



**A POST 16S
GUIDE TO HIGHER
EDUCATION**

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This guide was designed for young people like you who are currently studying for your Level 3 education (be that A Levels, BTECs or Intermediate/Advanced Apprenticeships). It aims to tell you all about your future options, or pathways if we may, in an unbiased and informative style.

Within these pages you will find information on what Higher Education (HE) is, how each pathway works and the most important things that you should know about each – for example, how an apprenticeship works or how much funding you can expect at university.

But, before you go through this guide, take a second to think about what interests YOU. Do you know what you want to do for a career? Do you enjoy certain subjects more than others? IF NOT DON'T PANIC, YOU STILL HAVE TIME.

HELPFUL HINT: think about what you don't want to do; very quickly the vast scary field of options that you have to wade through will begin to shrink and you'll feel much better.

Your thoughts at this stage may well be 'but that's years away' or 'why do I have to think about it now?'. Well the truth is that you will start to apply to these different pathways from the beginning of your final year and this year is your golden opportunity to learn about what is out there for you.

We hope you find this useful in choosing what's right for you and that this guide demystifies and answers any questions or concerns that you may have.



'Aspire Higher' is the consortium name that comprises 3 universities: University of Bedfordshire, University of Hertfordshire and University of Northampton.

Aspire Higher is funded by the Office for Students (OfS) body that has developed the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) in England. NCOP aims to increase the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education by 2021.

The OfS's goals for the second phase of the NCOP are to:

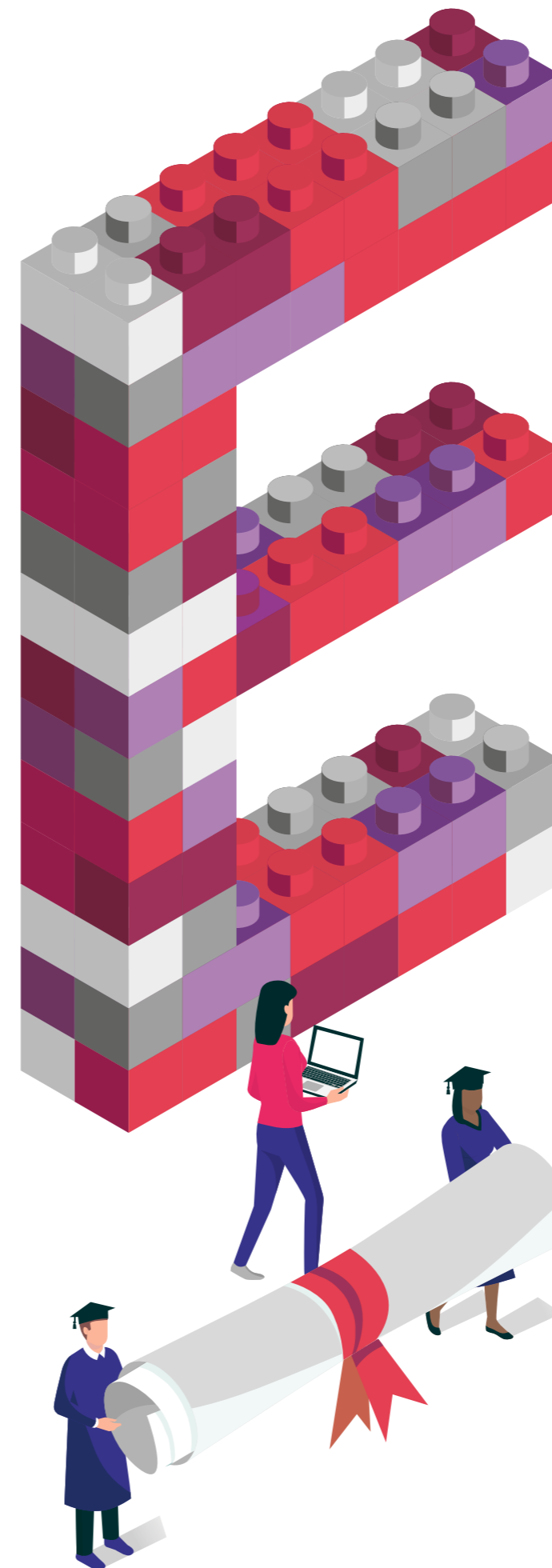
- reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups¹
- support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education
- support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers
- working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners
- contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.



¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/national-collaborative-outreach-programme-ncop/>

WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)?

HE is the study of a course or subject at Level 4 and above. Anything levelled 1-3 (taken after your standard secondary education at 16+) would be considered Further Education (FE). **HE courses can be applied for by adhering to the UCAS timeline outlined in this pullout resource.**



UNIVERSITY

At university you would find yourself taking a degree, be it a Foundation, Bachelors, Masters or a PhD. You would choose a subject that interests you and attend classes for a set number of hours per week – either in person or online via distance learning. Of those students who study on campus, some will choose to live in university accommodations and others will commute. There is no wrong or right option regarding this, however each come with their own set of positives and negatives.

You could also do a university degree via distance learning, i.e. The Open University or a registered online course directly with a university.

HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to earn whilst you learn. As an apprentice you will typically spend four days a week at work and one day in the classroom at a college, university or within the work setting.

Students taking Higher Apprenticeships will finish with a qualification between the Levels of 4-7.

Students taking Degree Apprenticeships will finish with a full Bachelors (Level 6) or even a Masters Degree (Level 7).

There is an existing preconception that taking an apprenticeship is only for those who are less academically minded. In truth they're just as challenging, the Degree Apprenticeships even more so than a traditional degree as you study the same content as every traditional student as well as incorporating work-based learning. The difference is that you will finish with a valuable level of experience that the traditional university student will not have. Most universities now deliver apprenticeships. You can find out more from their website and/or prospectus.

AT A FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE

Colleges will offer different courses to universities, often more vocational qualifications, for example animal and land-bases courses.

HE JARGON

BA/BSc/BEng:

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Engineering.

First Class Degree:

A First is the highest grade that you can get in a degree qualification. It indicates that you achieved 70% or above in your work. The next grade down is a 2:1 at 60%, 2:2 for 50% or a Third for 40%.*

Foundation Degree:

A Foundation degree is a vocational approach to higher education that combines workplace experience with academic learning. It is often a route into a Bachelors degree.

Fresher:

Student in their first year.

Gap Year:

A year out before starting university (optional).

Maintenance Loan:

A loan students can apply for, usually through Student Finance England, to help with living and accommodation costs. This loan is repayable once earning over a certain threshold after graduating.

Means Testing:

A financial assessment of the income of the student's household to determine how much maintenance loan the student is eligible to from the UK government to help towards living expenses while at university.

Placement Year:

This is a year of either work experience or study placement.

Postgraduate Degree:

Once a student has obtained an Undergraduate degree (their first degree qualification) they may continue onto study a Postgraduate degree – usually a Masters or a PhD. This is referred to as a Level 7 or 8 qualification.

Scholarships:

A financial grant or benefit given to a student to support their education. Most commonly awarded by a university on the basis of academic merit or exceptional achievement in sports or the arts.

Single Honours:

An honours degree course in which a student studies a single subject.

Tuition Fees:

The cost that universities charge to study at their institutions. The maximum fees a university can charge are set by the government.

Undergraduate Degree:

An Undergraduate degree is what is received after a three/four year course of study. A person in the middle of this is referred to as an undergraduate and a person who has been awarded one is a graduate.

Admissions:

The dedicated team at a university that process potential students' applications.

Prospectus:

A university booklet which gives details of degree courses available.

Joint Honours:

A form of degree which offers students the chance to study two subjects at once.



THINKING OF UNIVERSITY

There are roughly 36,000 courses to study at 300+ institutions in the UK.

Bedfordshire's HE institutions are:

- University of Bedfordshire
- Barnfield College
- Bedford College
- Central Beds College

Hertfordshire's HE institutions are:

- University of Hertfordshire
- Hertford Regional College
- North Hertfordshire College
- Oaklands College
- West Herts College

Northamptonshire's HE institutions are:

- University of Northampton
- Tresham College
- Northampton College
- Moulton College



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF UNIVERSITY:

SOCIAL LIFE

HANDS-ON TEACHING

MEETING NEW PEOPLE (FROM AROUND THE WORLD)

MANAGING YOUR TIME

BUDGETING

LEARNING NEW ACADEMIC SKILLS

SPORTS AND SOCIETIES

GREATER EARNING POTENTIAL

LEARNING MORE ABOUT A SUBJECT YOU'RE PASSIONATE IN

DEVELOPING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY, BUT NOT ALONE

BUT WHERE DO I GO?

Choosing the right university isn't just an academic decision; it's also a very personal one.

The UCAS website (and the others listed at the bottom of this page) will help you search for the best place for you. It lists every course available in the country and even allows you to filter the options to make it easier.



Check out www.ucas.com/

Once you know what universities you're interested in, you should start attending their open days. This will help you to whittle down your final or preferred 1-5 choices and is the best way to find out which university is most suited to you.

WHAT ARE OPEN DAYS?

Open days provide the perfect opportunity to ask any questions you like, see the campus and find out more about the courses you're interested in. There will be hundreds of other students in the same boat as you, so please ask as many questions as you can.

Knowing what to expect

Members of staff will meet and greet you at registration. They will usually provide an itinerary for the day and explore this with you and your guests (usually parents, siblings or friends).

Universities will also have Student Ambassadors on hand to help visitors and point them in the right direction. **Student Ambassadors are the best people to talk with regarding university life – they've been in your shoes, are now experiencing it first-hand and can answer any questions from a personal perspective.**

The itinerary will outline when and where subject talks are taking place and usually includes a map too, so finding your way around should be simple!

FOR HELP FINDING THE RIGHT COURSE OR UNIVERSITY FOR YOU, VISIT THE FOLLOWING:

www.ucas.com/?theme=discover

Specific university websites

www.thestudentroom.co.uk/university/unimatch/

www.unifrog.org/



Key things to look out for at open days are:

Campus tours – a perfect opportunity to see the university, whether it be campus or city-based. The tours usually include student accommodation, library, Students' Union, study spaces, sport facilities and much more

Subject talks – these enable you to meet the academic staff, find out more about the course modules and placement opportunities, as well as ask questions

Explore the local area – you need to feel confident in where you choose to live, so explore the local area and see the opportunities it presents

Finance talk – includes everything you need to know about how student finance works. Parents and carers always find these really useful as they'll discover what they may need to support you with

Application guidance – additional talks that some universities offer throughout the day

★ **Being as prepared as possible for an open day is the way to go.**



CAN'T THINK OF WHAT TO ASK.

Keep this checklist of questions to hand:

- What units of work will my degree include?
- Are there study abroad opportunities?
- What employment opportunities do you have?
- Are work placements part of the course? If so what are some examples of placements?
- What are the employability statistics for this course?
- What types of accommodation are available?
- What are the different accommodation costs?
- What support services do you offer?
- What makes the university stand out from the rest?
- Will I have a personal tutor?



UCAS APPLICATIONS

UCAS stands for the University and Colleges Admission Service.

All university applications are made via UCAS (note conservatoires for dance and drama are different). This makes it very easy to co-ordinate and as an extra bonus it is an online process. Your application is broken into three parts:

1. **Your details**
2. **A personal statement (PS)**
3. **A tutor reference.**

CHOICES

Via UCAS Apply you can make up to 5 choices at once (universities or courses) and this costs £25.*

The UCAS website can help you on your search. It will list every course available in the country and even allow you to filter the options to make it easier.

Check out www.ucas.com/



Important UCAS dates

(remember schools/colleges have earlier deadlines)

1 September – UCAS Apply opens

15 October – closing date for Oxford/Cambridge, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine or Veterinary Science

15 January – closing date for all other courses. Late applications process starts

Late February – UCAS Extra available

Late June/early July – late applications process closes. UCAS Extra closes

Late July to mid October – clearing starts.

UCAS Tariff

Qualifications and grade	Tariff points
A Level Grade A*	56
A Level Grade A	48
A Level Grade B	40
A Level Grade C	32
A Level Grade D	24
A Level Grade E	16

www.ucas.com/tariff-calculator



ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Every course will have a set of requirements. This will be either grades or points – the UCAS tariff table on this page shows you what each grade is worth in points.

Some places may also require: entry interviews or tests, portfolios, or prior work experience. This will all be listed by the university.

*Accurate for Applications in 2019-20. However the cost may increase annually.

PERSONAL STATEMENT (PS)

Your PS is your chance to sell yourself to a university, and for most, is the only chance. Admissions tutors will use these as a critical method of choosing between applicants.

You get to write up to 4,000 characters which works out at approximately 400 words (just over one side of A4).

You will write about your chosen degree and the interests you have in it, what you want to do in the future, as well as giving them any information on the following:

Work experience

School awards

Hobbies

Volunteering

Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Awards.

Most importantly, all information must be relevant to your application. For example, you shouldn't just claim to be good at time management; we can all claim something, you have to prove it! For example, completing your DofE alongside your studies shows how you have used time management effectively.

DO'S AND DON'TS

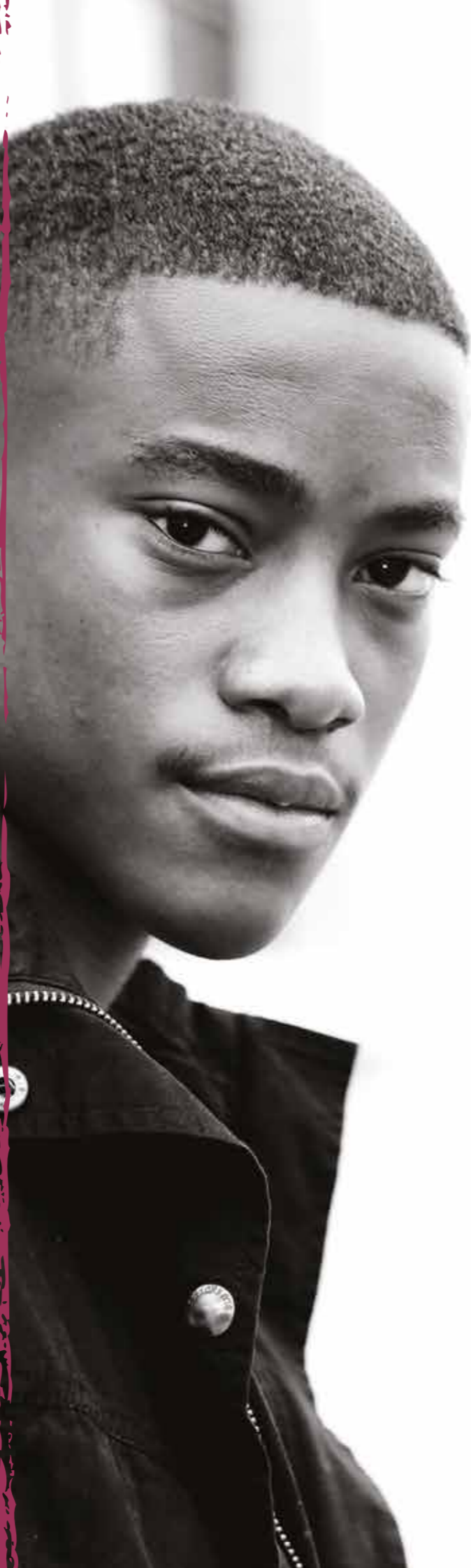
Don't write about your grades or current subjects in the PS; that information is already in your application and will be wasting space

Do write your PS as you would any other written piece of work; have a beginning, middle and end

Do be forward facing and positive i.e. 'I am choosing this because I am going to be an Architect', not 'I want to be...'

Start strong, keep it going and stand out; there is nothing more tedious than reading twenty boring applications in one go!

Don't finish your statement with 'I'm looking forward to university'; that's a given, use something compelling that ties it back to the application.



top 10 tips for writing your UCAS personal statement



Remember the **abc** rule and connect the dots

a the action | **b** the benefit | **C** the relevance to the course

STUDENT FINANCE

Student finance is broken into two parts: a **Maintenance Loan** and a **Tuition Fee Loan**, and you apply for these via Student Finance England in February/March of every year.

MAINTENANCE LOAN

The Maintenance Loan contributes towards the costs of living and is meant to help pay for accommodation, food, books etc. The amount you get is calculated to fund you during term times only – holidays for university students are quite generous – therefore don't assume that your loan will get you through holidays as well.

If applying for it, each student will receive an amount based upon the household income. This will be split into three and paid to the student at the beginning of each term.

This graph gives you an indication of how much Maintenance Loan you can get in a year.

Household Income	Living at home	Away from home (outside London)	Away from home (London)
<£25,000	£7,747	£9,203	£12,010
£30,000	£7,095	£8,544	£11,340
£35,000	£6,442	£7,884	£10,670
£40,000	£5,789	£7,225	£10,000
£45,000	£5,137	£6,565	£9,330
£50,000	£4,484	£5,905	£8,659
£55,000	£3,831	£5,246	£7,989
£60,000	£3,410	£4,586	£7,319
£65,000	£3,410	£4,289	£6,649
£70,000	£3,410	£4,289	£5,981

TUITION FEE LOANS

Every UK citizen who has lived in the country for three years prior to starting their degree is entitled to the Tuition Fee Loan. This allows potential students the opportunity to attend university without funding it being a concern.

Currently fees are set at £9,250/year and a Tuition Fee Loan will cover the duration of your course, with a potential extra years' funding in extenuating circumstances.

LOAN REPAYMENTS

Student Finance loans are repayable. However these loans are different from a bank loan and the repayment method has been created to benefit the student. For example, students **will only ever make repayments if they're earning over £25,000/year** and after 30 years any remaining debt disappears (regardless of amount paid or not).

Tuition Fee Loan repayments by wage bracket

Yearly Salary	Monthly Salary	Monthly Repayment
Up to £21,000	Up to £1,750	£0
£25,000	£2,083	£0
£30,000	£2,500	£25
£35,000	£2,916	£63
£40,000	£3,333	£100
£45,000	£3,750	£138
£50,000	£4,166	£175

Note: all figures are rounded.

Once earning at the threshold, students will repay 9% of earnings above it per month. For example:

A graduate earning £30,000 will be expected to repay 9% of the £5,000 over the £26,575 = £308. That £308 is divided by 12 and the student repays **£32.00 a month** which is less than some mobile phone contracts.

Interest is added to the loans that students take, this is RPI plus a maximum of 3%. Interest has no effect on the repayment method. You could borrow £20,000 and still repay the same as another who borrows £50,000 if you're earning the same wage.

THINKING OF APPRENTICESHIPS

There is an ever increasing number of universities offering Degree and Higher apprenticeships. Subject/careers fields are varied and many more are being developed.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

You will hold a place at a university/college for study, and have a job in a skilled occupation with an apprentice's contract of employment at a company. You will be treated like a normal employee by them and a student by the university or college.

THE FACTS:

Open to anyone 16 or over (after completing Year 11)

Minimum legal wage from April 2019 is £3.90/hour for under 19s; however many employers pay full wages regardless. There are companies offering as high as £30,000/year

Must work minimum of 30 hours a week

Holiday pay – 4 weeks plus bank holidays is the minimum

Apprenticeship training should be minimum of one year and a maximum of 4

You do not have to stay with the same employer all the way through your qualification; if a company is not working out you can look for another

3 million places by 2021.

Core Principles:

It is a job in a skilled occupation

It requires substantial and sustained training, as well as at least 20% of your time studying

It develops transferable skills, plus English and maths, to progress careers

It leads to full competency and capability in an occupation

It trains you to the level required to apply for professional recognition where this exists e.g. AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians).

APPRENTICESHIPS HAVE EQUIVALENT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS:

Type of Apprenticeship	Level	Equivalent educational level
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelors or Masters Degree
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation Degree and above
Advanced	3	2 A Level passes
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?

'I can't afford it'. Unlike most ways of gaining formal training and practical experience, apprenticeships are paid for by the government and your employer, so they're great if university isn't an option financially.

'It won't help my job prospects'. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that more than 25% of university graduates were paid less than the £11.10/hour average for those on apprenticeships last year. The figures show that 85% of people who complete an apprenticeship will stay in employment, and 64% of these stay with the same employer with which they did the course*.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Whilst there is not a standard entry requirement, you will usually find that they will expect three A Levels, the equivalent BTECs, or other qualifications such as the Advanced Apprenticeship. You should also hold a GCSE in maths and English at B/Grade7/8.

Apprenticeships can be competitive and gaining work experience will set you apart from others.

NOTE: An Advanced Apprenticeship (even at Level 3) is worth two A Levels and may not be enough to allow you to advance to a Degree Apprenticeship. If you intend to take a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship, please look at the current entry criteria in your field of interest.

To learn more about Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, read our 'A Student's Guide to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships'.

*Statistics from gov.uk

WHERE TO LOOK AND OR APPLY

Trailblazer Groups – these are companies that have coordinated a 'standard' of quality in certain fields. These indicate a robust and well developed apprentice opportunity – the standards can also be useful as a job description of sorts.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-list-of-occupations-available

Institute of Apprenticeships
www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/

UCAS

Government apprenticeships site:
www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch

National Apprenticeship Service Helpdesk – 08000 150 600 (free from landlines and mobiles)

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

FINANCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeship potential earnings

Currently the minimum wage for an apprenticeship is **£3.90/hour** (if you are under 19 or 19 and over in your 1st year of an apprenticeship).

If you are 19 and over and have completed your 1st year, you must be paid at least the minimum wage of **£6.15/hour** – refer to www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1902 for the most up to date minimum wage.

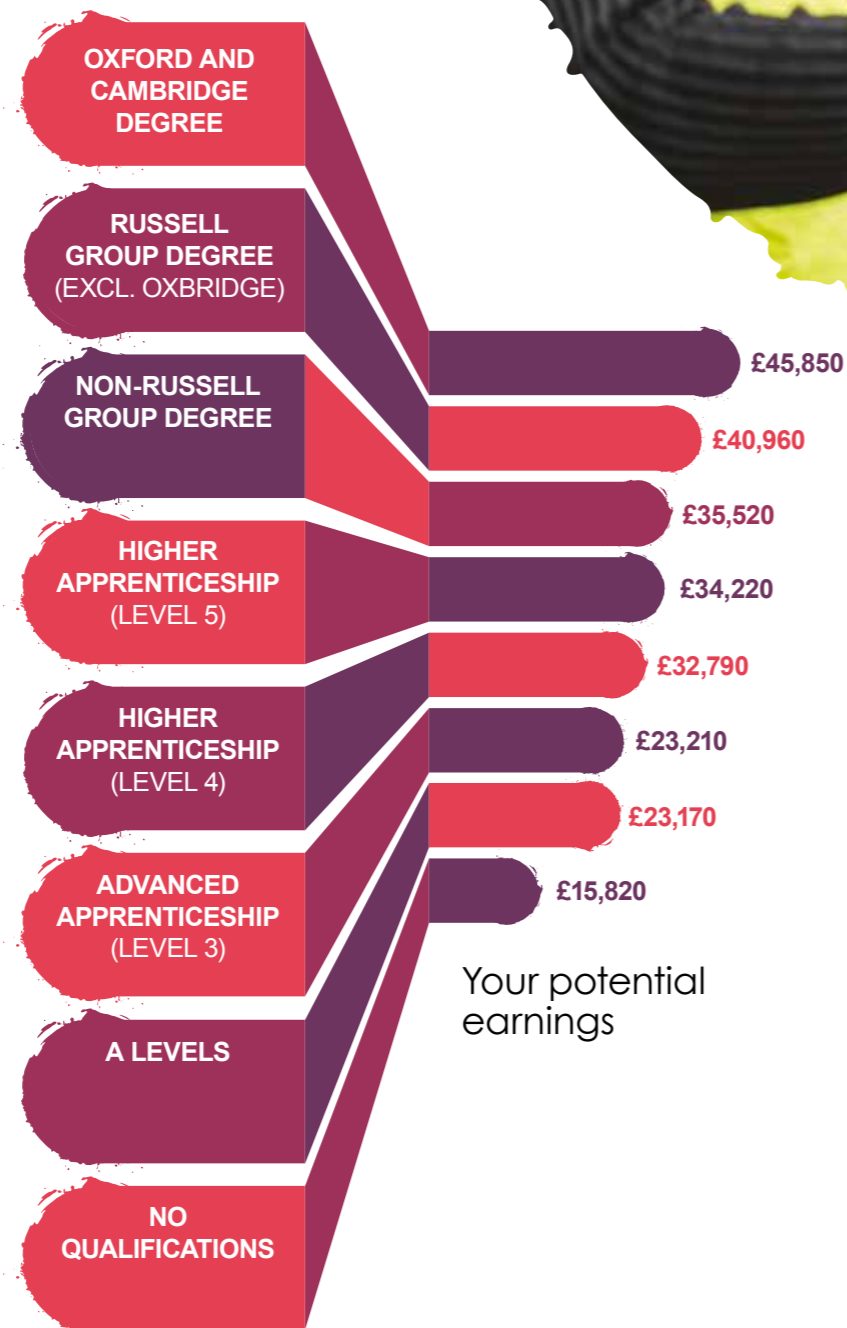
But your company is more than likely going to pay you something around **£300/week**. Don't forget they are paying your tuition fees for your degree (up to **£9,250/year!**)

Company benefits may include a pension, access to a car, leisure facilities or a relocation allowance if you have to move. Apprentices are entitled to the same rights as other employees: a contract of employment and at least 20 days paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays.

Apprenticeship discounts

You'll be classed as an employee, not a student, so you won't be entitled to student discounts, but the National Union of Students (NUS) has just brought out an NUS Apprentice Extra Card. For **£11/year** you can get discounts on lots of brands. Apply at www.apprenticeextra.co.uk

You might be eligible for discounts on public transport, for example the Apprentice Oyster photo card in London gives apprentices 30% off certain journeys. Local offers will exist.



Aim high and choose your employer carefully; you could be earning with these huge brand companies, although you may need to relocate:

Aerospace Apprentice, BAE and Rolls Royce £21,971/year*

Accountancy Apprenticeship, KPMG £13,000/year†

Digital Marketing, Next Step £16,000/year†

APPRENTICESHIP JARGON

What do these things mean anyway?

Competitive salary

Many employers advertise roles with a 'competitive salary'. This means the salary and benefits will be in line with similar roles for other organisations or that it depends on your current skills and experience.

Standards

Over the last three years, employers from over 200 organisations have been working together to develop a range of new apprenticeship standards "approved by the Department for Education". An apprenticeship standard is a template for the way an apprenticeship is delivered:

1. What an apprentice will do during their apprenticeship
2. The skills they will need to perform the role they are training for

Sector

An industry or part of an industry, covering groups of related occupations. Examples of sectors/industries are Construction, Engineering, Freight Logistics, Health, Manufacturing and Retail. There is only one Issuing Authority for each occupational sector.

SFA

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) are responsible for giving colleges, training organisations and employers the right funding to help adults, young people, the unemployed and people with low skill levels to get the skills they need for employment.

NAS

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), part of the Skills Funding Agency, is a government agency that coordinates apprenticeships in England, enabling young people to enter the skilled trades.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/get-in-and-go-far-with-new-apprenticeships>

Over the past three years, 159,780 people have started a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship. The government has pledged to create 3 million apprenticeships across all levels by 2021.*

LIVING AWAY FROM HOME



Living away from home for the first time can be daunting for anyone, but you won't be alone. In university accommodations, such as halls of residence or self catering flats, all other first year students will be in the same situation.

Students who are unable to move into these accommodations can look for house shares with other first years.

Students on apprenticeships may find that they have to move away too. Large companies may be able to help with this by having houses for apprentices to share and rent, but most apprentices will have to find a house share, rent independently, or move in with that great aunt if you're lucky enough to have family near that location.

Moving out will help you develop a number of new skills and an untested level of independence. Do not panic; there are a number of things that you can learn to help yourself – why not see what you already know on our everyday skills list over the next page.



TOP TIPS FOR MOVING AWAY FROM HOME:

- 1 You don't need to take the kitchen sink; think carefully about what you pack
- 2 Buy kitchen supplies/utensils cheaply or raid your family's cupboards for their spares
- 3 Ask whoever drops you off to take you for a big grocery shop before they leave
- 4 Open the right student bank account (check out the competitive deals)
- 5 Don't forget your chargers
- 6 Not enough plugs in your new room? Get an extension cable
- 7 Go out and meet people after you first arrive
- 8 Takeaways every night are costly; learn to cook 3 basic meals before you leave home
- 9 In the months before leaving ask your parents for the second item in any BOGOF deals and start yourself a moving away goodie box



Curry in hurry, Stir fry, Pasta bake, Spaghetti bolognese, Pancakes, Pizza omelette, Pitta pizza, Fajitas, Nachos, Soup, Toad in hole



FOR YOURSELF

To make it easy you can ask a parent or carer to teach you how to cook your favourite meals. Alternatively, check out the following sites:



www.studentrecipes.com

www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/student

www.studential.com

You could also invest in some useful cook books, such as The Student Cookbook or Jamie Oliver's 5 Ingredients.

HAVE SOME FUN LEARNING THE FOLLOWING SKILLS AND TICK THEM OFF AS YOU GO



Home and Personal Care Skills

<input type="checkbox"/> How to use basic kitchen appliances	<input type="checkbox"/> Fold laundry	<input type="checkbox"/> Set an alarm and wake yourself up on time
<input type="checkbox"/> Wash/dry clothes	<input type="checkbox"/> How to properly clean the bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/> Get rid of spiders and bugs (without help)
<input type="checkbox"/> Make a bed (with clean sheets)	<input type="checkbox"/> How to unclog a toilet	

Life Management and Organisation Skills

<input type="checkbox"/> Create a budget	<input type="checkbox"/> Calculate a tip	<input type="checkbox"/> Change the battery in a fire alarm
<input type="checkbox"/> Use a credit card responsibly, avoiding debt	<input type="checkbox"/> Back up information on your devices	<input type="checkbox"/> How to deal with an estate agent
<input type="checkbox"/> When/how to pay taxes	<input type="checkbox"/> How to split a bill amongst friends	

Transportation Savvy

<input type="checkbox"/> Fill up a car with petrol	<input type="checkbox"/> Add oil to an engine/water to radiator	<input type="checkbox"/> Learn to navigate bus/train timetables
<input type="checkbox"/> Change a tyre	<input type="checkbox"/> Read a map	<input type="checkbox"/> Bike maintenance

Student-Specific Skills

<input type="checkbox"/> Shop smarter for books	<input type="checkbox"/> Contact professors for help	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a healthy balance between your academic and social lives
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep track of assignments due	<input type="checkbox"/> Discussing living guidelines with flatmates	
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain healthy study habits	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking clear, readable notes	

General Conscientiousness

<input type="checkbox"/> Awareness of your surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/> Have personal medical information and keep up with appointments	<input type="checkbox"/> How to say 'no' respectfully
<input type="checkbox"/> Recognising a potentially dangerous situation	<input type="checkbox"/> Be sexually responsible	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid drugs and alcohol

Professional Skills

<input type="checkbox"/> Write a CV	<input type="checkbox"/> Write thank you notes	<input type="checkbox"/> Draft a cover letter
<input type="checkbox"/> Network with people outside your course	<input type="checkbox"/> Professionally formatting your emails without emoji's 😊	<input type="checkbox"/> Join a club or society

BUDGETING FOR THE TERM/YEAR

When it comes to budgeting there are students who struggle with learning how (but they get there in the end), students that don't try until it's too late (so they end up in a pickle) and students who think ahead of the game. Thinking ahead is always best when it comes to budgeting. Getting it right will mean enjoying the social side of university... and keeping your dignity intact.

Use our quick budget calculator to identify how much you should have as spending money per week.

Budget calculator

Fill in the blanks:

Student loan amount £...../3 = £..... (this is one term's worth of funds)

Now take that term amount and minus your rent for one term (plus any other bills you have to pay i.e. mobile)

£..... minus

£.....

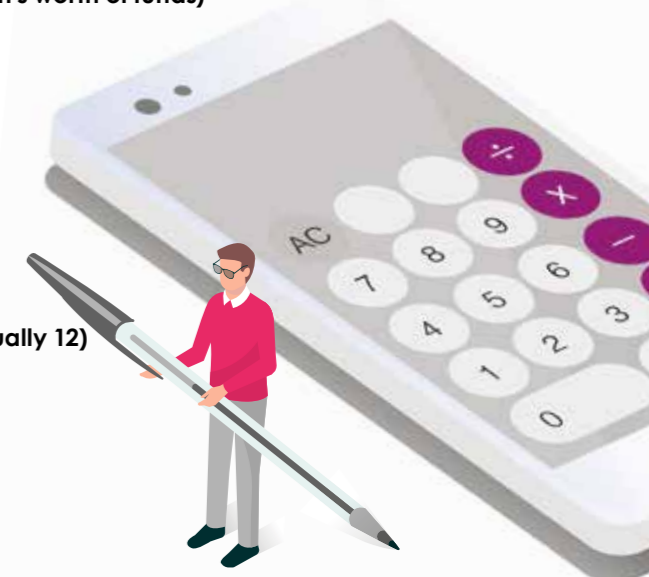
= £.....

And divide the remainder by the number of weeks in term (usually 12)

£...../12

= £.....

This is what you should spend per week. Haven't got much left? Consider a part time job at uni and talk with your parents/carers to see if they're able to help.



THERE ARE PLENTY OF WAYS TO SAVE A FEW POUNDS. CHECK OUT ALL THESE STUDENT DISCOUNT AND MONEY SAVING SITES:

Student Beans – www.studentbeans.com/uk

NUS discount – www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-extra/discounts

NUS for apprenticeships – www.apprenticeextra.co.uk

www.savethestudent.org/save-money

www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support/ucas-undergraduate-managing-money

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

Employers can do an internet search to see your digital footprint. What do your social media accounts say about you? Whether you realise it or not, you're promoting yourself on them.

Are you prepared for employers to see you as you are? If not, consider spring cleaning your footprint or strengthen profiles where you can. For more information or support on how to clean up your footprint visit www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/taking-care-your-digital-footprint

For those of you going straight into an apprenticeships or work this is very important. You should also create yourself a professional LinkedIn profile.



SKILLS, SKILLS, SKILLS

Companies and universities will look at your applications in an attempt to understand what skills you currently have.

Common ones that they're looking for include:

- Communication
- Problem solving
- Team work
- Writing
- IT
- Networking
- Organisation
- Leadership.

Think you've got some gaps? Here's what you can do between now and writing your applications to improve the above skills:

- Work experience
- Volunteering
- Online blog
- YouTube channel (vlogging)
- Reading sources in your fields of interest that are not in the curriculum
- Join a sports/social club at school or locally for young people.



INTERVIEW TIPS

When having an interview, be that for university, a job or apprenticeship, there are a number of things that you should do as standard:

1. Research the organisation, academic field or university

News, trends, values, history, social media and opportunities for the organisation and its sector

2. Review your application just before any meeting or interview takes place

They may ask you questions based on the details of your CV or application

3. Contact referees (more so with a job interview than a university application)

Let them know that you're being interviewed and that they may receive a call

4. Know the role, course or placements that you are going for

Go through the job description and identify skills, interests and experiences the interviewers are looking for

5. Anticipate questions they will ask you

Research the type of questions that an industry may ask you and practise your answers with a friend or relative

6. Prepare to ask questions

Those interviewing candidates will always expect to be asked questions. It demonstrates that you're committed, interested and capable of thinking for yourself

7. Arrive early, never on time

You never know what kind of travel issues you might face. Planning to arrive early will give you leeway should you get stuck in traffic. If there are no traffic issues, then you'll have time to relax and compose yourself (very important for an interview)

8. Dress appropriately

This will help you make a good first impression.

9. Don't speak at 100 miles an hour

Speaking too fast will make it difficult for interviewers to follow you. Slow down – it will demonstrate that you can handle the pressure

10. Don't be afraid to ask interviewers to repeat a question (don't overdo it though)

You'll do more damage for answering a question wrong than you ever would for asking interviewers to repeat it

11. Have a firm handshake

A handshake is a way to measure confidence. Practise with friends and relatives to gain a firm, but not dominative, handshake. Don't be afraid to instigate one either

12. Eye contact (another body language which gives away confidence levels)

Keep eye contact with everyone on the panel (the group interviewing you are the panel) but don't stare at them either. It's easy to focus on the friendliest person there but if you do this, you're ignoring the rest.

Remember that while you may like the opportunity, a role is often the result of an employer needing to solve an internal problem or need. So when answering interview questions, ensure that you're telling the interviewer how you will make their lives or the company's easier.

Finally, when talking about your experiences it's all about you and the problems that you have solved; try to say 'I have...' not 'We have...'

What are video interviews?

Video interviews are becoming a trend in today's world of employment. This is more likely to happen with work experience or graduate opportunities in large companies. University of Northampton reports that in the last 12 months they have seen a huge increase in the number of students requesting video interview prep. The most common video interview format that the University comes across involves interview questions coming up on the screen, giving the applicant a time limit to answer before moving on to the next question.

You could prepare for this by recording yourself answering questions and watching it back for any of the common mistakes we mentioned earlier or unconscious behaviours.



UCAS TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER – JANUARY 15TH

UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is a UK based organisation whose main role is to operate the application process for British Universities.

Applications to all universities must be made through UCAS Apply, not directly to the university.

Application

You can start filling in the information for your UCAS application as early as May/June. This is solely to make a start – you can't send any applications until September and the **UCAS deadline is 15th January** (your school/college will have an earlier deadline).

Remember you have 5 applications only

Application deadlines for Medicine, Veterinary Science, Dentistry and Oxbridge will be 15th October

Personal Statement

Your opportunity (possibly the only one) to convince the university that they should choose you. You will write about your aspirations, interests, hobbies and more in this 400 word document.

Tutor Reference

This reference is meant to support your personal statement. Teachers will tell the university what type of student you are and will aim to support any academic claims you make. To do this well, **they need to see your personal statement with enough time to write a good reference** – aim to finish your personal statement for the deadline you're given.

JANUARY – MAY

UCAS Track

Once an application has been submitted and your welcome email has been received, you can then **see how your application is progressing by signing into 'UCAS Track'**, their online system, at any time. Responses will begin to come back; some might be quick, others may take a while.

Unconditional Offer (U)

This means **a university has made you an offer and they have not set any requirements for your entry.** Despite this you must still finish school!

Conditional Offer (C)

This means **an offer has been made but you can only attend if you meet the conditions attached**, which is usually the grade requirements of the university in question.

Unsuccessful (R)

This means that the application to the university has **not been successful.**

UCAS Extra Opens

UCAS Extra is an opportunity for students without successful offers to apply elsewhere. This usually runs from late February to July. You can make one new application at a time.

Decision Time

You can only keep hold of two of your offers.

Even if you only hold two you will still need to select which **one will be your Firm and Insurance Choice** – you have until early May to choose between any offers returned by the end of March. Note, offers made past March will have a different answer deadline.

Firm Choice

A firm choice is when you have **'firmly decided to accept'** a conditional/unconditional offer made by a university.

Insurance Choice

An Insurance Choice is when you have decided to accept the university's offer **but will only attend if your Firm Choice's conditions are not met.**

Results

On the day that you collect your results in August you will also be able to see the outcome of any conditional offers on UCAS Track. If successful and happy with your choices, skip to 'Your final choice'. If you no longer hold the offer you want, you will enter into Clearing. **To get the best opportunities start this as soon as you can.**

Clearing

Clearing is a process available from early July to late October each year **where students have an opportunity to try and gain one of the remaining spaces at another university.** Students may use this if they did not achieve the grades needed for their firm or insurance choices or if they simply want to go elsewhere.

Adjustment

This is a process in clearing where **students who received higher grades than predicted can apply to universities that were previously out of reach.**

Your Final Choice

Now that your results are out, you are at the point where **you need to confirm your attendance at your preferred choice.**

Be mindful that once you do this, you cannot get that second offer back. You're on your way now.

Deferral

This is when a **student decides to postpone going to their final choice until the following academic year.** Be sure to check if the university course is accepting deferred entry applications!

UCAS Extra Closes

No more applications can be put in to universities through UCAS from early July. **From this point applications can only go through the clearing.**



A POST 16S GUIDE TO HIGHER EDUCATION



Uni Connect is funded by the Office for Students. It is a national network of hubs across England which offer impartial advice, guidance and activities on the benefits and realities of higher education in college and university.



For further information please contact aspirehigher@northampton.ac.uk