PARENTS’ GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY
As a parent or guardian you’ll appreciate just how big a decision going to university is, and as one of the biggest influences in your child’s life they may come to you with lots of questions about where and what they should study, whether they should stay at home, and how they’re going to afford it.

This guide will provide you with lots of help and advice so that you can help your child to make one of the most important and transformational decisions of their life. We’ve included information about key topics such as fees and finance, applying to university, and key dates to name a few, but if you have any further questions you can contact us at study@beds.ac.uk or +44(0)300 3300 073.
Going to university will be one of the most exciting times of your child’s life. There are many benefits of a university education, here are just a few:

- University enables students to meet people from a wide range of countries and backgrounds, and make a strong network of contacts and life-long friends.
- Many professions require a university qualification such as: lawyers; nurses; social workers; science researchers; midwives; and teachers.
- University graduates tend to earn more money than non-graduates.
- Students develop many transferable skills during university, and having a degree opens up many more career options, regardless of the subject studied.
- University provides a unique opportunity for your child to learn from experts, explore new hobbies and interests, and discover more about themselves.

Some people know exactly what course they want to study, or have a specific career in mind such as becoming a lawyer or a nurse, so their course choice is fairly straightforward. For others it can be more challenging, particularly with more than 50,000 courses available at 395 UK higher education providers.

If your child is not sure what subject they should apply for then we advise you to help them think about what subjects they enjoy, and how this can then be linked to a course. For example, if your child loves sport then they could consider studying a course in sports science, or even sports journalism. Alternatively, you could look at degrees that could be transferable to a wide range of careers, such as business.

It is also important that your child has a realistic view of what their final grades may be, as all courses have specific entry requirements that will need to be met.
There are plenty of resources out there to help you research which course and university will be best for your child - here are just a few to get you started.

**UCAS website**
UCAS is the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, processing all applications for universities across the UK.

**UCAS exhibitions**
UCAS exhibitions are typically held at venues across the UK between March and June, with students usually attending at least 18 months in advance of starting a university course. Many schools organise trips to the exhibitions and most universities will have representatives at these events. Here at the University of Bedfordshire, we are proud to be hosting the Bedfordshire UCAS exhibition. For more details visit: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

**Statistics and league tables**
There are thousands of statistics that are used in the university sector to benchmark and measure the performance of each institution. There are also league tables, each based on different criteria and using different weightings.

Some students have a clear idea of the type of location they want to be in - whether it’s a busy city centre, or a self-contained leafy campus.

At the University of Bedfordshire we are able to offer your child the best of both worlds with our main campuses in Luton and Bedford. Our campuses benefit from low living costs compared to London, but have great transport links to our capital city, and the rest of the UK.

**University Open Days**
Open Days are the best way for you and your child to get a feel for a University, and see for yourselves just what they can offer.

You will have the opportunity to meet the tutors and discuss course content in detail, as well as meeting current students and seeing the facilities and accommodation on offer.

At the University of Bedfordshire we host Open Days throughout the year. To book your place visit: [beds.ac.uk/opendays](http://beds.ac.uk/opendays)
Below we’ve listed some of our top tips to help you support your child with their university application.

Be realistic about your child’s predicted grades (teachers can help with this)

Start researching courses and universities with your child when they are in year 12 or at the beginning of year 13

Know the UCAS deadlines (see page 8)

Attend university Open Days with your child

Help your child to select up to five university/course choices

Encourage your child to write several drafts of their personal statement and help them by proofreading it

Ensure your child submits their UCAS application in plenty of time

Remind your child to check their emails regularly and respond to any decisions via UCAS promptly
Your child is most likely to apply to university whilst they are at school or college via an online application form on the UCAS website.

The application process has the following key sections:

- Personal details
- Additional information
- Student finance
- Choices - a maximum of five course/university choices can be made
- Education
- Employment
- Personal statement
- Reference - usually supplied by the school (or, if your child has left school, this can be an independent referee)

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**Personal statement**

For many students writing their personal statement can be a daunting process. This is where your help and encouragement will no doubt be greatly received. It is the one chance that your child has to explain in their own words why they are applying to university. If a course is very popular, and has lots of applications from students with similar grades, then the personal statement becomes even more important. Consider including some of the following elements:

- Their interest in the subject
- Achievements (certificates, awards etc)
- Volunteering experience
- Work experience and transferable skills
- Hobbies and interests
- Future career plans
- Positions of responsibility
- Involvement in community projects

It’s a good idea to set aside some time to sit down and brainstorm ideas with your child. Try to encourage your child to link the elements listed to the course they’re applying to. The more they can reflect critically on their achievements and experience the better. Remember that the personal statement must be written by your child and not contain any material copied from another source.

A second pair of eyes to proofread the personal statement before it’s submitted will always be a bit help!
Going to university is a big investment, and we understand that you may be concerned about the cost of your child attending university.

**Student finance**

Tuition fees for the majority of UK universities stand at £9,250* per annum. Students (UK/EU) can apply for a tuition fee loan from Student Finance England to cover this cost.

UK students can also apply for a student maintenance loan to help with their living costs whilst at university. The amount your child will receive will partly depend on your household income.

If your child receives the tuition and/or maintenance loan from Student Finance England they will not have to pay anything back until they have graduated and are earning over £26,575* per annum.

**How to apply for a student loan**

Students apply for a student loan through Student Finance England via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). It is best that they apply just after short-listing their firm and insurance choices. They do not need to have accepted a place before they apply for their loan.

Your child will be sent a student finance entitlement letter with a declaration that they will need to sign and return. They will need to take a copy of this letter with them when they go to register at university.

**Scholarships and bursaries**

Most universities within the UK will also offer a range of scholarships and bursaries to support their students.

At the University of Bedfordshire we’re proud to offer a number of scholarships and bursaries including:

- University of Bedfordshire bursary
- Merit scholarship
- Foundation Year bursary
- Level 5 bursary
- Sports scholarships
- Care Leavers bursary

For details about our scholarships and bursaries, as well as eligibility criteria, please visit: [beds.ac.uk](http://beds.ac.uk)

If your child is studying a medical degree such as Nursing, Midwifery or Paramedic Science, they may be entitled to an NHS bursary.

For more information about government funding, tuition and maintenance loans please visit:

[www.slc.co.uk](http://www.slc.co.uk)

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

*This information is correct at the time of print. For the most up-to-date information please visit: beds.ac.uk

**Support finding part-time jobs**

Many students choose to work part-time whilst they’re studying - as well as providing some extra money, it also allows them to develop their transferable skills and enhance their CV.

At the University of Bedfordshire our Careers and Employability Service provides students with support to link them to local employers and help them to find part-time work. There’s also a range of workshops available including CV writing and interview skills.

For more information visit: [beds.ac.uk/careers](http://beds.ac.uk/careers)
When results day rolls around hopefully your child will have the results they need to start at their chosen university - if this is the case you can skip this page!

If not, don’t worry - we know things don’t always go to plan. Maybe your child didn’t get the grades they need, or maybe they’ve changed their mind. If that’s the case your child will enter the Clearing process.

What does Clearing mean?
Clearing is when universities make their remaining course vacancies available to students already in the UCAS system. Students need to call universities directly to find out what vacancies they may have. If their results are better than expected, they may be eligible for adjustment - visit [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) to find out more.

Thousands of students go through Clearing every year and they end up loving their course and university experience, and go on to fulfilling, successful careers in their chosen area.

What do we need to do?
Make a note of the Clearing telephone numbers for each university that your child is interested in.

You can contact the University of Bedfordshire on: +44 (0)300 3300 073.

Points to note:
- Your child will need to be available - universities will not be able to speak to parents or other representatives
- You will need internet access - the UCAS website will show a list of all the Clearing vacancies and universities will update their website with availability and instructions throughout the Clearing period.
- Your child will need to use their UCAS Track page to check that they are in Clearing and to get their Clearing number. They will also use this site to refer to an application if a university offers them a place.
Congratulations! Your child has secured a place at university and is about to embark on one of the most exciting, challenging and rewarding experiences of their life. Here are just a few things they will need to consider before they start their course.

**Accommodation**
Each university has different accommodation options, here are just a few:

**Halls of residence**
Most universities provide halls of residence accommodation for their students. Halls offer an affordable and sociable introduction to living away from home. Here at the University of Bedfordshire our accommodation is run by CLV and Liberty Living, and there are a range of options available including en-suite and studio rooms. What’s more, we guarantee a place in halls to all new, first-year students. Find out more at: **beds.ac.uk/accommodation**

**Private accommodation**
Accommodation rented from a private landlord is sometimes an option for students once they have completed their first year of study. It’s important to be aware that although private accommodation may initially seem cheaper than halls, it does not usually include the cost of bills, insurance and Wi-Fi.

**Staying at home**
Increasingly students are choosing to live with their parents in order to save money on rent and other bills. However, it is worth bearing in mind that if your child does live at home, they may feel that they are missing out on some elements of the traditional student experience, such as moving away from home and gaining independent life skills.

**Student support**
As a parent it’s reassuring to know that all universities in the UK provide some form of support to their students. This can be both on campus or online as with the University of Bedfordshire’s Student Information Desk (SiD). Whether your child needs a helping hand with their studies, finance, careers advice or a personal matter, SiD is available 24/7.

**Careers and employment**
At the University of Bedfordshire we are passionate about supporting our students to achieve their career goals. Our practice-based approach to teaching and learning ensures that your child will develop a way of thinking and a skill set that today’s employers are looking for. Just some of the opportunities they may be able to take advantage of include:

- Practice placements in industry
- Assessment centres experience
- Industry days
- Mini consultancy projects for employers
- Masterclasses and career guidance from prospective employers

**The first few weeks...**
We understand that some parents can be anxious about their child moving away from home for the first time. This is why we do everything possible to support your child in their first few weeks at University.

Freshers’ Angels are existing University of Bedfordshire students who are on hand from day one to help new students settle in and answer any questions about University life. We also arrange an extensive calendar of welcome events so that your child can get involved and make new friends straight away. From a practical point of view you may want to encourage your child to pack some of the following items to take with them to university:

- mobile phone
- cutlery
- plates
- tea towels
- glasses
- saucepans
- kettle
- toaster
- duvet and pillow
- towels
- lamp
- TV (with TV license)
- alarm clock
Bursary
Money given by universities to students that does not need to be paid back

Clearing
Clearing is when universities make their remaining course vacancies available to students who are already in the UCAS system. Students need to call universities directly to find out what vacancies they may have

Conditional offer
An offer for a place on a course that has certain conditions which need to be met (usually certain grades need to be achieved)

Deferral
After they have applied to university some students choose to take a gap year. They need to check with the university and request to defer their studies for a year

Extra
The UCAS system for students who have applied to universities but not received any offers, or do not like the offers they have received. It enables students to reapply to different courses/universities one at a time

Firm choice
Once your child has received offers back from universities they need to select a first choice (their preferred offer)

Graduate
Someone who has completed their undergraduate course and graduated from university

Halls
Halls of residence are one of the most popular accommodation option for students, they are often arranged in blocks of flats with shared kitchen/dining areas

Insurance choice
Once your child has received offers back from universities and after they have selected their first choice they then need to select their insurance or second choice

Scholarship
Money given by universities to students that does not need to be paid back. Often there is specific criteria that needs to be met before the student can qualify for this money

Student Finance England
The organisation that runs the Government student loan system. Your child will need to apply for their loan via: www.gov.uk

UCAS
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UCAS tariff
The number of points that a student needs to achieve before they are accepted on the course. For more details visit: www.ucas.com

Undergraduate
A student studying for their first degree

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We have students of all ages within our vibrant and diverse community and believe that there should be no barriers to getting a degree. Whether you’re interested in career progression, personal development, a career change, or the opportunity simply wasn’t available to you previously, we will provide you with an exceptional support network.

We welcome students to study part-time, whether that be in the evening, weekends, or during the week, and understand that part-time students often have multiple commitments to juggle such as work and family, so strong support systems are absolutely crucial. We provide part-time students with the same support and advice as those in full-time study: round-the-clock access to our online learning environment; 24 hour access to our libraries in Luton and Bedford (term-time only), and remote access to more than 80 information databases, meaning that you will always be able to get on with your work, whenever, wherever.

“I’d been a Teaching Assistant for quite a few years and loved my job but really wanted my own class. At my age I was thinking maybe I’d had my time, but then came to an Open Day at Bedfordshire and loved it and decided to go for it.

“The facilities here are great. As a parent I have to take every opportunity I can so I love that I can still access the library at 7am on a Saturday morning if I need to.”
Rachael Whitfield
Primary Education with QTS BA (Hons)