



FOR PARENTS,
CARERS AND
SUPPORTERS

**YOUR GUIDE
TO HIGHER
EDUCATION**



ABOUT US

Aimhigher Plus is a partnership of universities, schools and colleges who support young people in years 9-13 with their careers education. This booklet is packed full of information, advice and guidance about university and higher education as well as some suggestions on how you can support your child with their future choices.



BY 2024 THE
UK WILL NEED
4.3 MILLION
MORE GRADUATES
THAN IN 2014

(UK Commission for Employment and Skills)



“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”

HIGHER EDUCATION WHAT IS IT?

Most people progress to Higher Education after completing their BTEC, A-levels 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 150 universities in the UK and more than 240 colleges with higher education courses.



WHY HIGHER EDUCATION?

WHY SHOULD MY CHILD GO TO UNIVERSITY?

- Some professions have a minimum requirement of a degree level qualification (e.g. nursing, law, education)
- Increased career prospects and potential earnings
- To study something they really enjoy
- Opportunity to meet new people and expand their horizons
- Get out of their comfort zone and try something new - join clubs and societies
- Work experience opportunities, networking and career support
- Personal development – supported step into adulthood

GRADUATES
ON AVERAGE EARN
£10,000
PER YEAR
MORE THAN
NON-GRADUATES
(Department for Education)



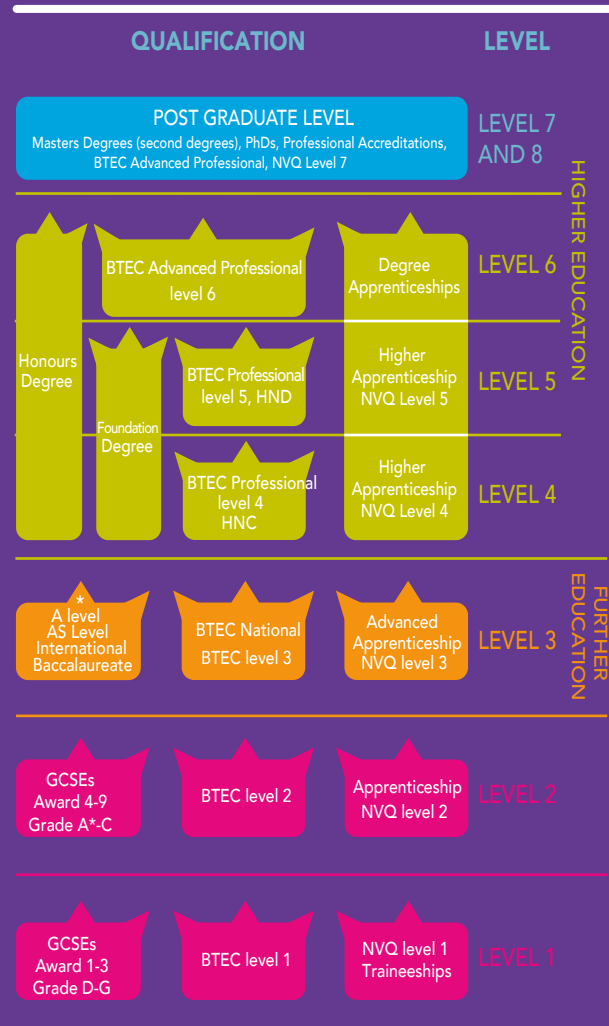
**HIGHER
EDUCATION**
IS MORE THAN JUST
A QUALIFICATION
YOU **GAIN SKILLS**
WHICH MAKE
YOU **MORE**
EMPLOYABLE

- Time Management
- Organisation
- Independence
- Budgeting
- Confidence
- Problem Solving



NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

There are many 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.



*T Levels are new courses planned to start in September 2020. These will follow GCSEs and will be equivalent to 3 A-levels.

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.

CAMPUS

The grounds and buildings of a university or college.

DEGREE

Qualification awarded to students upon successful completion of a course of study in higher education. There are different abbreviations depending on the type of degree - BA Bachelor of Arts, BSc Bachelor of Science, BEng Bachelor of Engineering, BEd Bachelor of Education.

FRESHER

Term used to refer to new higher education students.

GRADUATE

A person who has successfully completed a degree.

HALLS OF RESIDENCE

The accommodation where most higher education students live during their first year of study.

LECTURE

A presentation of information by a member of academic staff (lecturer) to a large group of students.

MODULE

A unit of study within a degree that explores a specific area or subject.

OPEN DAY

A day where you can visit the university and experience it first hand, meeting staff, visiting teaching facilities and taking a look at student accommodation. There are also additional Applicant Visit Days and Offer Holder Visit Days you can attend after application or once an offer has been received.

PROSPECTUS

A printed or online brochure that advertises a university or college and their courses.

SANDWICH COURSE

Degree programmes which include some time working in a related industry or studying abroad.

SEMINAR

A class at university where a specific topic is discussed in a smaller group.

TUTORIALS

Smaller group or individual meetings with a member of staff.

UCAS

The 'Universities and College Admissions Service' is responsible for processing applications for courses at universities in the UK. University applications are made and managed online through the UCAS website.

● ADJUSTMENT

If you meet or exceed your firm choice, it is possible to swap where you plan to study.

● CLEARING

How universities and colleges fill any places they still have on their courses. You find courses with vacancies and contact universities or colleges directly to see if they will offer you a place.

● DEFERRED ENTRY

Applying for a course then taking a year out before going to university.

● OFFER

A conditional offer means you still need to meet the requirements (e.g. exam results).

An unconditional offer means you've got a place, although there might still be a few things to arrange.

Some universities make contextual offers to students whose personal circumstances may have restricted achievement at school or college. These offers are often one grade lower than the entry requirements

● UCAS EXTRA

If you used all five of your choices on your original application and you're not holding an offer, you'll be able to add another choice using Extra between February and July.



CHOICES, CHOICES, CHOICES

WHAT TO STUDY

Some people will have had a dream job from childhood but most young people (and adults) aren't sure yet! The variety of courses can seem overwhelming but selecting the best possible course is a key decision for any student.

COURSES

If your child has a future career in mind then encourage them to research the job and what qualifications they'll need. Some courses offer a clear career pathway (Nursing, Teaching etc) whilst others like History, English and Psychology are more broad and have several employment options afterwards.


NOT SURE WHAT TO STUDY?

If your child is unsure about what to study, encourage them to explore what they enjoy, what they're good at and then which careers involve a combination of the two. They should also base their decision on what's important to them:

Are they motivated by money and therefore want to pursue a career with high earning potential?
Law or Finance.

Are they an adventurer that wants a future career that involves travel and variety?
International Business Management or Journalism.

Are they passionate about saving the planet or supporting others?
Environmental Science or Social Work.



As well as handling applications, www.ucas.com has a wealth of information on higher education and the wide range of courses available

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

You can take a look at www.whatuni.com to compare courses and read reviews and get advice from students

As well as their carers quiz, www.prospects.ac.uk have hundreds of job profiles. If your child has a career in mind they can find out what qualifications they'll need here



WHERE TO STUDY

There are hundreds of higher education providers to choose from. Your local college or university may offer the perfect choice for your child or they may want to leave home to study further afield.

There is no right or wrong university but it's 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: Location

Will your child live at home and travel to university each day or will they move into student accommodation? 'Commuter' students may save money on rent but if your child wants to experience a new town or city, moving away may suit them best. If moving away, consider where the university is and the accommodation on offer. How expensive is the area? Is it on a direct train line back home?

Type – campus or city?

Campus universities usually have all amenities in one central location: accommodation, lecture theatres, campus shops and student union all in convenient walking distance. They're often out of town but their own community and you'll be surrounded by students all day. City universities are ideal for those wanting to mix with a wider range of people and build a life in a new place. Halls of residence may be further away but they'll have all the benefits of city living! Would they prefer a busy city or a quieter rural campus?

Universities come in all shapes and sizes so ask about classroom sizes at open days.

League tables and reviews

University rankings and reviews give an overview of how a university is performing. Depending on which ranking you look at, you'll be able to see student satisfaction, graduate employment and/or ratings for specific courses. Rankings vary year on year and also between league tables so focus on the areas most important to your child.

Examples of league tables include: Unistats, National Student Survey and University league tables.

Open Days

Attending open days and physically visiting the institution is often the most effective way to finalise decisions on courses and where to study! You can support them with planning their journey, preparing questions and going along with them. University open days will include informative talks, campus and accommodation tours as well as opportunity to meet current students and teaching staff.

THERE ARE MORE THAN 50,000 UNIVERSITY DEGREE COURSES TO CHOOSE FROM




STUDENT FINANCE

Why you **CAN** afford to go to university

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

**GRADUATES
ON A SALARY OF
£27,000
PAY BACK LESS
THAN £10 A MONTH**

Money Saving Expert

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 upfront. This money is paid directly to the university and doesn't need to be repaid until they've completed their degree and are in a job earning over the salary threshold *

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 earning over the salary threshold *.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO PAY ANYTHING UPFRONT

ONCE YOUR CHILD HAS FINISHED THEIR COURSE, **THEY DO NOT PAY BACK ANYTHING** UNLESS THEY ARE EARNING A SALARY OVER A CERTAIN THRESHOLD *

SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

These are non-repayable sums of money awarded to students who fulfil specific criteria. This could be for academic or sporting achievements or based on factors such as household income.

REPAYMENTS

Many people think of repayments as a tax because, once working in a job earning over the repayment threshold*, the repayments are deducted directly from the graduate's salary each month before it arrives in their bank account.

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

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

Take a look at the student finance calculator to estimate student loans and extra funding

www.gov.uk/student-finance-calculator

* £26,575 AT THE TIME OF PRINT



UNIVERSITY SUPPORT



SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

University Outreach for School and College Students

Most Universities have outreach programmes which include summer schools, mentoring programmes, guidance on applications and activities to improve retention and success. To look at the support your child may be able to access through Aimhigher West Midlands and other universities, go to the Aimhigher WM website and 'search activities'.

University Student Services

Greater independence is a key part of the University experience and for some students this will involve leaving home and learning to look after themselves. The great advantage of higher education is that it provides a safe and supportive environment for this to happen.

Universities and colleges have a department, often called 'student services', which offers advice and support to all students who want it. They support students

from all backgrounds, and their services typically include:

Accommodation

Student Money Advice

Wellbeing and welfare

Mental health and counselling

Careers and work experience

Disability service

Health Centre

There is also targeted support for care leavers, asylum seekers, carers, parents, estranged students and Military Families.

CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

If you're supporting a care leaver or looked after child to apply to higher education, there is support available to help with admissions, finance, settling in and accommodation;

Plan: Every looked after child must have a **Pathway Plan** (starting around their 16th birthday) agreed with the Local Authority which will look at their ambitions for the future and plans for supporting them to achieve their goals.

Application: Make sure they **tick the box** on their UCAS application to let universities know they've been in care. This is confidential and will only be shared with those who need to know in order to offer additional support with finance, accommodation and accessing specialist services.

Finance: Most care leavers will be entitled to the full Student Finance England maintenance loan. They can also access a Higher Education bursary of £2,000 from their local

authority and any Care Leaver specific bursaries offered by individual Universities.

Accommodation: Many Universities offer year round accommodation for Care Leavers but your Local Authority should give you money to live on over the holidays, and somewhere to live if you don't have year round accommodation where you're at university.

www.propel.org.uk has a wealth of information on supporting care leavers to access HE.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

Course providers welcome over 45,000 disabled students each year, meaning there's already lots of on-campus support available.

Awareness: It's important to be open about disability and support needs. Universities can then ensure students can access the support they need which could be financial (disabled student allowance), pastoral (mentoring) or practical (specialist equipment). It's a good idea to contact

universities directly to discuss support needs as early as possible – even before submitting a UCAS application.

Finance: Disabled Students' Allowance can be claimed in addition to student finance loans and grants to cover any extra study-related costs a student may incur due to an impairment, mental health condition, or learning difficulty. It doesn't need to be repaid and is based on individual needs, not family income.

Accessibility: Under the Equality Act, all universities and colleges have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their services so disabled students are not disadvantaged. Accessible.co.uk provides accessibility information on 1000s of locations – including many Universities.

Look out for specialist SEND university summer schools!





HOW YOU CAN HELP

Parents and supportive adults play a significant role in a young person's decisions. You probably have more influence than you think!

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.

Support your child in checking that their chosen route is best suited to them by exploring the practicalities of their decision and the skills they will gain. Have they looked at what qualifications they will receive and how this will support them in their chosen career? Will the environment they've chosen suit their needs? Try to stay open minded and embrace their choices. It may not be the route you had originally envisaged but they may have given it a lot more thought than you expected.

Support your child to attend open days and ask important questions



Support your son or daughter's 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?
- Do you want a course which includes a one-year placement in industry?
- Do you want to live at home or move away?
- How do you like to learn?

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

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.

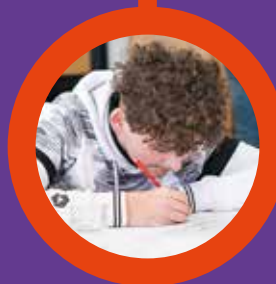
Higher and degree apprenticeships are a good way to gain the skills, qualifications and experience needed to get into many careers. They combine paid work, training and study without any tuition fees.

Degree apprenticeships provide the same level of qualification as a university degree but can be very competitive. They are well suited to dedicated, hard working individuals who know what career they want to work in.

The list of employers, universities and colleges offering higher and degree apprenticeships is growing all the time as new apprenticeships are developed. Each individual apprenticeship opportunity will identify the university or college involved and the entry requirements.

Take a look at Amazing Apprenticeships for lots of free resources and information:

www.amazingapprenticeships.com



WHAT NOW?

Make sure your child's application stands out

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

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.

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.

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.

It is important to ensure that any part time work doesn't impede on college work

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.

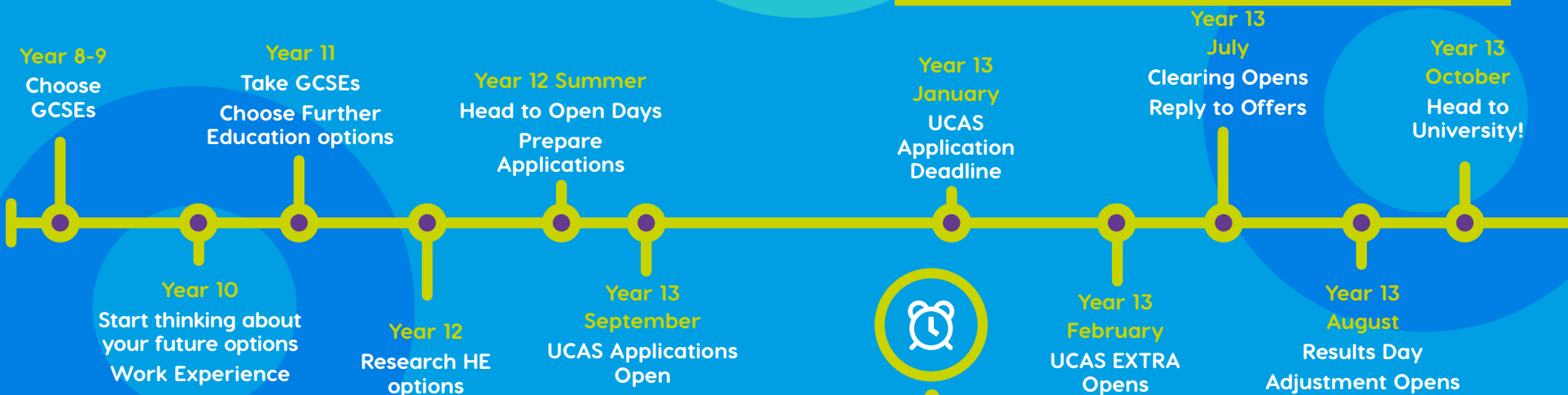
OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

Taking up opportunities that link to the career or course your child wants to pursue can really help with applications. This could include attending a taster lecture at a university, Aimhigher trips, extra-curricular clubs like STEM clubs, completing free online courses from places like Future learn and more!



"Working part time has been great for my confidence, I have developed my communication and team working skills which has really helped me at University."

HIGHER EDUCATION TIMELINE



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

The Uni Guide

Find a subject which suits you at:

www.theuniguide.co.uk

UK universities and colleges

To search for courses at UK universities and colleges go to:

www.ucas.com

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