

HEREFORD CATHEDRAL SCHOOL



HIGHER EDUCATION GUIDE 2015

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This booklet is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive. There are plenty of other useful sources of information and avenues to explore, so don't expect all possibilities to be covered in the following few pages. Once you have read through this booklet and discussed your plans with your parents, if you have any further questions, make an appointment to see Mrs McCumisky or drop into the Careers and Higher Education Office. Always remember that your future is what you make it.

The Careers and Higher Education Library is also open five days a week and is available for you to browse research and use the resources. There is a loan facility to borrow resources.

1. How to choose

The majority of students who leave Hereford Cathedral School at the end of the Upper Sixth go on to higher education at a university. **This does not necessarily mean that this is the best pathway for every HCS student.** The first thing to decide is whether **you** want to go to university or to venture out into the big, wide world of employment. An alternative is to start a university course after a **gap year**. This can be a very rewarding and enriching experience which is often valued by university admissions tutors and employers alike. **However, a gap year should not be viewed as a 'year off'.** It must be planned carefully if it is to be truly useful. There are plenty of ideas for suitable projects and lots of advice available in the Careers and Higher Education department.

Centigrade

To help you with research, considerations and decisions, at the beginning of the spring term you will have taken the Centigrade Questionnaire that will have generated for you your own personal workbook. This will provide you with important information and help you to structure every aspect of your higher education preparation and UCAS application.

If you decide to go to university, then there are lots of further decisions to be made. Your choice of courses should reflect the subjects which interest you in school and your probable choice of career. It is impossible to do too much research into courses and universities. Remember that you are committing yourself to at least three years' study of a subject in a particular place, so it is important to make the right choices. Consider the nature of the degree(s) you are contemplating. Will the course last three years, four years or longer? Is the degree vocational or non-vocational? Is it a single honours, joint honours, combined honours or modular degree course?

Where you will study is important. Do you want to study near home or as far away as possible? Do you want to attend a campus or city-based university or one which operates a collegiate system? Would you prefer a new university or a red-brick one? Prospectuses and websites are very useful, as is talking to past HCS students who know the universities and courses. The best way of assessing whether a university is right for you is to visit on an Open Day.

It is important when you make **decisions about which course to choose** you really understand the content of the course, how it is organised and what attributes and skills are required of students completing the degree course. I would highly recommend you look on the UCAS website under Courses for references made to Entry Profiles (EP). Not every university course has entry profiles but they can be used for personal statement purposes.

When you are ready to make firm choices, depending on exactly what you want to study, you will be able to apply to as many as five different course or universities. Choose wisely based on accurate research rather than blindly. Remember that the time will come when you will have to commit to your choices, so don't pick anywhere you don't seriously want to go to. You must be realistic about your A2 prospects. There is no point applying for a course which requires higher grades than you are capable of achieving. Your GCSE grades, AS results and your estimated grades should help you assess your A2 prospects. Teachers are careful to be realistic and accurate in their grade estimations. If in doubt about your capabilities, ask them for advice.

Always remember that **it is your life you are deciding** and that, though you can get advice from lots of different people and sources, it is up to you to make the effort to find things out so that your decisions are as informed as possible. **The Careers and HE department is like a self-service buffet. Help yourself rather than wait for anyone to serve you, and don't be afraid to keep coming back as often as you want.**

2. Applying for competitive courses at university

There are a number of courses at a number of institutions where the demand for the courses far exceeds the number of places on offer. This applies to most courses at Oxford University and Cambridge University as well as courses such as Law, English, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, History and Dentistry.

Universities find it difficult to discriminate between top A level students and often expect you to sit preliminary tests (see 10: Entrance Tests) or provide other further evidence for selection purposes. This will include reading outside the curriculum, auditions, work experience, portfolios, extra-curricular activities as well as a passion for the subject. These factors should be included in your personal statement. GCSE and AS/A2 requirements are often stipulated .e.g. average GCSE grade expectancy is 7 A*s for Oxford and Cambridge University and for some medical courses (Birmingham University). You should check carefully the GCSE requirements as well as AS/A2 grades.

The Careers and Higher Education department organise an Upper Sixth Mock Interview Scheme. Oxford University, Cambridge University and subjects at universities such as Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary medicine, Teaching, Nursing and Physiotherapy usually interview students. It helps to be prepared so you will be asked to participate in the mock interview scheme.

Ten Do's and Don'ts

1. **Ask yourself** why you are choosing a particular university course and provide substantial evidence in your personal statement.
2. **Check** entry requirements very carefully. A minority of universities are using A* at A level or are more favourably considering predicted A* applicants as a selection tool or being used in the offer made.
3. **Check** the AS requirements i.e. modular scores or grades. Many research-based universities will expect to see average scores of 90+
4. **When choosing a university** do not assume the most prestigious ones are in the Russell Group, i.e. 20 major research-intensive universities in the UK. Another 18 research-led universities are in the 1994 group, e.g. York, Durham, Exeter.
5. **Do not assume** the entry requirements necessarily relate to the quality of the institution. Many universities have niche departments with international excellence.
6. **Do research each course** area e.g. Business Management can be very different in different universities.

7. **Do visit universities** before making your choice and weigh up a number of factors.
 - Staff/student ratio
 - Destination of past students
 - Location
 - The way the course is assessed
 - Facilities i.e. state of the art technology, studios, laboratories
 - Social factors- distance, accommodation, social activities, student support.
8. **Do check** to see if entrance tests are being used in selection. It is very important you get examples of these tests to download and talk to your tutors if necessary. They form a crucial aspect in selection for Law, Medicine, Dentistry and any departments in Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Some of the Oxford University medical and law tests are taken in school or in nearby location prior to submitting your application.
9. **When completing your personal** statement do use the UCAS university course entry profiles and university websites. It is important also you understand how you get feedback if you application has been unsuccessful.
10. **Do not feel daunted** by the prospect of researching your university choices. For some of you, you will be entering a very competitive situation and any rejections are not a reflection on you as a person, but competitive forces which can be marginal. The school has had many successes in the past which have been the result of optimistic research.

Best of Luck!

3. Ideas Generation

If you have a wide range of study interests or genuinely need to seek ways of exploring new ideas for Higher Education courses the following are suggestions in no particular order:

- Your Centigrade work book – use this to structure and plan your research
- Higher Ideas (on the School's network)
Using interests and school subjects
- Completing an online interest questionnaire – UK course Finder
www.ukcoursefinder.com
- Look at the index of subjects on the UCAS website
e.g. Business will open up many sub-sections to show you the variety of courses available.
- Consideration of taking a broad range of subjects at university
i.e. Combined Arts, Combined Sciences
- Seek guidance from the Careers and Higher Education Team

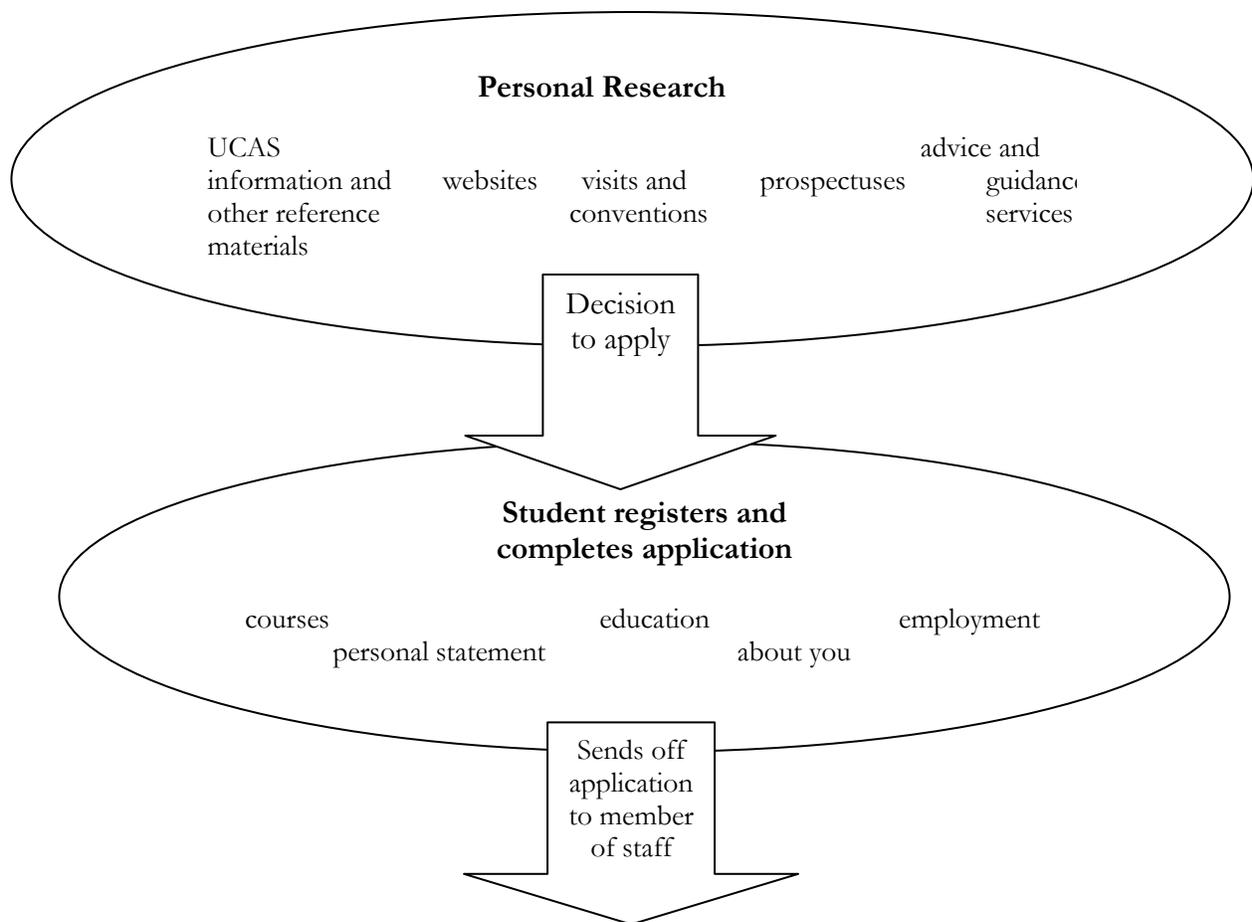
4. UCAS Online Application

Each House group has a UCAS Coordinator responsible for the processing of your UCAS application form.

Mrs A J Burdett	Cornwall
Mrs J Curry	Langford
Mrs J Taylor	Somerset
Dr C Jones	Stuart

They are also responsible for the school reference. It is crucial you maintain contact with your relevant **UCAS Coordinator**. It would be worthwhile looking at the video presentation (www.ucas.tv) which gives you an illustrated in-depth look at the application procedure.

A student's guide to 'UCAS apply', an overview of the application process.



Using **UCAS apply**, you make an online application. Before you do this, you still have to do some personal research in order to decide **what to study, where to study, what you are going to say about yourself**.

Before you can begin your UCAS application, you will need to register with UCAS on the UCAS website www.ucas.com

You will be guided through this at the end of term in Year 12, through IT sessions with your UCAS coordinator.

More information is available from the Careers and HE Department from Mrs McCumisky Head of Careers and Higher Education.

5. Personal Statement advice

The Personal Statement in Section 10 of the UCAS form is your opportunity to **sell yourself** so that universities will want to give you a place, so it is important that you make your statement as personal and interesting as you can.

The Personal Statement is restricted to 47 lines on the form (which is about 400-500 words) and there is a limited amount of formatting (e.g. bold, italics and underlining) available to you, so it is impractical to rely on spacing and formatting to spice up the Statement. This means that content is everything and what you say must be concise, to-the-point and persuasive. As we are all different, the overall style of the personal statement should reflect your own personality, but there are guidelines as to what you should include in it. The commonest, and probably the most effective, format for a personal statement is as follows:

- **Why have I chosen the course I want to study**
- **Why I am suitable for this course**
- **What I have enjoyed about my AS/A2 courses so far**
- **What I have done which is relevant to my proposed course of study**
- **What I have achieved**
- **What I would like to do in the future.**

Whatever you do, **do not say anything you cannot justify**, as interviewers may well question you on the content of your personal statement. All the same, you should try to include any experiences or achievements which will set you apart from other applicants and promote yourself as much as you can, even if what you say does sound immodest.

When you think that you are happy with your personal statement, show it to someone else (perhaps parents, UCAS Coordinators or Careers staff) and ask them to give you an honest assessment of it. It is best to revise and redraft the personal statement many times rather than submit something which is frankly not very good. In particular, you must check the spelling, punctuation, grammar and structure of the statement. Remember that admissions tutors will read hundreds or even thousands of applications and poor spelling or expression could easily mean the difference between an application being successful or not. To some extent whether you are offered a place is a matter of luck, but it is important that you portray yourself in the best possible light to sway the luck in your favour.

As a rule of thumb for academic course applications **at least 70% of the personal statement should be about why you have chosen this subject and related evidence.** Remember admissions tutors who are academic staff will be reading your personal statement and may be less interested in your extra-curricular activities.

There is online information regarding compiling and writing the personal statement on the UCAS website www.ucas.com as well as text based information in the Careers Resources Centre.

6. Timetable of University Applications

SPRING/SUMMER- Open Day visits, UCAS Higher Education Fair
Registration for UCAS applications

YEAR 13

AUTUMN TERM Mid -September finalisation of Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry,
Veterinary Medicine (internal)

1st October **CUKAS – Music Conservatoire - UCAS official deadline date**

15th October **UCAS closing date for above application**

Mid November All other UCAS applications

SPRING TERM

15th January **First official closing date for initial application.**

24th March **Both dates apply to Art and Design courses**

End Feb-June UCAS extra vacancy system

SUMMER TERM

First week of May Replies from students through Apply to university offers

Exam results date To be confirmed (usually mid August)

Adjustment period (1 week) for higher achievers.

Clearing period for course vacancies start (August to September)

The application calendar shows sequential steps from the research carried out by you over the two years leading to the publishing of your final A2 results. The internal deadline dates allow for your reference writers to complete the reference section of the UCAS application form. Some of the dates are approximate as the official date from UCAS is not yet available.

7. UCAS Points Tariff

Universities will make offers which are either grade offers (e.g. ABB) or points offers (e.g. 320 points) so it is important that you know how the points system works. UCAS points are awarded for post-16 qualifications and a number of other qualifications such as RSA Music examinations. The main points tariffs are as follows:

A2 (A level)	A*	140	AS		
	A	120	A	60	
	B	100	B	50	
	C	80	C	40	
	D	60	D	30	
	E	40	E	20	

Only certificated AS levels count towards the points tariff. This means that only the AS grade of a subject dropped at the end of the Lower Sixth counts towards the overall points tally.

Advanced Extension	Distinction	40
	Merit	20

Music Examinations

Practical

Grade 8		Grade 7		Grade 6	
Distinction	75	Distinction	60	Distinction	45
Merit	70	Merit	55	Merit	40
Pass	55	Pass	40	Pass	25

Theory

Grade 8		Grade 7		Grade 6	
Distinction	30	Distinction	20	Distinction	15
Merit	25	Merit	15	Merit	10
Pass	20	Pass	10	Pass	5

8. Finance

Applying for student fees

In the United Kingdom this depends on where you are domiciled. The arrangements for those students domiciled in England are now different. Students can apply (following their application submission) directly onto an online website www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

- There is an online calculator which will help you work out how much you can get based on your individual circumstances. You can even see what bursaries may be available at your preferred university or college.
- Parents and family members will also be able to supply details in support of an application quickly and securely.
- Once you have applied you can manage your account online and communicate with an advisor using web chat or secure messaging.

The quick start guide gives you an idea of what student finance is available through tuition fee loans, maintenance loans and maintenance grants.

The fee structure is different in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for those domiciled within those countries and for other nationals i.e. from England or the EU.

If you normally live in Wales, you can apply for your student finance online using the Student Finance Wales website: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk, speak to an advisor on 0845 602 8845, or you can contact your Local Authority to receive a paper application pack. Additional information is available at: **www.studentfinancewales.co.uk**.

Bursaries

Many universities offer bursary schemes to attract students. The best place to find out what is available where is on the UCAS website or on the websites of individual universities or www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

9. Entrance Tests

This is a list of tests which are not exhaustive. For some tests LNAT and UKCAT you have to register with the test organisation and sit the test at a local centre. For other tests you sit the test in School usually in the first week of November.

Alternatively this may be done at the university. The UCAS application form triggers notification of the tests in a particular department/faculty of the university. You will need to check the websites for details of test papers etc.

<p>BIOMEDICAL/ADMISSIONS TEST www.bmat.org.uk Medicine – Oxford, Cambridge, UCL Imperial</p> <p>Veterinary Medicine – Royal Veterinary College, Cambridge Physiological Sciences – Oxford</p> <p>UK CLINICAL APTITUDE TEST (UKCAT) www.ukcat.ac.uk Dentistry Medicine – 24 institutions</p> <p>LAW NATIONAL ATTAINMENT TEST www.lnat.ac.uk 10 universities currently use this test</p> <p>CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY TESTS Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA Cambridge) www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk A large number of colleges at Cambridge University are using online or paper tests including Computer Science, Economics, engineering, Natural Sciences, Social and Political Science (SPS), Land Economy Medieval and Modern Language Test www.mml.cam.ac.uk</p> <p>OXFORD UNIVERSITY TESTS History courses www.history.ox.ac.uk English courses www.elat.org.uk Mathematical Computer Science courses www.maths.ox.ac.uk Physics courses www.physics.ox.ac.uk Classics & Oriental Studies (to be notified) www.classics.ox.ac.uk</p> <p>Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA Oxford) www.admissionstests.cambridgeassessment.org.uk Economics and Management Experimental Psychology</p>	<p>TEST 4 November – School registers applicant</p> <p>Student registers on website at local test centre.</p> <p>Student registers on website at local test centre</p> <p>Tests at interview</p> <p>Tests at interview</p> <p>4 November School, test</p>
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Physiology and Psychology Psychology and Philosophy Physiology and Philosophy Philosophy, Politics and Economics Psychology, Philosophy and Physiology	
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11
**Sixth
 Term
 Exami
 nation**

Papers in Mathematics (STEP)
www.stepmathematics.org.uk
 Exam sat in School summer term

Most colleges at Cambridge University and the Mathematics faculty at Warwick University require a certain grade in STEP as a condition for the following subjects- Mathematics, Mathematics and Physics, Computer Science with Mathematics.

Candidates should approach the school ie Head of Mathematics about sitting the test in the summer term. The STEP specifications are based on material that is common to the core of A level Mathematics.

Other Tests

For all other tests, auditions, written essays and portfolios the individual applicant should check with their university of choice/course of choice.

Conclusion

It is essential that you undertake research prior to sitting these tests to see what the tests involve and look at sample papers. These tests often form part of the selection process along with other criteria e.g. suitability, academic performance. As you can see some tests will be in school, taken locally or sat in the university prior to interview.

10. Useful Website Addresses

HIGHER EDUCATION – GENERAL

www.ucas.com

official UCAS website for courses, Entry Profiles, Apply (applicants)

www.eunicas.com

for information on study in Europe

www.fulbright.co.uk

for information on study in USA

www.unistats.com

comparison website for courses, national students review and graduate destinations

www.aimhigher.ac.uk

wide ranging information about courses, places and support

www.push.co.uk

independent and irreverent guide to UK universities

www.opendays.com

open day website

www.ukcoursefinder.com

study interest questionnaire, matching interests to courses

www.whichuni.com

student views of various universities

www.direct.gov.uk

government site with advice about all aspects of university applications

www.ucas.com/sep

student employability profile to show what is required in a particular degree discipline

www.prospects.ac.uk

university website giving profiles of graduate jobs, salaries and careers relating to degree course choice

www.notgoingtouni.com – alternatives to university routes into professions

GAP YEAR

www.yearoutgroup.com

links to prestigious gap companies

www.wyv.org.uk

on our network, 1450 organisations in 214 countries

www.gapyear.com

year out ideas

www.yini.org.uk

paid gap opportunities in science, engineering and business

CAREERS

www.cascaid.co.uk

links interests to career ideas on our network

*www.prospects.ac.uk

guide to graduate careers and postgraduate studies

www.plotr.com

www.icould.com – general careers websites

www.slc.co.uk

the Student Loans Company that coordinates financial services for students in the UK

11. Reference Books/websites

GENERAL

Choosing your Degree Course and University 2015	Brian Heap
Degree Course Offers 2015	Brian Heap
The Virgin 2015 Alternative Guide to Visiting Universities	Piers Dudgeon
The UCAS Guide to Getting into University	UCAS
The Times Good University Guide 2015	
Notgoingtouni	
Careers 2015	

What Graduates Do

GAP YEAR

Worldwide Volunteering

www.YearOutGroup.org

www.frontier.ac.uk

www.gap360.com

www.projects-abroad.co.uk

COMPUTER RESOURCES

www.ucas.com

Information on all aspects of considering and applying for university courses in the UK

www.unistats.co.uk

www.whatuni.com

Compares official course data from universities and colleges

Higher Ideas

An ideas generator to help identify appropriate courses based on subjects chosen at AS/A2 - available through school computer programs under 'Careers' (See flyer enclosed.)

KUDOS online – Careers search and higher education ideas generator

www.notgoingtouni.com

Website that details alternative routes into professions

www.apprenticeships.co.uk

Information on all levels of apprenticeships currently available throughout the UK

www.gapmedics.co.uk – for students who are interested in becoming doctors; call on 0191 230 8080 or email at info@gapmedics.com for a brochure in the post.

FINANCE

www.gov.uk/unimoney

www.studentfinanceengland.co.uk

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

www.slc.co.uk - the Student Loans Company that coordinates financial services for students in the UK

www.thestudentroom.co.uk/studentfinance

How To books
Brochures in Careers Library

12. University Open Days

Attending Open Days is the best way to see whether you really would like to live and work in a particular university. It is sensible to go to an Open Day with your parents or guardians as they will be much more likely to pick up on the really important things such as the suitability of accommodation offered or local transport links while you may be more interested in the bar prices in the Students' Union.

Remember that Open Days are provided for you to assess the university, so make sure that you look and listen and ask for as much information as possible. Often Open Days are combined with interviews. If that is the case, remember that it is still an opportunity for you to ask questions as much as it is for admissions tutors to assess you. Often relevant and perceptive questions at the end of an interview can be just as impressive to the interview panel as responses you make during the interview itself.

Everyone will have the opportunity to attend at least one Open Day, either as part of a group visit, such as the annual trip to the Universities Fair at Worcester University and a visit to a Russell Group university. It is up to you to plan Open Days using the list of Open Days published by UCAS, or prospectuses or websites for particular universities. However, the Lower Sixth are restricted to three Open Days per year. If you want to attend an Open Day, you must complete an Open Day Request Form and get it approved at least 24 hours before you leave for the Open Day. The blank forms are readily available from the Careers Department/School Office.

A useful website is www.opendays.com and a useful publication, available in the Careers and Higher Education library, is *The Sixth Former's Guide to Higher Education Open Days and Taster Courses 2015* by Inspiring Futures.

A visual reality open day website is worth visiting on www.uni360.com

13. Conclusion

“Graduates are generally happier, healthier and wealthier” (Vice Chancellor, Aston University)

Please take heart over the whole choosing and application process through UCAS. Clearly if you do the research required it is extremely likely that you will get offers of places. **Use your Centigrade Report to help in narrowing down choices and planning your approach to further research, reading and overall preparation for making informed and successful Higher Education choices.**

Over 90% of students from Hereford Cathedral School get their first choice of course and university. The range of universities and subjects applied for is broad. Try to get an estimate of your likely A2 grades from your teachers. It is also useful when considering your five choices to a strategy behind each individual choice, but be clear that you would like to be considered for that course at that university.

I wish you productive and fruitful researching.

**Mary McCumisky
Head of Careers and Higher Education**

8 a. Student Finance – the implications (appendix)

Students who start university or college on or after 1 September 2013 (academic year 2013/14) will be on the following finance scheme:

- universities and colleges can charge tuition fees of up to £9,000
- Tuition Fee Loans will go up to cover the higher fees
- part-time students can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan (replacing grants) for the first time
- you don't start repaying your loan until you earn £21,000 (up from £15,000)

Student finance: what money you can get

Get an estimate of the loans, grants and bursaries available to you (full-time students only)

You can apply now for student finance for 2014/15 courses.

To cover the costs of studying you can apply for:

- a Tuition Fee Loan to cover your tuition fees in full
- a Maintenance Loan for living costs like rent (full-time students only)
- a Maintenance Grant if your household income is less than £42,600 (full-time students only)
- scholarships and bursaries from colleges and universities
- extra financial help if you have a disability or children or adults depending on you

Full-time students have to pay back any loans plus interest once you leave your course and start earning more than £21,000 a year. Part-time students who earn over £21,000 a year have to start paying back their loans after four years even if their course hasn't finished.

If you leave your course early you need to repay a percentage of the Tuition Fee Loan for that year - see 'Paying back your student loan' for details.

You don't have to pay back grants, scholarships or bursaries.

You can apply online now for 2012/13 student finance.

Tuition fees and loans

Tuition fees are the amount universities or colleges charge you each year to study.

From September 2012 UK universities and colleges were able to charge students from England:

- up to £9,000 a year for new full-time students
- up to £6,750 a year for new part-time students

There are no restrictions on the amount private colleges or universities can charge.

Tuition Fee Loan

You can get a Tuition Fee Loan of up to:

- £9,000 for new full-time students, including full-time distance learning students
- £6,750 for part-time students whose courses are at least 25 per cent of a full-time course each year (eg. four years part-time instead of one year full-time)
- £6,000 if you study on an approved full-time course at a private university or college
- £4,500 for students on an approved part-time course at a private university or college whose courses are at least 25 per cent of a full-time course each year (eg. four years part-time instead of one year full time)

The Tuition Fee Loan is paid directly to your university or college.

The Tuition Fee Loan may not cover the full cost of your tuition if you're studying on an approved course at a private university or college.

If you're an EU student from outside the UK, you can apply for a Tuition Fee Loan if you meet certain conditions.

Loans and grants for living costs

Only full-time students can get Maintenance Loans and Maintenance Grants for their living costs.

Maintenance Loans

The maximum Maintenance Loan for new students starting from 1 September 2012 is:

- £5,500 if you live away from home and study at a university or college outside London
- £7,675 if you live away from home and study at a university or college in London
- £4,375 if you live at home

Maintenance Grants

You can also apply for a Maintenance Grant if your family income is below £42,600. You can get:

- £3,250 if your household income is £25,000 or under
- £50-£3250 if your household income is between £25,000 and £42,600

These loans and grants are paid into your bank account at the start of each term, once you've registered on your course.

Scholarships, bursaries and awards

You may be able to get a bursary, scholarship or award directly from your university or college. The National Scholarship Programme helps students with a family income of £25,000 or less. Bursaries and scholarships do not have to be paid back.

**This information is taken directly from the website:
www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance where more information
is available**