



# **NEXT STEPS**

## **PARENT/CARER GUIDE**

## Options at 18

1. **Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) and Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE):** first and second year of a degree course.
2. **Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND):** HNC is a one-year industry specific course, and the HND is a two-year industry specific course.
3. **Higher apprenticeships:** provide an opportunity to gain Level 4 qualifications or above, e.g. HND, or foundation degree while you work. Can take from one to five years to complete, depending on the course level.
4. **Foundation degree:** flexible vocational qualification, combining both academic study and workplace learning. It usually takes two years to complete.
5. **Bachelor's or undergraduate degree:** a three to four-year course which can also be available as a part-time option, allowing you to study and work.
6. **Degree apprenticeships:** enable you to gain a full undergraduate or master's degree while you work. Degree apprenticeships take three to six years to complete, depending on the course.

### Degree Apprenticeships

Introduced in 2015 Degree Apprenticeships are a work based programme that combines practical work experience with academic study. It allows individuals to gain a full university degree while working and earning a salary. The degree apprenticeship does **not cost** the student anything, as the employer pays the university fees. Typically, the apprentices split their time between working for an employer and studying at a University. This type of apprenticeship provides a valuable opportunity to develop practical skills and knowledge while also receiving formal education and training.

### Post 18 - Apprenticeships

There are numerous opportunities available for students after A levels. Those available are listed on the official government website for Apprenticeships which is [www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk) as well as on websites of individual training providers and employers. These websites often list a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities in various industries and locations.

### University

#### **Different types of University**

**Russell Group Universities** - Established in 1994, the Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities that are committed to industry-leading research and an outstanding learning experience for all students. Most are city based. Included within this group are the **Ancient Universities** of Edinburgh, Oxford & Cambridge with their historic buildings and lecture rooms.

**Metropolitan universities** - These universities have evolved from polytechnics, further education colleges and other higher education institutions to become universities. They are often the 'second' university in a city. Some of these universities are smaller and located in smaller cities or towns, such as Bolton, Huddersfield and Staffordshire

### Which type of university should they choose?

They need to make sure that they choose the right one to suit their wants and needs. Most importantly, it should provide an excellent learning experience that ensures they graduate with a degree that will help them to start a rewarding career in their chosen industry. There are pros and cons to each of the three different types of university. The choice is theirs.

### **Questions to ask your child before applying**

- Choose a course - Do they love the subject?
- Would they be happy to study it for three plus years?
- Do they like the look of the course?
- Will it help them in the career they want to do?
- Does University offer the course they want?

A single degree concentrates on one area of specialisation, whilst a double/joint degree major focuses on two areas of specialisation

### **Do they have the right grades to apply?**

Even if they are predicted the grades that are required, check they have the required GCSE results as well.

### **What else can your child do?**

Completing the Extended Project Qualification EPQ (it will not necessarily\* be part of the offer, however it is advantageous) it is an excellent way they can investigate and become an expert in a topic linked to what they want to study. They could also

- Enter essay competitions offered both in and out of school
- Try to gain relevant work or academic experience
- Prepare thoroughly
- Show they have an enquiring mind to take on new ideas.
- Be enthusiastic and show a love for the subject
- Show a good level of general knowledge and an interest in the world
- Demonstrate an ability & desire to find out for themselves and not be spoon fed

### **What do they need to do?**

Think about - Do they really want to go?  
Visit Universities and attend Open Day  
Campus or city location

### **What can they be doing from now?**

Research, Research and more research. Reading around their subject.  
Look at all guidance material. Keeping abreast of world news  
Reading journals relevant to their subject, maybe keeping a log or diary, making a summary of what they read and questions it generated.

### **Applying to university**

They need to register on UCAS Hub [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

They are applying with the support of school; therefore, they enter the school buzzword (supplied by UCAS Administrator)

The application is online – however, they do not need to complete the application all in one go. They need a valid email address (school email). There are questions specifically for UK students – these are about your ethnic origin, national identity, and occupational background. These are mandatory questions used for monitoring purposes. The information will be shared with the university, only after they have applied. Information about personal circumstances – such as parental education, if they have been in care, or involved in widening participation activities, so universities and colleges can form a more complete understanding of them as an individual. While this information is optional, it can help universities and colleges better understand their background, and provide support. There is a question on how they plan to fund their studies – normally drop down option UK IOM. They can give a parent, guardian, or adviser nominated access –this allows you to speak to universities about their application on their behalf. They will add your education history. They must enter all your qualifications from secondary education onwards – even any that were ungraded or you are still awaiting exams and results. This helps universities to understand if they meet their entry requirements. If they have any questions about entry requirements, speak to the University before you apply. A levels will be added with result pending and their predicted grades are added as part of their reference.

**Their application needs to be ready in school by Friday 5th December 2025 so we can complete the school administration for it to be with UCAS for the deadline in January 2026.**

There is nothing preventing them from applying as early as they are ready and the application process opens from **June 2025**.. Applying for Student finance comes later in the process.

### **Writing a supporting statement**

Writing to support the application. It is a chance for them to articulate why they would like to study a particular course or subject, and what skills and experience they possess that show their passion for their chosen field. There is a maximum length of 4,000 characters and this includes spaces.

### **What to write about in a supporting statement.**

They are telling admissions staff why they are suitable to study at their university or college. It is important to remember they can only write one personal statement\*, the same statement for all courses they apply for. Avoid mentioning any universities or colleges by name. If they have chosen similar subjects, talk about the subject in general, and try not to mention course titles. If you have chosen a variety of subjects, just write about common themes.

Ideas to help them get started:

- Look at course descriptions and identify the qualities, skills, and experience it requires – they can use these to help them decide what to write about.
- They need to tell the reader why they are applying – include ambitions, as well as what interests them about the subject, the course provider, and higher education.
- They need to think about what makes them suitable – relevant skills or achievements they have gained from education, experience, work, or other activities.
- They need to include any clubs or societies they belong to that are relevant
- Mention relevant employment experience or volunteering.
- If they have taken part in a higher education taster courses, placements or summer school or something similar, include it.

## **2026 Applications**

For students applying for university for the 2025 entry (to start in September 2026), the UCAS personal statement will have a new format. Instead of a free-text field, it will be structured with three specific questions. These questions will focus on: why you want to study the course, how

your qualifications and studies have prepared you, and what other experiences have prepared you. Here's a breakdown of the changes and what students need to know:

For 2025 Entry (to start in 2026):

### **New Format:**

The personal statement will be structured around three key questions.

#### **Questions:**

- Why do you want to study this course or subject?
- How have your qualifications and studies helped you to prepare for this course or subject?
- What else have you done to prepare outside of education, and why are these experiences helpful?

### **Character Limit:**

The overall character limit (including spaces) remains at 4,000, and each answer may have a minimum character count.

### **Focus:**

The new format is designed to be clearer and more focused, helping students highlight their motivations and readiness for university study.

### **Personal circumstances**

If there are any personal circumstances, which have affected their educational performance, they should outline them in their personal statement. For example, this might be something that caused them to miss school - such as a physical or mental health condition, or caring for a family member. If their personal circumstances have affected their qualification choices, they can mention this in their personal statement. For example, a change of school that did not offer the same options, if they have suffered financial hardship (e.g. received a bursary to cover the costs of education), let the university know about that.

They need to make their personal statement stand out. The personal statement is an important part of your application as it is their chance to personalise it. Two thirds of the personal statement should be about the course they are applying for. The personal statement should explain why they are applying to university. They will need to show enthusiasm, commitment and convince the admissions tutors that they will be an asset to their course. Remember the person reading your application is a specialist in that field and will want to know why they chose the subject/course

A third should be about the applicant. Think about what makes them a good student. If they are planning a gap year, they should mention in their personal statement what they intend to do during this time. Only mention things that support the application.  
Look at the help on the UCAS - website [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement>

Once they submit an application, they will receive either an offer, or a request for interview or in some cases a rejection. Some subjects involve submission of work i.e. Architecture, Film production and Art.

### **Interviews**

The interview – this is mostly for applicants applying to Allied Health, Dentistry, Medicine, Performing Arts, Veterinary and Teaching courses. The format may vary, however usually between 10 – 30 minutes. They will need to demonstrate that they are going to be a suitable student. They need to know the A level syllabus they are studying and what they have written on their personal statement. There will still be gaps in their knowledge, if an interviewer asks a tricky question, they are not trying to catch them out, but rather they are offering them the scope to show what they know. Suggest they try to get as much subject-specific interview practice as they can, putting what they have thought about into practice. Remember, the Admissions Tutors want to see that they are right for the course they are applying for. They need to understand the course and that their answers illustrate their understanding of the complexity of questions in light of the course. Following the interview, there will be a decision:

A rejection – the application has not been successful

or

An offer – read the conditions, and they just need to achieve the grades!

Once they have had replies from all 5 choices they can decide on a firm choice and an insurance choice

**Help on hand from:**

**Form Tutor**

**Head of Sixth Form Mr Lewis [LewisP@uptonhigh.co.uk](mailto:LewisP@uptonhigh.co.uk)**

**UCAS Administrator - Mrs Gwyther [gwythere@uptonhigh.co.uk](mailto:gwythere@uptonhigh.co.uk)**