could give them ideas about what degree to study. icould.com/buzz/



HOW WILL I AFFORD IT?

One of the biggest concerns for parents and carers is the cost of university. Here's a breakdown of what you need to know about fees, finance, and repayment.

Tuition fees

Many universities and colleges charge around £9,250 per year for tuition fees (this includes all of a student's lectures, seminars, tutorials, exams, assessments and marking). Any student in the UK can take out a tuition loan for their first degree and fees do not need to be paid up front. Students apply for a loan to cover their fees and this doesn't need to be repaid at all until they've completed their degree and are earning a significant salary.

Living costs

The second loan students can apply for is the maintenance loan to help towards living expenses, such as accommodation, food, and course materials. The amount students can borrow depends on several factors, including where they will be studying and their household income. It is important that you declare your financial information in order for your child to receive the maximum amount of funding available to them. Like the tuition fee loan, this doesn't need to be repaid until they are in a well-paid job.

EXTRA SUPPORT

Scholarships

Scholarships are cash grants which do not have to be repaid. They are usually awarded for academic, sporting or musical excellence.

Bursaries

A non-repayable sum of money awarded to students who fulfil specific criteria.

Many universities offer additional support to students in need such as fee waivers and hardship funds.

Other help is available for students with dependents, care leavers, and students with disabilities.



AMBITION

FINANCE

CAREER



PLAN

FUTURE

COLLEGE

Discover more about
student loans and the
repayment process here:
www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/



ALTERNATIVES TO UNIVERSITY

University isn't the right choice for everyone, and there are other avenues which can lead to success. Here are some other options for you to consider:

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a good way to gain the skills, qualifications, and experience needed to get into many careers. They combine paid work, training, and study without any tuition fees and can lead to higher education level qualifications.

The world of work

If your child knows what sector they want to work in, they can get straight into employment. It's a competitive market so they'll need to consistently develop their CV, check out job adverts and speak to recruiters to get a sense of different jobs on offer. There are also a number school leaver programmes who look for talented young people to start working in their business without a university-level qualification.

Deferred entry

Some young people need a bit of breathing space after school or college. If you think this would benefit them, your son or daughter could spend some time gaining work experience or taking a gap year to build up skills, knowledge, and confidence before they start a higher education qualification a year later.



WHAT NOW?

Whether your child is going to university, applying for an apprenticeship or starting a job search, there's a variety of things that they can do now to help them stand out from the crowd.

Work experience and internships

Work experience looks great on personal statements, job applications and CVs but only if your child is able to reflect on what they learnt from it and how it's relevant to their future. Some university courses (e.g. Medicine, Social Work and Teaching) require a minimum number of hours experience.

Part-time work

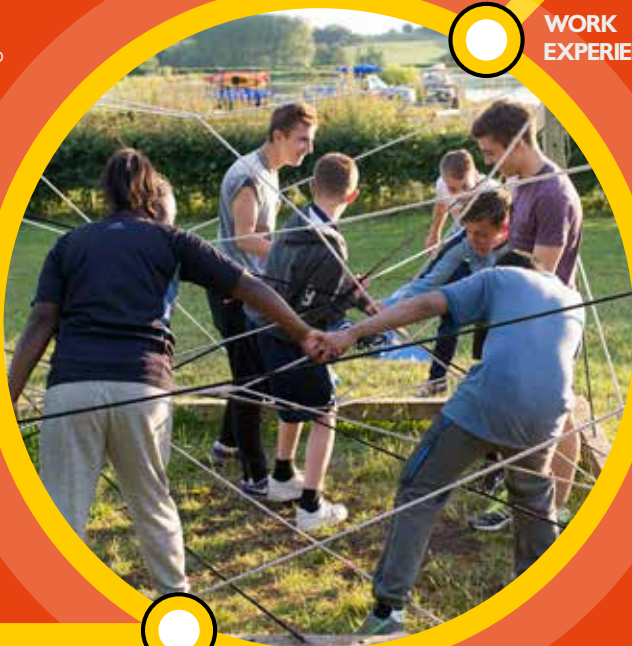
An evening or weekend job can demonstrate a young person's potential to universities and employers. By working for just a few hours per week, your child can gain employability skills such as communication, handling money, solving problems and many more. These are useful to draw upon in applications and interviews.

Volunteering

Doing voluntary work shows that a young person is driven and focused. This is another great opportunity for your child to build skills that are essential for their future.

Clubs and Hobbies

Talking about interests or hobbies adds personality to an application and can set a candidate apart from their peers. It's important for students to have other skills outside of academia.



**WORK
EXPERIENCE**

EMPLOYABILITY



JARGON BUSTER

When your son or daughter starts thinking about going to university or college, you'll come across a lot of new words and phrases. We've tried to help by picking out some of the key terms.



Access Course

Access courses are designed to prepare mature students without other qualifications for entry into university.

Campus

The grounds and buildings of a university or college.

Freshers

Students who are new to higher education are often referred to as 'freshers'. A welcome week is usually hosted at the start of term to familiarise new students with higher education life. This includes lots of social events as well as an introduction to facilities and staff.

Halls of Residence

These are blocks of accommodation where most higher education students live during their first year of study.

Lecture

A presentation of ideas and information by a member of academic staff (a lecturer) to a fairly large number of students.

Prospectus

A printed and online brochure produced by a university or college to advertise their institution and courses to potential students.

UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is the organisation that handles most university applications. Students complete an online UCAS form; UCAS then forward it to the universities that the student wants to apply to.



UNI

FINANCE

OPPORTUNITY

CAREER

JOURNEY



QUALIFICATIONS

LIFE

USEFUL WEBSITES

Complete University Guide

For information on all UK universities and advice on which university to choose visit:

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

Student Finance

Find out more information about Student Finance by visiting

www.gov.uk/studentfinance

Which? University

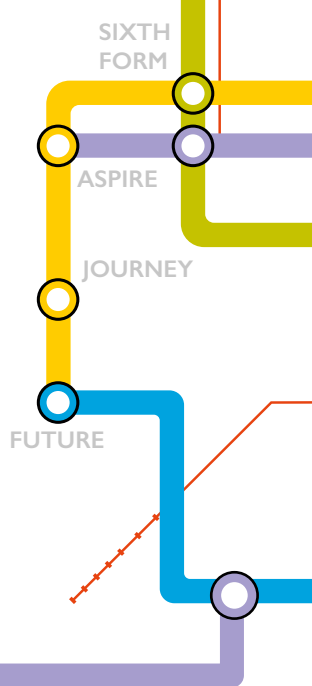
Find a subject which suits you at:

<https://university.which.co.uk/>

UK universities and colleges

To search for courses at UK universities and colleges go to

www.ucas.ac.uk



For more information about Aimhigher visit our website: www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk

Email us: aimhigher@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Or telephone: 0121 415 8176



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