

A mini guide to **UNIVERSITY IN THE NORTH EAST**

WWW.NERAP.AC.UK



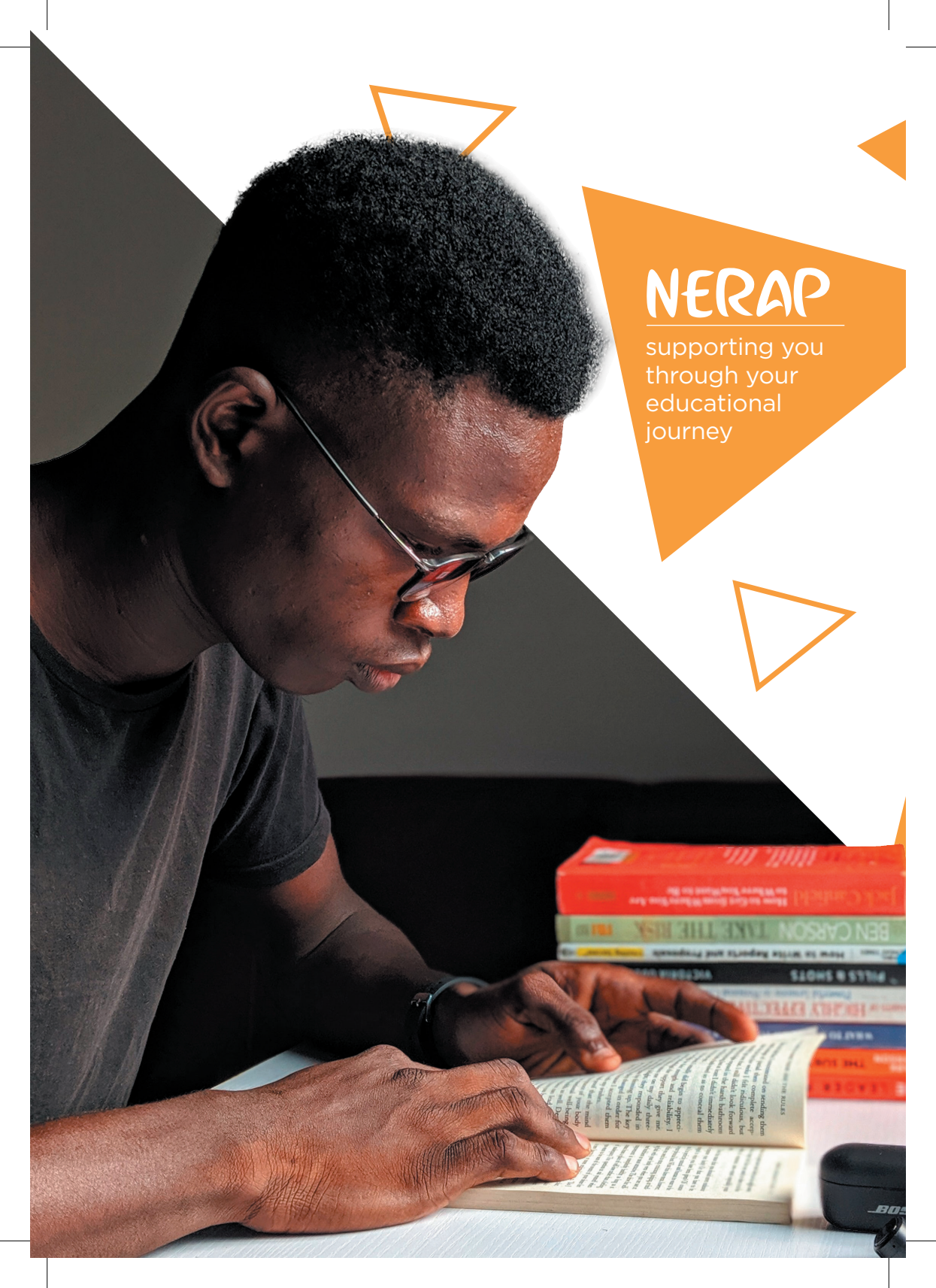
NORTH EAST
RAISING ASPIRATION
PARTNERSHIP





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NERAP

supporting you
through your
educational
journey

WHO ARE WE?

The North East Raising Aspiration Partnership is a collaboration of the region's five universities; working together to ensure every young person has the opportunity to make informed decisions about higher education.

As a Partnership, we deliver sessions in schools to provide free and impartial advice about higher education and deliver programmes of activity to groups of young people who are currently under-represented at university.

Our regional universities offer a wide range of opportunities for students to support higher education decision making. Details of all events along with key information for students can be found by visiting www.nerap.ac.uk

OUR HIGHER EDUCATION AMBASSADORS

You may have already met some of our Higher Education Ambassadors in school, they are all recent graduates of the five universities and are fully trained to offer information and advice about higher education opportunities. They regularly visit schools in the region to deliver talks on student life, choosing the right course, applying to university and much more. If you meet them at your school, make sure you ask them about their time at university – they loved it so much that they don't want to leave!



**NORTH EAST
RAISING ASPIRATION
PARTNERSHIP**

'Working together to engage, inform and inspire'



Case Study

Emily

📖 Biosciences (MBiol)

📍 Durham University

Why did you decide to go to university?

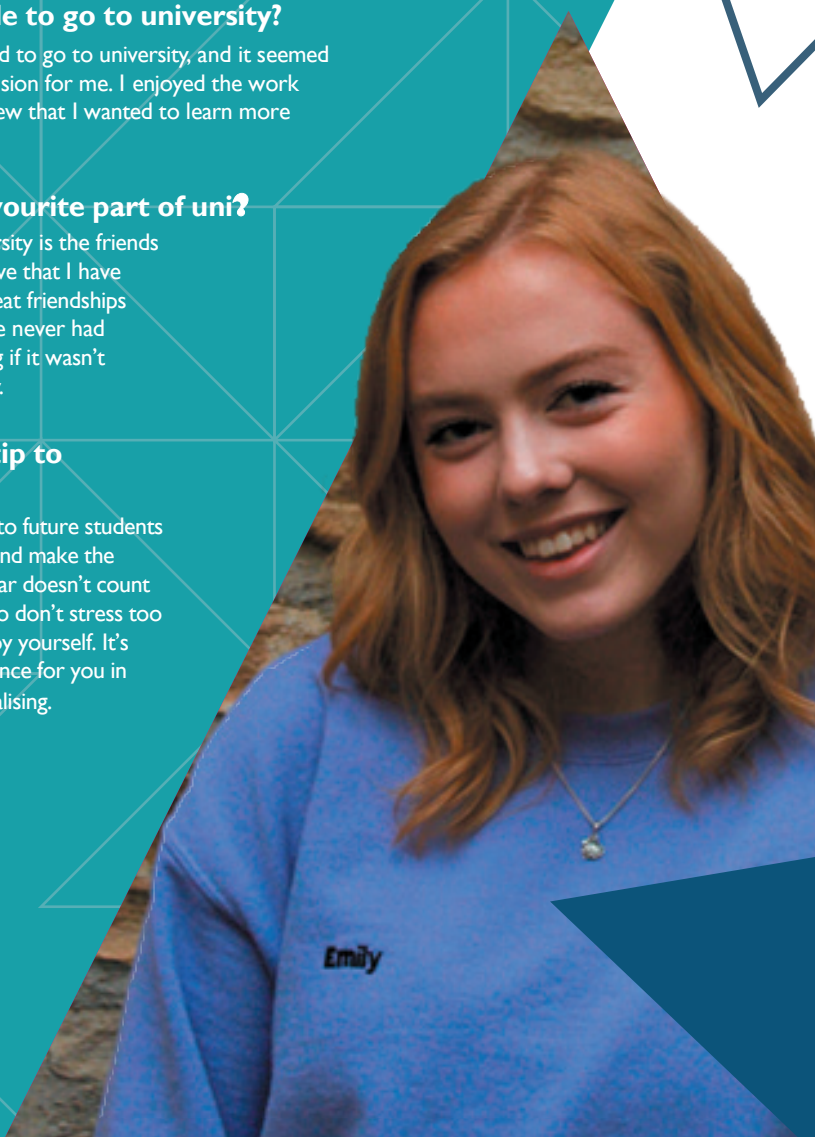
I always knew that I wanted to go to university, and it seemed like quite a natural progression for me. I enjoyed the work that I did at school and knew that I wanted to learn more about my chosen subject.

What was your favourite part of uni?

My favourite part of university is the friends that I have made here. I love that I have been able to form such great friendships with people that I would've never had the opportunity of meeting if it wasn't for me attending university.

What is your top tip to future students?

My biggest piece of advice to future students is to enjoy your first year and make the most of your time. First year doesn't count towards your final grade, so don't stress too much about work and enjoy yourself. It's about getting the right balance for you in terms of studying and socialising.



What is HIGHER EDUCATION?

Higher Education enables you to work towards gaining any Level 4 qualification or above such as a degree and is typically taught at a university or a further education college. In the North East, we are lucky to have so many great providers of higher education that offer a huge variety of subjects to study.

There are over 52,000 courses to choose from within higher education which can be a subject you already study or something completely new! Perhaps you have a career path in mind or simply want to expand your opportunities; higher education can help to unlock your true potential. Each university and course will have specific entry requirements, normally A-levels or equivalent. It's definitely worth doing your research to find the path that suits you.

Studying a higher education qualification can give you invaluable skills to support your future and help you achieve your goals. You will have the opportunity to meet people from lots of different backgrounds, live independently or perhaps even study abroad, all while expanding your learning.



**You will gain
invaluable skills and
experiences**



**Graduates typically
earn a lot more
money over their
lifetime!**

MYTH BUSTER

Will I have classes every day?

Not necessarily! Every university course will have different teaching hours that vary across the year. A lot of your time might be spent outside the classroom too whether that's completing practical work or studying independently.

Do I have to move away from home?

It's totally up to you! You might choose to live in student accommodation with your friends or independently. Universities provide lots of living options on campus or in the local area, from halls to houses! But if you wanted to stay at home, you can always commute to your chosen university. The North East in particular has great transport links to get you where you need to be.



Can I afford university?

Student Finance England provide financial support for all students applying to university within England. This means that no matter what your financial situation is, you can apply for support throughout your studies! For more information about all things student finance, please turn to page 22.

Will I make friends?

Absolutely! Universities usually have vibrant student communities that have something of interest for everyone. From joining clubs and societies to lectures or seminars with your course mates, there are so many opportunities to get to know your fellow students.

Universities have students from far and wide from a variety of different backgrounds, so you are sure to have plenty of interesting conversations!

Will university help me to get a job?

Many jobs will require a degree such as a doctor or lawyer, but many others will also benefit from having this level of qualification. University focuses on building your transferable skills and experience which will contribute to your overall employability!

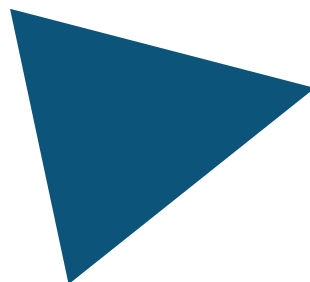
Gaining a deeper knowledge of a subject when completing your degree can also help you to decide on your future aspirations and goals



Making choices WHERE DO I BEGIN?

It's never too early to start thinking about your future! Let's explore some of the different pathways that you might take.

Making choices can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming but don't worry, we are here to take you through each stage and give you some tips along the way!



GCSEs

These are the qualifications that you will begin to work towards in Year 10 and 11 – some of you may even start them in Year 9!

A GCSE can be done in many different subjects however, English Literature/ Language, Maths and Science are usually compulsory. These could also include specialist subjects in different schools. It is really important to try your best in these subjects as most employers, colleges and universities will require at least 5 GCSEs, including English and Maths. You will also be able to choose some optional subjects, these will vary depending on what your school offers.



Top tip

It can help to start thinking about the subjects that you both enjoy and are good at when choosing your optional GCSEs.

When you leave school you are required to stay within education or training until you are 18. Most young people will go on to study at a further education institution such as a sixth form or college. But what can you study there?

A LEVELS

A levels are subject-based qualifications and you can normally study three or more over two years. They are usually assessed by a series of examinations and offered across a variety of subject areas. Most teaching is done in a classroom, but some subjects may also include practical sessions too. You can study these at many different sixth forms or colleges.

Most higher education courses require specific A levels or combinations of A levels so this may be a good option to choose if you are considering university. A levels also allow you to experience a selection of subjects which can be a good way of keeping your options open!

T LEVELS

T Levels are a technical qualification and were introduced in 2020 as a new way to study in further education. They are classroom-based programmes which include an element of learning in the workplace. These will take 2 years to complete, and you will spend 80% in the classroom and 20% on the job.

A T Level will be made up of two elements: core and occupational specialism. Core component grades are measured from A*-E while occupational specialism grades will be Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*. These will then be combined to give your overall T Level Grade and will be equivalent in UCAS points to 3 A Levels.

You might decide to choose a T Level if you want to continue your studies and know what industry you want to work in, but still aren't sure which occupation. This course will give you a minimum of 315 hours in the workplace across the two years to help build your skills and knowledge about the industry.



Top tip

Start researching university courses that interest you to check any specific entry requirements that they might have before choosing your A levels.

Case Study

Matthew

🎓 MEng (Hons) Aerospace Engineering

📍 Teesside University

GCSEs studied:

Maths, Physics, Biology, Chemistry, English Language, English Literature, French, Geography, Religious Education, Engineering BTEC Level 2

A Levels studied:

Maths, Physics, Biology, Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)

How did these help you get into university?

Engineering requires a good understanding of Maths and Physics and are compulsory entry requirements for most Engineering courses at university. Studying these at college really prepared me for what to expect at university, where we carry out structural analysis of beams as well as projects involving differentiation and integration. Studying an EPQ helped me understand the Harvard referencing system and bibliographies, which I use all the time at university.



BTECS

BTECs are specialist work-related qualifications that combine practical learning with subject and theory content. They tend to be assessed using coursework rather than exams. There are many different courses across 16 sectors that are available from entry level through to professional qualifications at Level 7 – from Sport to Childcare!

This might be an option that you choose if you are interested in a particular industry but are not yet sure what job you would like to do. BTECs provide you with applied knowledge within your subject area which will build the necessary skills to go straight into employment or progress onto higher education.

APPRENTICESHIP

An apprenticeship allows you to earn while you learn! You'll work as an employee in your chosen industry whilst also studying the theoretical elements from the classroom. Typically, apprentices spend 80% of their time in the workplace and 20% of their time at a college, university, or training provider.

There are many different levels of apprenticeships to study. An advanced apprenticeship is equivalent to A levels and you could begin one of these once finishing your GCSEs. Higher and degree apprenticeships allow you to gain a higher education qualification whilst combining work and study. Each different type of apprenticeship will have different entry requirements, so be sure to do your research.

Gaining a nationally recognised qualification by completing an apprenticeship can allow you to progress to further study, another apprenticeship or full-time work in your chosen industry.

Always research!

Universities generally accept T Levels and BTECs as part of their entry requirements, but it is always best to check directly with each institution. Many courses look at these on an individual basis, so it is always a good idea to do your research before making your choices when you leave school!

Higher Education in **THE NORTH EAST**





Durham University offers a wide range of courses and a research informed education, delivered by world-leading experts in outstanding facilities. They offer supportive college communities, a warm welcome to all, excellent student welfare and a fantastic student experience.

Located in the beautiful and historic city of Durham, they are one of the oldest universities in the UK, yet have a modern and forward thinking mindset. With 27 academic departments covering over 200 undergraduate courses as well as postgraduate taught and research degrees, their teaching is research-informed and led by academics, many of whom are world-leading experts in their field.

Durham is a collegiate university, which means your student experience will be distinctive and based in one of their 17 college communities. In fact, their students say that colleges are one of the best aspects of student life at Durham. You are guaranteed a warm welcome.



Find out more

For more information, and details on upcoming Open Days, please visit Durham University's website:

www.durham.ac.uk





Newcastle University is a top 140 global university, advancing knowledge, providing creative solutions and solving global problems. Our strengths include ageing and health, data, cities and place, one planet, culture and creative arts.

Whether you're looking for a course with professional accreditation, or one that offers a work placement or a study abroad year, Newcastle University offers over 185 undergraduate and 270 postgraduate courses to choose from.

The campus is in the heart of Newcastle city centre, a friendly, multicultural and safe city, where one in six people are students.

The University maintains a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and welcomes more than 29,000 students from 135 countries.

Newcastle University also offers a range of scholarships and bursaries to support students, and ensure higher education remains accessible for all.



With over 180 student-run societies and more than 60 sports clubs to join, students can discover new passions, grow in confidence, and make friendships that will last a lifetime.

Find out more

To discover all of their courses and learn about upcoming Open Days, please visit Newcastle University's website:

www.ncl.ac.uk

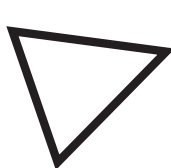




Northumbria University NEWCASTLE

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally, and internationally. It was named Modern University of the Year in the Times Good University Guide 2025. Northumbria has modern facilities, extensive course choices and is based in a cosmopolitan city with a vibrant student community. With campuses in Newcastle and London, the University attracts staff and students from all over the UK and from over 140 countries worldwide.

Northumbria is ranked in the top 25 in the UK for research power, according to the results of the Research Excellence Framework 2021. The University is also ranked 13th for Career Prospects (Whatuni Student Choice Awards 2025), and with expertise in career support services, is ranked in the top 20 for the number of UK undergraduates who go into skilled jobs (Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022/23 Leavers). At Northumbria, you'll have the opportunity to work on live projects, take part in a placement year, or study abroad to help shape your CV and make you stand out to future employers. You could find yourself working with companies such as Northumbrian Water, Proctor and Gamble, Nissan, the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary art, or even working on live legal cases while you study. Innovative and entrepreneurial, Northumbria has ranked top



10 for graduate business start-ups in each of the last 16 years – holding top spot in 5 of those years - with business turnover over £160m and over 1,550 jobs created. (Higher Education Business and Communities Interaction (HEBCIS) survey – 2023/24. Through societies, volunteering, team sports and the alumni society, you can challenge yourself, build your confidence, try new things and meet new people with different ideas and viewpoints.

In the top 30 for sport in the UK (British Universities & Colleges Sport), Northumbria provides students with access to a wide range of sports and activities at different levels, so there's always an opportunity to take part in challenges, join clubs and leagues, or simply to make friends. Northumbria's Student Life and Wellbeing team are available to support students and Northumbria offers a range of financial support packages to help students during their studies.

Find out more

For more information, and details on upcoming Open Days, please visit Northumbria University's website:

northumbria.ac.uk





The life-changing University of Sunderland has 25,600 students based at their campuses in the north-east, London and Hong Kong and at its global partnerships with learning institutions in 16 countries.

Ranked as a Top 30 University in the Guardian University Guide 2026, they are proud of their long-established commitment to widening participation, world-leading research, and public and private sector collaborations.

Their career-focused courses and facilities are spread across two campuses in Sunderland. City campus is right in the heart of the Sunderland with everything a student could need on their doorstep. The impressive riverside campus, the Sir Tom Cowie campus at St Peter's, sits on the banks of the River Wear and is within easy reach of the city centre and miles of beautiful beaches.

The University prides itself on the support it offers throughout the student journey as well as its multimillion-pound facilities, award-winning teaching and internationally-recognised research.



The University's Centre for Graduate Prospects (CfGP) works to embed employability in all aspects of the curriculum. It also provides a significant amount of coaching, mentoring and support to students across all year-groups, so graduates are career-ready. Their research and innovation activity has a deep focus on providing solutions in fields as diverse as Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business, diabetes, mental health, pupils in schools with special needs and public art – to name but a few.

Students are at the heart of everything they do, and they're always looking for ways to help you get the most out of campus life. From the moment you apply to the day you graduate, they'll be there to help if you need them.

Find out more

For more information, and details on upcoming Open Days, please visit the University of Sunderland's website:

www.sunderland.ac.uk





Based in the heart of Middlesbrough in North East England, Teesside University is a friendly, modern university with over 24,000 students from many different countries and cultures.

The University campus is in the heart of the town-centre, everything you need is only a short walk away. Shops, bars, restaurants and leisure activities are right on the doorstep.

They work with employers and industry to make sure their courses give you the skills, knowledge and experience to succeed. With lots of opportunities to gain experience through placements and internships, you should be ahead of the game when looking for a job.

Teesside University is always working to make it's campus even better. One of the latest additions is Digital Life – a cutting-edge space packed with AI and robotics suites, virtual reality and cybersecurity laboratories, plus studios for animation and visual effects.

It's designed to bring people together, whether they're working on digital projects or hands-on collaborations.



Bios is our state-of-the-art facility at the heart of our campus, home to high-tech laboratories for the sciences and clinical subjects like anatomy, pharmacy, microbiology, chemistry, Earth sciences and food sciences. It's all about giving students access to the best tools and spaces to learn and explore.

The heart of student life at Teesside University is their award-winning Students' Union. It's a warm, welcoming space where students feel part of the community from day one.

Teesside University are Proud to be Times Higher Education's University of the Year 2025, Modern University of the Year 2026 (Daily Mail), and the North East's top uni for student experience with a TEF Gold award.

Find out more

For more information, and details on upcoming Open Days, please visit Teesside University's website:

www.tees.ac.uk/opendays





The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, or UCAS as it's more commonly known, is the service that students of all ages use to apply to university.

HOW DO I APPLY?

The application process is done using the UCAS website and there are 6 sections to complete:

- Personal Details
- Education
- Employment
- University Choices
- Personal Statement
- Reference

Your reference is completed by either your teachers or employer, and it acts as a character reference – so make sure you get to know them!

HOW MANY COURSES CAN I CHOOSE?

You can choose up to five courses across different universities and there are over 52,000 courses in the UK so it's fair to say there is something for everyone! Take the careers quiz at www.ucas.com/careers/careers-quiz to find your ideal job matched to your personality and a list of courses previous students studied in order to get there.

WHAT ARE UCAS POINTS?

For qualifications at A level or equivalent, UCAS have allocated certain tariff points that universities can consider for entry requirements onto their degree programmes. Some universities will ask for specific grade requirements (e.g., ABB), whilst others will give you an overall points target. This may impact the choices you make in further education so make sure to do your research prior to applying!



If you are a parent or carer and are new to UCAS, you can find a whole host of resources on www.ucas.com to help support you in understanding the application process. You can find a wealth of information surrounding UCAS and higher education with some excellent tools to support you and your young person every step of the way.

Start your journey into higher education by visiting the UCAS undergraduate website at

www.ucas.com/undergraduate



Case Study

Meg

🎓 Illustration and Design BA (Hons) with Integrated Foundation Year

📍 University of Sunderland

What advice would you give to students worrying about student finance?

I know this can be overwhelming, and everything you're feeling is totally normal. Start your application early, go through it at a pace you're comfortable with, and if you can, get someone to help you. Don't be afraid to contact Student Finance if you're struggling because they are really helpful - I asked them questions on Twitter throughout my application process and they made me feel so at ease. You've got this.

What other tips would you give to students about finance when thinking about going to university?

Make a monthly tracker or spreadsheet and put in all your regular income and your expenses. Seeing what your finances look like all in one place makes it so much easier to know how much you have to spend and is really reassuring if you're worried about money. The more you add to it, the better you'll be able to understand your spending and keep good spending habits. Also, put your savings in your pot or account on payday straight away and allow yourself to save for future you.



STUDENT FINANCE

University is a positive investment into your future. Student Finance England provides funding for your studies and living costs, leaving you to focus on getting the best degree you can!

There are two loans available: a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan.

TUITION FEE LOAN

Universities can charge up to £9,535* per year for your tuition, but this goes straight from the government to the university, so you don't need to worry about anything! This money contributes to key elements of your course and academic life, as well as core services related to students' wellbeing and experience on campus.

MAINTENANCE LOAN

This loan goes to your bank account and can be used to help you with expenses such as travel, books or rent! You are responsible for budgeting this money every semester to help you with your day to day living costs. The amount of loan and eligibility is based on your household income.

It is only once you've graduated and are earning over £25,000* per year that you'll start making loan repayments. These are small, manageable deductions off your monthly pay, which could be smaller than your current mobile phone bill!

For further information about student finance, visit www.gov.uk/student-finance



Top tips



You don't need to pay up-front for university



Check university websites to see if you're eligible for any scholarships or bursaries!

*Subject to change. Visit www.gov.uk/student-finance for the most up to date information



NORTH EAST RAISING ASPIRATION PARTNERSHIP



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