



**BIRMINGHAM CITY**  
University

# Parents' Guide

Birmingham City University's guide for parents and supporters

# Welcome

## *Welcome to our Parents' Guide*

Your son or daughter's transition into higher education is an exciting time. However, the process can be an overwhelming experience as there are lots of big decisions to be made, including choosing the right course for them, managing their finances and finding out what support is available.

At Birmingham City University, we pride ourselves on supporting our students at every step of their journey. Whether you are a parent, carer or a family member, our Parents' Guide will help you to support them through the process.



# Why go to university?

*The first decision a prospective student needs to make is whether higher education is right for them.*

Our students have the chance to gain industry experience through work placements, mentoring schemes, Erasmus years and sandwich courses.

## Some of the reasons students may have for going to university include:

- To study something they enjoy and are passionate about in greater depth
- To pursue a specific profession that requires a degree-level qualification (such as teaching or nursing)
- To enhance career options and promotion prospects in the workplace
- To increase their earning potential: graduates earn £9,000 more per year than non-graduates, according to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015)
- To develop new skills, knowledge and interests through various opportunities, such as work experience, volunteering projects or student societies.



# | Why Birmingham City University?

## Teaching excellence

Our students learn through various modes of study, including lectures, seminars and lab-based workshops. Many of our courses offer work placements with leading companies, providing vital opportunities for your son or daughter to gain first-hand experience. Working closely with these companies enables us to develop cutting-edge curricula and collaborate on course projects.

## Exemplary facilities

We're investing £260 million in our estate, including a major expansion of our City Centre Campus, providing students with an enviable range of facilities. New, additional teaching space, and a new home for Birmingham Conservatoire, will open in 2017. We operate a number of specialist libraries — including the Mary Seacole Library, one of the biggest health libraries in the UK.



## An unforgettable experience

Our thriving Students' Union offers societies as varied as basketball, cheerleading, chess and rock climbing. There are plenty of opportunities for your son or daughter to get involved, including volunteering, writing for the student magazine or even presenting on the University's TV station. For more information, visit [www.bcsu.com](http://www.bcsu.com).

## A global city

Birmingham is the youngest city in Europe in terms of average age, and 65,000 students from all over the world study here. We are the UK's second city, and not just in terms of population — our nightlife, museums, galleries, shopping, restaurants and sports venues are world famous.



Our dedicated employment agency, 'OpportUNity — Student Jobs on Campus', recruits our own students to a variety of temporary and casual part-time jobs with the University, providing valuable experience of the workplace.

# | Student support

Your son or daughter can be confident that their learning needs are our top priority. In addition to high-quality teaching and facilities specific to their course/subject, they'll find a range of general learning support facilities, which will provide them with all the help they need to succeed.

## Centre for Academic Success

Our Centre for Academic Success provides advice and support via workshops, tutorials, short courses and study guides which cover a range of study skills topics including reference writing, research skills and revision techniques. [For more information, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/academic-skills.](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/academic-skills)

## Careers and Employment

Our Careers and Job Prospects service gives your son or daughter access to qualified careers consultants throughout their studies and for up to five years after they graduate. Students can develop their skills, plan their career and access the latest job and work experience opportunities. There are also sessions based around CV writing, applications and interview preparation. [For more information, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/careers.](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/careers)

## Health and wellbeing

Our professional and confidential Health and Wellbeing services can support your son or daughter's physical and mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, helping them to study more effectively. They include healthcare, counselling, mental health and wellbeing, disability support, and faith and spiritual support. [For more information, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services.](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services)

## Accommodation

If your son or daughter chooses to live in halls of residence, we offer a range of friendly and affordable self-catering accommodation with CCTV and 24-hour security. A room in halls is guaranteed if they make us their first choice and apply by the relevant deadline. [For more information, and to take a virtual tour of our accommodation, visit www.bcu.ac.uk/accommodation.](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/accommodation)

“I think the course is brilliant, particularly because of the tutors - they're so supportive and I'm still friends with many of them now. They really care for us and want us to do well, and that really makes the course.”



Cleo McColgan  
BA (Hons) Fashion Design



## Making the right choices at school/college

*During secondary school, your son or daughter will have to make key decisions which can affect their future progression to university and employment.*

### Year 8/9: GCSE choices

In Years 8 and 9, students decide what GCSEs they would like to study. This decision can impact on their options for post-16 study, as sixth forms and colleges will be looking for specific GCSE qualifications to study on their courses.

### Year 11

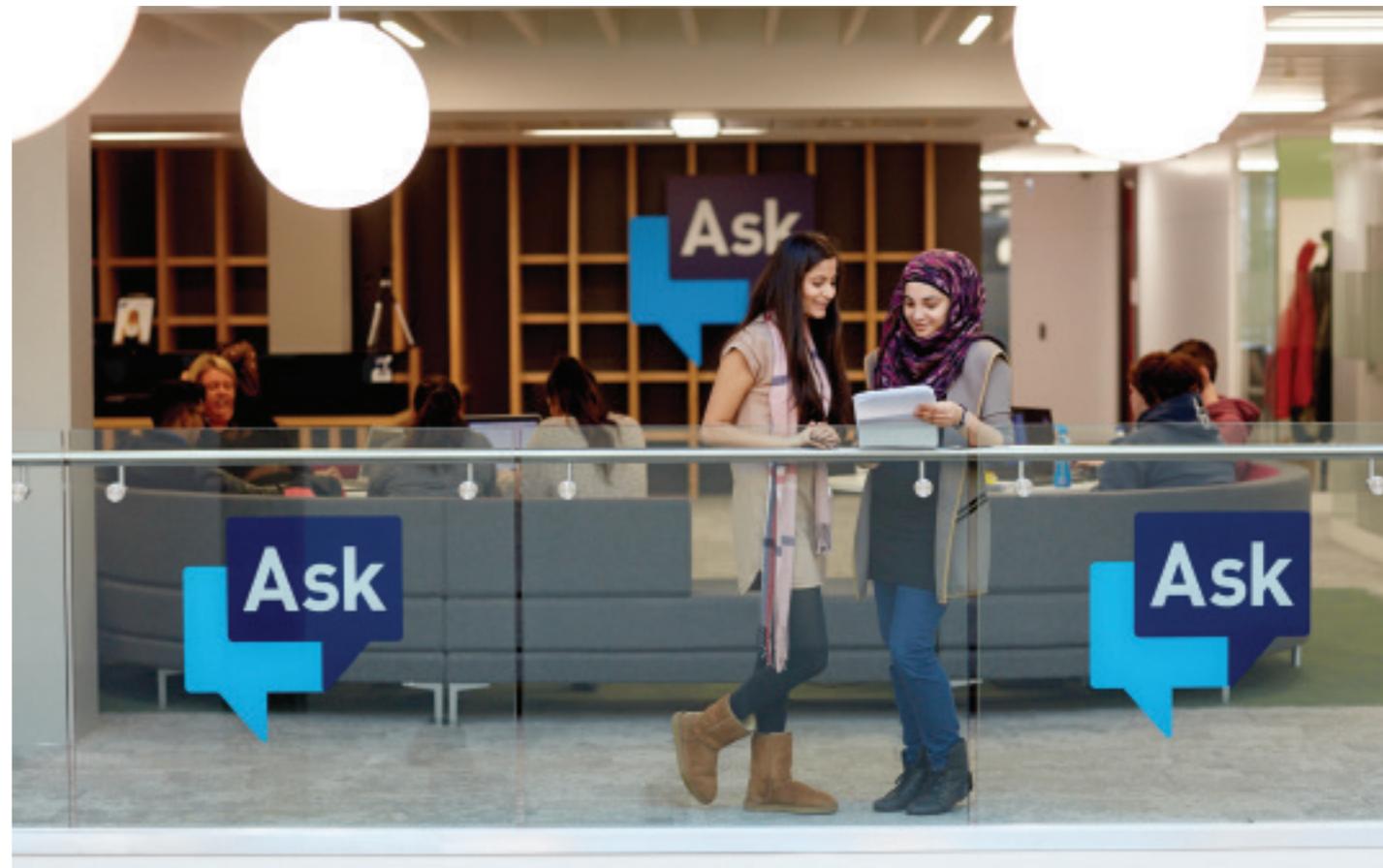
In Year 11, students will be working hard during this year to get the best possible grades from their GCSEs. GCSEs play an important role for entry in to university. For example, to train to become a primary school teacher, students will need GCSEs in English, mathematics and science grade C or above as a minimum requirement.

Also in Year 11, students will be making their decisions about what to study at post-16 level. This decision is important for future progression to university and other pathways. Students can access information on the entry requirements for all of the 37,000 higher education courses by visiting the UCAS website ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)).

### Post-16 (Year 12 and 13)

The qualifications students study during their time at sixth form or college are those which universities will base their decision on to admit applicants. For some courses, such as Radiotherapy, relevant work experience will also be an essential requirement, which students will need to gain while managing their studies.

For further information on the entry requirements for the courses we offer, visit [www.bcu.ac.uk](http://www.bcu.ac.uk) or call our course enquiries team on 0121 331 5595.



# Helping your son or daughter to make the right decision

*Research is key to making the right decision.*

The last thing you want is for your son or daughter having to drop out of university because they don't like their course or the institution. By having frequent conversations with them, you can encourage them to think about their options. Some areas to consider may be:

## Course options

- What would they like to do as a career?
- What subjects do they enjoy studying?
- Do they want to stick with a traditional subject or study a new course?
- Do they want to study a Single Honours (one subject) or Joint Honours (two subjects) degree?
- Do they want to study a course that includes work experience?
- Do they want to study a sandwich course (which includes a one-year placement in industry)?

## University options

- Do they want to stay at home or move away?
- Do they want to study at a small or large institution?
- How much does it cost to live in the university's accommodation?
- How much does it cost to travel to the university?
- How much are the course fees?
- Does the university offer scholarships or bursaries?
- What are the course facilities like?
- Does the university cater for their hobbies and interests?

## Open days

Your son or daughter will receive lots of information relating to higher education during their time at sixth form or college. Each university will also hold open days throughout the academic year, which will allow your son or daughter to find out more information about the courses on offer. For further information about open days at Birmingham City University, visit [www.bcu.ac.uk/open-days](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/open-days).



“Birmingham City University was right for me because I loved the flexibility within the course; the placement year was optional, there is the chance to study abroad and it seemed to be a place that was bursting with opportunities — which turned out to be true.”



Jonathan Colen  
BA (Hons) Business and Management

# Helping them through the UCAS application process

*Nearly all applications to UK universities are made online through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) at [www.ucas.com/apply](http://www.ucas.com/apply).*

There are eight sections to complete, including the Personal Statement, which is the opportunity for your son or daughter to tell universities and colleges about their suitability for the course(s) that they hope to study. They will need to demonstrate their enthusiasm, passion and commitment for the subject and, above all else, ensure that they stand out from the crowd.

## Application timeline

There are several key deadlines within the application cycle for your son or daughter to remember:

### 1 September

The UCAS application system opens.

### 15 October

Deadline for applications to Oxford or Cambridge, plus medicine, dentistry, veterinary science and veterinary medicine at all UK universities.

### 15 January

Deadline for applications to all other courses except specific art and design courses, where the deadline is 24 March (check the UCAS search tool).

Your son or daughter's sixth form or college might set their own internal deadline which must be met. This will allow the school or college time to check and process their application.

Once your son or daughter has submitted their application, they will be able to monitor it through UCAS Track and will be notified when they receive offers from the universities:

### Types of offers:

- **Conditional** means the place is subject to your son or daughter meeting the entry requirements — usually exam results.
- **Unconditional** means they have a place, and they have already met the conditions.
- **Withdrawn** means a course choice has been withdrawn by either your son or daughter or the university/college.
- **Unsuccessful** means the university/college has decided not to offer them a place on the course.

Birmingham City University attracts some of the best staff, including academic experts and experienced business leaders with the latest knowledge and industry contacts.

## Interviews, auditions and portfolios

Some universities invite applicants to attend an interview or audition, or ask to see a portfolio of work before making offers on courses. The interview process will vary depending on the course and university.

### February 25

UCAS Extra opens: if your son or daughter has used all five choices, and they're not holding any offers, then they will be able to add another course choice (on courses that still have places available).

### May/June

Once your son or daughter has received all of their offers they will have to reply and decide their firm and insurance choice:

- **Firm acceptance** is your son or daughter's first choice. If it's an unconditional offer, they have a confirmed place.
- **Insurance acceptance** is your son or daughter's second choice, if their first choice offer is conditional. It might be a good idea for them to pick the course that has lower offer conditions.
- **Decline:** Your son or daughter will need to decline the other courses they've applied to once they've made their firm and insurance decision.

### Mid-August

A Level results are released and places are confirmed by universities.

“The teaching and staff support at Birmingham City University has been excellent. I've enjoyed studying with Ron Austin. He suggested great resources for additional study and was always happy to talk.”



Aaron Mosely  
BSc (Hons) Computer Networks

## Clearing

If your son or daughter failed to get in to their firm or insurance choice they can go through Clearing. Universities will release any remaining places through Clearing and these will appear on the UCAS website during August. [To find out further information on the UCAS application cycle, visit www.ucas.com/apply.](http://www.ucas.com/apply)

## Birmingham Conservatoire and Birmingham School of Acting

Please note that applications to courses taught at Birmingham Conservatoire ([www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire)) or Birmingham School of Acting ([www.bcu.ac.uk/acting](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/acting)) have a different application process — see their websites for details.

# Fees and finance

*As well as getting a place at university, it's equally important to think about the cost of studying.*

There are a range of student finance packages which are a mixture of repayable, non-repayable, and means tested and non-means tested loans and grants.

## Tuition fee loan

Universities can charge up to £9,000 a year for tuition fees to full-time UK and EU students. This money is not paid up front by the student; it is paid directly to the university by the Student Loans Company, with repayments only beginning once the graduate is in work and earning above a set amount.

## Maintenance Loan

Maintenance loans are paid to help with living costs, such as accommodation,

food and travel. A portion of this loan is available to all students and the amount your son or daughter is entitled to depends on where they decide to study (with a higher loan available for students in London) and whether or not they live at home.

The remaining portion of the loan is means tested, which is when Student Finance England will require documentation to confirm the student's household income to determine how much more they're entitled to receive.

## Other support

Extra support for students with a disability and for those with children and dependants may also be available. These include Parents' Learning Allowance, Childcare Grant, Adult Dependants' Grant, and Disabled Students' Allowances.

For up-to-date information on how much your son or daughter is entitled to, visit [www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance).

## Scholarships and bursaries

Some universities offer their own scholarships and bursaries and it's important for your son or daughter to check what extra financial support is available. We offer both academic and means-tested scholarships.

For further information on what scholarships and bursaries we're offering, visit [www.bcu.ac.uk/financial-support](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/financial-support).

The University focuses on practice-based learning, providing students with access to cutting-edge facilities and real-world experience.

## Repayments

Repayments will normally be taken automatically via the tax system, once your son or daughter has graduated and is earning over £21,000 per annum. Repayments are linked to what an individual earns, not what they owe. Your son or daughter will repay nine per cent of income above £21,000.

For example, if your son or daughter earns £25,000, they would pay back nine per cent of £4,000, or £30 per month. If they earn less than £21,000, they do not have to pay anything.

If a student loan has not been repaid after 30 years, any outstanding payments will be written off.

“The lecturers were just brilliant- they were real mentors and friends and they pushed us hard, but for the right reasons. Because of the success they had achieved in their own careers - including some who had worked for the BBC - they gave us all something to aspire to.”

 Sue Paz, BA (Hons) Media and Communication  
Online Producer



Birmingham City University  
University House  
15 Bartholomew Row  
Birmingham  
B5 5JU

0121 331 5000  
[www.bcu.ac.uk](http://www.bcu.ac.uk)