HIGHER EDUCATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

University of Huddersfield
Inspiring tomorrow’s professionals

THE AWARDS
AWARD WINNER
University of the Year
We hope this guide provides you with the information you need at this time, as well as some hints and ideas to help you along the way.

This guide can also be accessed online at: www.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate/parentsandcarers

Click on it now for up-to-date information and advice.
Why university?

Going to university can be a life-changing moment for young people, and can also have a great impact on their families.

For the vast majority of students, Higher Education can boost career prospects and earning potential, as well as provide an opportunity to gain subject expertise and transferable skills to take into the world of work. It is also a time for independence and a chance to make friendships that can last a lifetime.

Going to university often involves the need to take loans to pay for tuition fees and living costs, however these can be repaid after graduation and when earning above a certain salary threshold.

Those who complete a degree are likely to earn between £168K and £252K more over a working lifetime compared to somebody without a degree*.

Yet entering Higher Education demands careful thought. Time must be put aside to research both universities and their courses. In recent years, record numbers of students have entered Higher Education meaning that it is in the interest of all applicants to make the strongest possible application.

That is why parents and carers have a vital role in supporting the student through both the research and decision-making process.

We hope this guide provides you with the information you need at this time, as well some hints and ideas to help you along the way.

Don’t forget to visit our web pages for parents and carers at:

www.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate/parentsandcarers

*BIS report

“Going to university can be a life-changing moment for young people, and can also have a great impact on their families.”
The University of Huddersfield

The University of Huddersfield is a modern, innovative university with a broad range of courses and a great reputation for its industry links that provide many of its students with the experience needed in today’s competitive jobs market.

It is both a friendly and a welcoming place to study with a commitment for meeting the needs and aspirations of its students. The University is proud of its record in widening participation to Higher Education and of its highly socially inclusive student community. This is combined with good student retention rates and success in achieving graduate employment.

With 24,000 students, the University is one of the top ten universities for courses with placements. These courses are a great opportunity to gain valuable work experience to supplement a course and to increase employment prospects after graduation.

Imaginative conversions and new buildings on its town centre campus mean that its students have access to some of the best university facilities in the UK. Huddersfield also has a strong reputation for its student support services meaning that help and guidance is within reach of all students during their time there.

To find out more about the University’s courses, and details of its forthcoming Open Days, visit: www.hud.ac.uk
Bachelor degrees commonly last for three or four years – although there is a growing number of compressed courses that can last just two years.
University qualifications

Students taking Higher Education courses are usually 18 or over, and the majority will opt to study for a degree. However, as the face of Higher Education has changed over the years, so the choice of qualifications to study at university has widened. These include:

Degrees
Bachelor degrees, or ‘first’ degrees, commonly last for three or four years – although there is a growing number of compressed courses that can last just two years. Upon completion, a qualification is awarded relative to the subject area (e.g. BSc (Science), BA (Arts), BEng (Engineering)).

Foundation Degrees
These are particular types of degrees which are broadly equivalent to the first two years of a Bachelor’s degree and are designed to equip students with specific work-based skills and knowledge. They can offer a route into Higher Education for students from many different backgrounds and upon completion, can allow students to transfer to the final year of a degree course. Entry requirements are often more lenient.

Higher National Diplomas/Higher National Certificates
HNDs (Higher National Diplomas) and HNCs (Higher National Certificates) are work-related qualifications designed to provide skills to put knowledge to effective use in a particular job. They are highly valued by employers both in the UK and overseas, and can also count towards membership of professional bodies and other employer organisations. Upon completion, both can lead to the final year of a degree course.

Foundation Year
A Foundation Year is another route into university for those lacking standard entry qualifications. It allows students to gain knowledge and study skills in a specific subject area and, upon completion, allows students to progress on to Year 1 of a chosen degree course.

Diplomas of Higher Education
Similar to HNDs, these are accredited professional qualifications that are highly respected by employers both in the UK and overseas. They usually take two years to complete and offer subjects such as accounting, construction and engineering.

Postgraduate Study
These are higher level courses for graduates, available upon completion of a ‘first’ degree, which can lead to qualifications such as a Master’s degree or a PhD.

www.findfoundationdegree.co.uk
What to study and where to study

With such a wide selection of courses across the UK, many students, their parents and carers, can be forgiven for feeling spoilt for choice.

Encourage your son or daughter to start the research process as early as possible and provide as much support as you can. For example you could go with them to open days and explore online information with them at home.

Where to start

Some university courses are similar to those studied at school, such as languages, music, maths and English.

Others provide a wider range of options such as multimedia, the NHS professions and specific strands of science. Then there are degree courses that are necessary to pursue specific careers, such as architecture, medicine and social work.

Most students choose to study one subject in detail but there is also the opportunity to study two or three subjects as part of a ‘combined’ degree.

The following are suggested as useful starting points:

// Prospectus: a directory of university courses, either online or a printed copy. The course search section of the UCAS website also contains impartial information about all Higher Education courses across the UK.

// Unistats: compares official course data from universities and colleges including National Student Satisfaction Survey scores, jobs, salaries and other key information.

// Prospects: information about the graduate jobs market and careers advice.

// icould: a non-commercial website rich with information about how to pursue chosen careers.

// Centigrade Online: matches the preferences and qualifications of the student with the most suitable courses available (subject to a small fee).

// UCAS TV: section of the UCAS website which provides a series of bite-sized films explaining the entire process of applying to and preparing for university.
Most students choose to study one subject in detail but there is also the opportunity to study two or three subjects as part of a ‘combined’ degree.

Entry qualifications and the UCAS tariff

It is very important to get to grips with the entry criteria for each course of interest, particularly the small print. A large number of universities now employ the UCAS Tariff when considering students for their courses.

This allows candidates to accumulate points relative to the qualifications and grades they achieve, and are predicted to achieve, within post-16 education.

Every Higher Education course publishes its minimum entry requirements in the form of tariff points or grades. It is rare that any university will accept applicants who do not meet the minimum points/grades score. If in doubt, contact the course admissions tutors via the telephone numbers and email addresses provided in the prospectus or online.

It is also worth noting:

- not all post-16 qualifications will lead to the award of tariff points;
- some courses demand a certain grade in a particular subject and qualification;
- many universities, especially those for highly selective courses, will also take into account GCSE performance;
- some courses require substantial work experience in a relevant area.

For more information, please visit: www.ucas.com/students/ucas_tariff
Choosing the right course

Going to university is a landmark moment. The majority of students are there for three years or longer so choosing a course demands care and attention.

It is important to consider the entry requirements first and not to overlook the fact that some courses require a particular qualification, or are subject to an admissions test.

Admissions tests
Admissions tests can apply to applicants for:
// Medicine, Dentistry, and Veterinary Science;
// Law courses at a small selection of universities;
// individual universities who set additional entry criteria.

More information is available via the Entry Requirements section of the UCAS website.

Making the most of the UCAS website
Whilst many websites will provide information about universities and their courses, the most comprehensive and impartial source of information is the UCAS website.

The Search section of the UCAS website allows users to trawl for full-time degree courses across the UK.

Once individual courses are referenced a wealth of information is unlocked in the form of Entry Profiles.

Entry Profiles
The Profiles contain all you might wish to know about a particular course. Be careful about courses with similar titles as the content and assessments methods could vary greatly.

As well as providing details about course entry requirements, Entry Profiles can include information on where a course is taught, the views of students on that course and whether or not it offers a year’s work experience.

Sandwich/placement years
An increasing number of degree courses offer the chance to gain work experience. These are often referred to as ‘placement’ or ‘sandwich’ courses. Typically, they last for four years, with one year’s paid work experience in year 3.

Other degree courses might offer shorter periods of work experience whilst two-year Foundation Degrees and HNDs/HNCs often have work-based experience already built in.

The tuition fee situation can vary from one university to another in the case of placement years. It is important to check as this could make a difference financially.

The prospectus
A prospectus is a printed course directory that is published by each university in the country. You can order a University of Huddersfield prospectus from our home page.

Unistats
This is a non-commercial website, supported by UCAS, that provides a range of statistics through which university courses across the UK can be compared.

Music
There are two ways to apply for music courses. UCAS is the place to apply for full-time undergraduate courses but those wishing to apply for a practice-based music course should go to:

Nursing
Applications for nursing courses are made via UCAS. Courses are usually offered on specific pathways such as Midwifery, Adult or Child Nursing. More details can be found at:

Art and Design
Universities can choose one of two deadlines, January 15 or March 24, for their Art and Design Courses. UCAS Search will have information on this. Some students choose to undertake a one-year art foundation course before progressing into Higher Education.

Medicine, Dentistry, and Veterinary Science
As well as noting an earlier deadline and a maximum of four choices, candidates are advised to read the specific advice found via the UCAS website.
Choosing the right university

All universities will encourage concentrating on the choice of course, and the motivation for choosing it, prior to turning attention to where to study.

One of the first decisions to be made is whether to stay at home to study at a local university, or to move away. This decision may be influenced by personal preference or cost but regardless, the student will always have the opportunity to be part of the university community.

One of the best research strategies is to attend university open days. This will allow prospective students and their families to see each institution at its best and to get a feel for what the actual place is like. This is particularly important for disabled students in order to find out about access issues.

If looking at student accommodation, is it of a good standard and at a reasonable cost? If living at home, is it easy to travel to the university? Are the student areas safe and does the university offer plenty of support? What are the teaching facilities like? Are the staff friendly and helpful? Try to talk to current students whilst you are there and ask them about their experience of that university.

After answering all these questions, your son/daughter should finally ask themselves where they would feel happiest for three or four years. Then the application process can begin.

To find out more about the University of Huddersfield’s forthcoming Open Days, visit: www.hud.ac.uk

“On results day, if your son/daughter has a conditional offer, they will have a place on their chosen course provided they gain the specified points or grades.”
Applying through UCAS

Nearly all applications for undergraduate degrees go through UCAS. Applicants apply online to a maximum of five courses and it is possible to apply for more than one course at the same university or college.

Whilst UCAS has a deadline for applications, your son/daughter’s school or college will probably have its own, earlier deadline and it is very important to keep to this. Once UCAS receives the completed application, copies are sent to admissions tutors at each institution. During this time, your son/daughter will receive information from each institution regarding offers and/or interviews.

Medicine, Dentistry, and Veterinary Science

Students applying for these courses have a maximum of four choices but they can use up their remaining option(s) for different, related courses without prejudicing their application.

Art and Design

Art and Design courses differ in that students are expected to submit a portfolio of work to support their application. Some of these courses may have a later deadline than normal which the student needs to be aware of.

Once your son/daughter has sent off their application to UCAS, there are three decisions an admissions tutor can make:

1) an unconditional offer, where the institution will accept the applicant regardless of the points/grades gained in exams;
2) a conditional offer where a place on the course is guaranteed provided specified grades or points are achieved or;
3) a rejection.

On receiving the decisions letter from UCAS, students can then accept a maximum of two offers, one as a firm acceptance and one as an insurance acceptance. They are now committed to these institutions and can only consider other course options by rejecting both and either going into Clearing (a back-up system where students can apply for remaining places) or reapplying the following year.

UCAS Extra

If unsuccessful in this first round of applications, your son/daughter will automatically qualify for UCAS Extra - a second chance to apply for the places that are left.

Results day

On results day, if your son/daughter has a conditional offer, they will have a place on their chosen course provided they gain the specified points or grades. If they miss these slightly, it is worth checking with the college or university as the place may still be available for them.

If they do have a place, UCAS will write to them immediately confirming this. If they miss their firm acceptance, they will automatically be forwarded to their insurance choice, provided they have achieved their specified grades or points. Again, it is worth checking with the institution if they miss these. Should your son/daughter fail to get into either of their chosen universities, there are a number of options open to them including Clearing.

Do make use of the staff in school/college on the day who can advise on the best course of action and also look at:

[www.ucas.ac.uk/resultsandnextsteps](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/resultsandnextsteps)
Gain experience through a gap year

Some students decide to take a year out after their exams. If a gap year is planned thoroughly, it can have a positive impact in terms of life experience and the student’s CV. Opportunities are immense and range from voluntary work and cultural exchanges to a year in industry. A gap year is an ideal opportunity to earn money, gain valuable experience and to face new challenges. Numerous organisations listed on the Internet can help fund gap years or provide valuable contacts for sponsorship. Make sure your son/daughter weighs up the pros and cons of taking an extra year out of employment before committing themselves and whatever they plan, it is important that you support them and encourage them to make the experience as productive as possible.

"A gap year is an ideal opportunity to earn money, gain valuable experience and to face new challenges."

Student fees and financial support

Financial support is available to help students with fees and living costs at university. The details of this can change from year to year. It is possible to apply to university in Y13/second year at college with everyone else and simply defer entry for a year in consultation with their chosen institution. Financial support, however, needs to be started a year later than everyone else, so it is important to keep in contact with the process in the meantime in order not to miss deadlines etc. For details see: 

For the most up to date information go to:  
www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance

For University of Huddersfield specific information, go to:  
www.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesandfinance

Other sources of funding

// Disabled Students Allowance
This provision is to help with the extra costs your son/daughter has as a result of attending a course and as a direct result of his/her disability. All full-time and part-time students with disabilities are eligible. It is paid directly from the Student Loans Company and does not have to be repaid.

// NHS Related Courses
The Department of Health funds places on numerous degree courses including podiatry, dental hygiene, dietetics, midwifery, nursing, physiotherapy, prosthetics, occupational therapy, orthoptics and speech and language therapy. For more information, see: 

www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk
Accommodation

Students can choose from living in halls of residence, private sector housing, or living at home.

Halls of residence
Most first year students choose to live in halls of residence which are either owned and managed by the university or college, or run by an outside firm on its behalf. They provide students with the opportunity to meet people and make new friends in a safe environment.

As heating, cleaning and maintenance costs may be included in the rent, halls make the transition from home to university easier. Some halls provide meals, others are self-catering. Some halls have en-suite study bedrooms whilst others have shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Halls often provide laundry and computing facilities and it is worth checking what equipment, bedding and utensils are available to avoid arriving with too much or too little luggage. Check the schedule for payment of hall fees as some halls require payment twice a year rather than termly. This can make things difficult if the student is using a termly maintenance loan to pay for accommodation.

Private sector housing
Most students move into privately owned accommodation in their second and third years. Unlike halls and university flats, shared houses do not always provide lockable bedrooms, so students must be completely happy with all arrangements before they sign a contract. Private sector housing is often cheaper but rents may not cover heating and other bills. It is always advisable to use university approved housing as this ensures that gas safety checks and other important surveys have been carried out. Make sure your son/daughter is provided with an inventory when they move in, otherwise the landlord could charge them for breakages or loss associated with the previous tenants. University accommodation services will check rental or licensing contracts for students free of charge. For the University of Huddersfield approved and recommended accommodation go to: www.digstudent.co.uk

Insurance
Whatever the accommodation, students must have adequate home contents insurance; they may already be covered by your home insurance policy so check this first.

Living at home
An increasing number of students now live at home and commute to their place of study. So if your son/daughter choose to do this they will not be on their own.
Student support

If your son/daughter is leaving home for the first time, you may feel anxious about their welfare.

Every university will be different, but there will be plenty of help on hand if they need it. Universities provide numerous forms of other support for students. These may include:

**Personal tutor**
Upon arrival at university, each student is assigned a personal tutor – a member of staff from their particular department. Students can go to them with any problems or worries that they may have.

**Health centre**
All universities have a health centre where your son/daughter can register with a doctor which is particularly important if they are living away from home.

**The Students’ Union**
The Union will have a Welfare Officer who can give advice and information on any aspect of university life.

**Counselling service**
Many universities offer a counselling service where students can go to discuss personal or academic problems in confidence.

**Disability support**
The Student Services Officer will provide students with disabilities with all the information and support they need. If your son/daughter has a disability, it is advisable to arrange a needs assessment before they start their course.

**The Careers and Employability Service**
Here to guide, support and advise students from the very minute they begin University. They’re in control of their career planning and the Careers and Employability Service is here to help them reach their end destination - becoming an employable graduate.

**Chaplaincy**
Many universities also have a chaplaincy or faith centre to offer support and guidance to students regardless of their faith.

www.hud.ac.uk/student_services

Every university will be different, but there will be plenty of help on hand if they need it.
What it all means

Like every other area of life, Higher Education has its own distinct terminology and jargon. Some of these terms and definitions are listed below.

**Campus**
All the buildings belonging to a university that are grouped together on one site. Some universities will have both residential and academic buildings on one site, whereas others will have their buildings in several different areas of the town or city.

**Clearing**
A system allowing students who have not gained a university place to apply for remaining course vacancies once exam results are published.

**Dissertation**
A lengthy essay on a specific subject which many students complete in their final year.

**Extra**
A chance to apply for remaining courses if unsuccessful in initial applications.

**Faculty/school**
Similar subjects at universities or colleges are often grouped together under one faculty or school. For example, at the University of Huddersfield, Management, Business Studies and Marketing courses are grouped together under the Business School.

**Finals**
The last set of examinations taken before gaining a degree.

**Fresher**
Students in their first year at university are known as ‘Freshers’.

**Joint Honours**
A degree where two subjects are studied together with equal weight, for example, BA (Hons) English and History or BSc (Hons) Physics and Chemistry. Where one subject has more emphasis than the other, it is known as major/minor.

**Lecture**
A form of teaching where a lecturer speaks on a given topic to a large group and students take notes.

**Module**
Many degree courses are made up of specific modules, for example an English degree may offer the option of a module in Victorian Literature. Students choose from a number of modules, gaining credits for each one, which make up their degree course.

**Prospectus**
A directory providing information on a specific university. It contains course information, details of the town or city and the accommodation available. Most universities now offer their full prospectus online.

**Sandwich/placement year**
Sandwich courses usually last four years with the third year spent in industry. This placement year enables students to gain valuable work experience whilst being paid a salary and they may be offered a job at the end of their studies.

**Seminar/tutorial**
Where a small group of students meet up with a lecturer and discuss their ideas on a specific part of the subject they are currently studying. Work is often set and then discussed the following week.

**Students’ Union**
This is the social heart of a university. The majority of Students’ Union buildings will house bars, clubs, quiet study areas and shops and also host numerous societies. Students’ Unions also employ welfare staff to offer your son/daughter advice and reassurance.

**Term**
These are similar to terms in schools. The academic year at some universities, however, is divided into two semesters, Autumn and Spring.

**Undergraduate**
Someone studying for their first degree.
Useful contacts

We hope this guide has answered most of your questions about Higher Education. There is further information on our website or if you have a question, we are always here to help. Please find below some useful contacts.

UCAS

www.ucas.com

UCAS Customer Services Unit
08714 680468

Schools and Colleges Liaison Service
University of Huddersfield
01484 472282

Student Finance England
08453 005090
www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk

Disability Rights UK
0800 328 5050
students@disabilityrightsuk.org

Information for Parents and Carers
01484 473145
parents@hud.ac.uk
www.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate/parentsandcarers