

Thinking about higher education?

If you're around age 16 and thinking about higher education, there are several routes open to you. The most suitable route probably depends on how you learn best, and on what or where you want to study.

Entry requirements

Entry requirements are set by the university. Broadly speaking, for a degree course you're likely to need:

- Three (occasionally two) A Levels.
- Or vocational qualifications at Level 3, such as BTEC National or T Levels.
- Or a mix of A Levels and Level 3 vocational qualifications.

There are some other higher education courses, e.g. Foundation Degrees or HNDs, which may accept one or two A Levels or equivalent vocational qualifications.

Some courses require specific subjects and / or grades while others use a points system called the UCAS Tariff. There are also admissions tests for certain courses, e.g. medicine and law.

GCSEs

Aim for the highest GCSE grades possible. As a rule, higher education courses expect grades 9-4 (or 9-5) in English and sometimes maths and / or sciences. Remember that this is the minimum requirement and that, for a competitive course, you might be up against students with grades 9-7. If your qualifications are equivalent to GCSE, check if they are accepted.

A Levels

A Levels can lead to both academic and vocational university courses so, if classroom study and exams suit you, they're a flexible qualification. If you're choosing A Levels, think about which subjects you enjoy, your strongest subjects and any career ideas. Some higher education courses accept a range of A Levels if the grades are right. Courses such as medicine and related fields, or STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) often want specific subjects. Use www.informedchoices.ac.uk to explore where subjects might lead.

Vocational qualifications

Vocational (also called 'technical') qualifications at Level 3 can also lead to higher education although this is more likely to be in a subject related to your area of study. Check entry requirements as you may need specific grades or modules.

Work experience

Certain courses, such as teaching, nursing and medicine, expect work experience. Organise this well in advance as you will need to discuss it in your application.





What will it cost?

This information is under review and may change.

There are two types of cost to do with higher education:

Tuition fees - currently up to £9,250 a year (but this may change beyond 2020-21). **You do not pay any tuition fees in advance as they are covered by a Student Loan.**

Living costs - such as rent, bills and travel. There is a Maintenance Loan to help; this is partly based on family income and may not cover all costs, especially if you pay rent.

You don't start repaying Student Loans until you have finished your course and your pay has reached a certain level (currently £372 a week or £1,615 a month). At present any unpaid loan is cancelled after 30 years. (This might increase to 40 years.)

There are also bursaries and scholarships which you don't have to pay back. These include a bursary of at least £5,000 for students on nursing, midwifery and some related degrees.

Other routes into higher education

Apprenticeships

An advanced apprenticeship that leads to Level 3 qualifications can also be a way into some higher education courses.

Higher and degree apprenticeships are jobs where you study for higher education qualifications with your tuition fees paid. They are in various work sectors, such as engineering, management, construction, police and health.

Fast track degrees

Fast track (or accelerated) degrees lead to a full degree in two years. These are fairly new but there may be more around in a few years' time.

Find out more

www.ucas.com
www.informedchoices.ac.uk
www.shu.ac.uk
www.sheffield.ac.uk

www.gov.uk/student-finance
www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships
www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

