

Parent's Guide to Higher Education

If your son or daughter is thinking about going into higher education (HE), you may have all kinds of questions and concerns. We have tried to answer some of the most frequently asked questions below.

How will my child benefit from HE?

HE is about allowing people to fulfil their potential. In today's world of high technology, employers increasingly need skilled and educated workers. By studying for a degree, your child will have opportunities to choose from a broad range of exciting careers. Graduates, on average, earn significantly more than people who have not been in HE.

As well as improved career prospects, student life is a chance to make new friends and take part in a wide range of social and sporting activities. For many students living away from home, this is their first experience of full independence. HE is a great way of making the move from childhood to the adult world, without the immediate pressure of fulltime work.

Who is HE for?

Going to university was once seen as only for people from better-off families. This is no longer the case. More students are going into HE than ever before, including people of all ages, and from all backgrounds and walks of life. By 2010 it is anticipated that half of all UK adults under 30 will have had some HE experience. This includes a lot of students from families in which no one before has been to university. All young people are being encouraged to fulfil their potential and 'aim higher'.

What to study?

With more and more courses on offer, it can seem like there is almost too much to choose from! Having a clear idea of which qualifications are needed for different degrees and careers will help your child to make the right decisions. For example, if your child is interested in a scientific career, they will need to study sciences at GCSE and A-level in order to apply for a science degree course. For advice on choosing which subjects to study see what to study?

How much will it cost?

Many students and their parents are worried about the costs of going into HE, and the risk of ending up in debt. Fortunately, there is a wide range of financial support available, to make it possible for anyone, whatever their financial situation, to be able to go into HE.

For details about funding your child's study, see information for parents on the costs of HE.

Moving away or staying at home?

Choosing the right place to study is important. In the past most students moved away to study, but with more courses on offer than ever before, your child may find what they are looking for closer to home. This means that there is now more choice for students, either to move away or stay with the family.

Staying at home can be a cheaper and more convenient option, and suits a lot of people. On the other hand, some courses will only be available further away, and many students enjoy the opportunity for independence that moving away can bring. For more information see [where to study?](#)

Taking a gap year

More and more young people now take a year out after school before going to university or HE college, hoping to broaden their life experience and have some time away from formal learning. While some school-leavers want to go straight into HE, others feel that they will be refreshed after some time away from study.

Most students choose to work or travel during a gap year. Both universities and employers now tend to regard these activities as beneficial to students' personal development. Unless specifically stated in the prospectus, taking a year out should not affect your child's chances of getting on to the course they want. For more information, see [The Year Out Group](#) and [StudentUK](#).

Still worried?

For both you and your child, deciding whether to go on to HE is a big decision. However, there has never been a better time to 'aim higher' and there is excellent support available to help you and your family weigh up all the options and make the right choices.

The Aimhigher website is designed to make this process easier, and guide you through all the steps involved in entering HE. The rest of the site, and links to other information sources, should help answer your questions.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme/>