



UniFest 2017: Guidance for Schools

This guidance is for schools who are considering participating in the Aimhigher UniFest 2017 summer school programme. It should be read in conjunction with the UniFest 2017 Directory and Application Form which can be downloaded from <http://www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk/for-teachers-advisors/unifest>

What is UniFest?

UniFest is a programme of summer schools offered by 5 universities in the West Midlands:

- Aston University
- Birmingham City University
- University College Birmingham
- The University of Birmingham
- The University of Worcester.

UniFest 2017 will give over 300 disadvantaged young people from Year 10 opportunities to explore the world of higher education and make informed decisions about their future.

Who is UniFest for?

UniFest is for young people with the potential to be considering higher education who, as a result of certain barriers, need information, advice and support to aspire, attain and plan for progression. As the primary funders of UniFest, universities must ensure places are offered to young people who meet certain criteria. This forms part of their Access Agreements with the government's Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Aimhigher uses a weighted system to identify and prioritise applicants based on information about their backgrounds gathered as part of the application process.

Criteria	Weighting
Disadvantaged home postcode*	1
Eligible for Free School Meals / FSM6 / Pupil Premium	1
No parental experience of higher education	7
Parents / carers unemployed or in semi-skilled / manual occupations*	1
Young carers	1
Disability and / or learning difficulty	7
Children in Care	7

*Aimhigher can help you identify postcodes and occupations that meet our criteria. Contact m.a.thompson@bham.ac.uk for more information.

Although we do not weight or select by gender we would remind schools that boys are underrepresented in higher education. When identifying students for UniFest it would be very helpful if colleagues can encourage boys to consider the opportunity.

How does attending benefit young people?

Aimhigher summer schools have operated for many years, and numerous local and national evaluations show that attending helps young people become motivated and confident about their learning and progression. Young people attending summer schools are known to have improved KS4 and KS5 attainment and higher levels of entry to higher education than those who do not attend¹.

1 Aimhigher summer schools: Participants and progression to higher education; HEFCE December 2010



Is there a cost?

No. UniFest is funded by the universities, and is free to schools, young people and their parents / carers. **However, Unifest is expensive, and if an applicant who has been offered and accepts a place, drops out or does not attend we reserve the right to charge their school a cancellation fee of £200. See “What if learners drop out?” below for more details.**

What about supervision and safeguarding?

You do not need to supervise young people on UniFest events. The universities take full responsibility for safeguarding, and will liaise with applicants and their parents / carers in advance of their event. Aimhigher universities operate comprehensive safeguarding, child protection and health and safety policies and procedures. They will undertake risk assessments for all events and activities, and make these available to you for assurance purposes. Full details are on our website: www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk

What about transport?

Universities liaise directly with young people and their parents /carers about travel arrangements, and reimburse all reasonable transport costs to and from events.

Events are in term-time. Why should applicants miss school?

If UniFest clashes with activities at your school please consider the best interests of the young person...UniFest may be more beneficial than work experience for at student who is considering higher education rather than direct entry to training or employment.

What about Ramadan and Eid al Fitr?

Some UniFest events may coincide with Ramadan and the Eid al Fitr festival, and male and female prayer facilities will be available to Muslim students. However, the intensive and highly participatory nature of UniFest means young people attending will be asked not to fast during the event, and to make penance with additional fast days afterwards. Full details of the arrangements for Ramadan and Eid al Fitr at the events concerned are included in the UniFest Directory.

Is there any flexibility on age groups?

UniFest is exclusively for Year 10 students and applications from other age groups cannot be accepted.

What should I put in my supporting statement?

Please include any information on the young person’s background and how attending will benefit them. If a young person does not meet our criteria they may still gain a place if they have exceptional needs.

What if learners drop out?

Aimhigher will do all we can to minimise drop out before events, but it is inevitable in a small number of cases. Participating schools are making an investment in UniFest and we strongly advise you to:

- Actively support applicants in the period between places being offered and events taking place, and reinforce the importance of attending
- Notify Aimhigher immediately if a young person withdraws or is at risk of withdrawing...direct contact between the university, the applicant and their family can often help reassure and overcome any worries or concerns
- Identify reserve applicants to fill any vacated places. We can accept replacement candidates until Monday 5th June 2017.



Aimhigher will work closely with you to ensure all of your places are filled. However if a learner drops out on or after 5th June 2017 a payment of £200 will be requested from the school concerned. This is still only a small proportion of the cost of an empty place to our university partners.

This cost will also be charged for learners who fail to attend as expected, leave an event early or are excluded for breaching the UniFest Code of Conduct.

What if events are cancelled?

All UniFest events require a minimum number of confirmed applications to run. We will assess event level demand in early April, after the closing date for applications (31st March 2017) and if an event is at risk we may use applicants' eligibility and their 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th choices to spread demand more evenly. If despite this an event does not achieve sufficient numbers we reserve the right to cancel it.

How do I get involved?

1. Contact us to confirm your interest and we will send you more copies of the UniFest Directory and application form. We can also arrange for a representative to visit you to talk to potential applicants/ parents
2. Applications should be returned by 31st March 2017 if possible. Applicants will receive an acknowledgement postcard by return post
3. We will write to all applicants in April 2017, to let them know which event they are going to. Participating schools will also receive a report listing the outcomes for their applicants
4. Our university partners will maintain regular contact with all applicants and parents / carers between April and July
5. We will notify schools of any concerns about drop out / non-attendance on an ongoing basis
6. Impact reports will be sent to participating schools and colleges in September 2017.

Who do I contact for more information?

Contact Mike Thompson, Aimhigher West Midlands Coordinator:

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