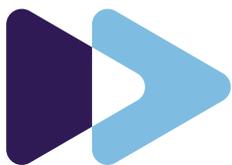


Higher Education: A Guide for Parents and Carers



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What is higher education?

FutureMe is working with young people to provide information, advice and support about higher education opportunities in the North East of England.

All of the universities and colleges in the region are working together to help young people, and those who support them, think about their future and how to reach their goals.

This guide is designed to provide you with information about all aspects of higher education to help you support your child to make the best decision for their future.

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Higher education refers to any qualification studied at level 4 or above, i.e. qualifications taken after sixth form or level 3 courses studied at college. A well known route is studying for a degree at a university, however there are many higher education qualifications that allow young people to study at a college, university, or in the workplace.

Higher National Certificate (HNC) & Higher National Diploma (HND)

Typically offered at colleges, these courses are usually related to a specific job or job family and are usually focused on a vocation. A HNC takes one year to complete when studied full time, while a HND takes two years. Both courses can act as a springboard into further study but can also lead straight into a great career. These courses charge a tuition fee, but students can apply for a loan to cover the cost of tuition. See page 12 for more information about student finance.

Higher & Degree Apprenticeship

An apprenticeship combines paid work and study to give a recognised qualification relevant to the chosen work sector. An apprentice will typically spend 80% of their time in the workplace and 20% of their time at a university, college or external training provider. There is no tuition fee as the cost of study is met by the employer and the government. Students will be paid a wage throughout their apprenticeship.

Foundation Degree

Foundation degrees focus on a particular career area and typically take two years to complete when studied full time. They can be ideal for those who are not sure about committing to a full degree, although they can be 'topped-up' to a full degree with additional study. Foundation degrees combine academic and workplace skills. These courses charge a tuition fee, but students can apply for a loan to cover the cost of tuition. See page 12 for more information on student finance.

Degree

This qualification is sometimes referred to as a bachelor's degree, an undergraduate degree or a first degree. These courses are typically three years in length when studied full time and are delivered at universities and some colleges. There are sometimes also options to study via distance learning. Sometimes a degree can take longer than three years to complete if it includes a year in industry, a year studying abroad or an integrated postgraduate qualification.

Some degree courses are linked closely to specific careers or sectors (e.g. Medicine or Computing) and others can help students develop a more generic skillset that would be valued in many different careers (e.g. History or Maths).

Foundation Year

Not to be confused with a foundation degree, a foundation year is an extra year of study at the start of a degree allowing students to increase their knowledge before starting a degree. It provides time for students to fill any gaps in learning and familiarise themselves with the skills they will need to succeed when completing a degree.



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Key

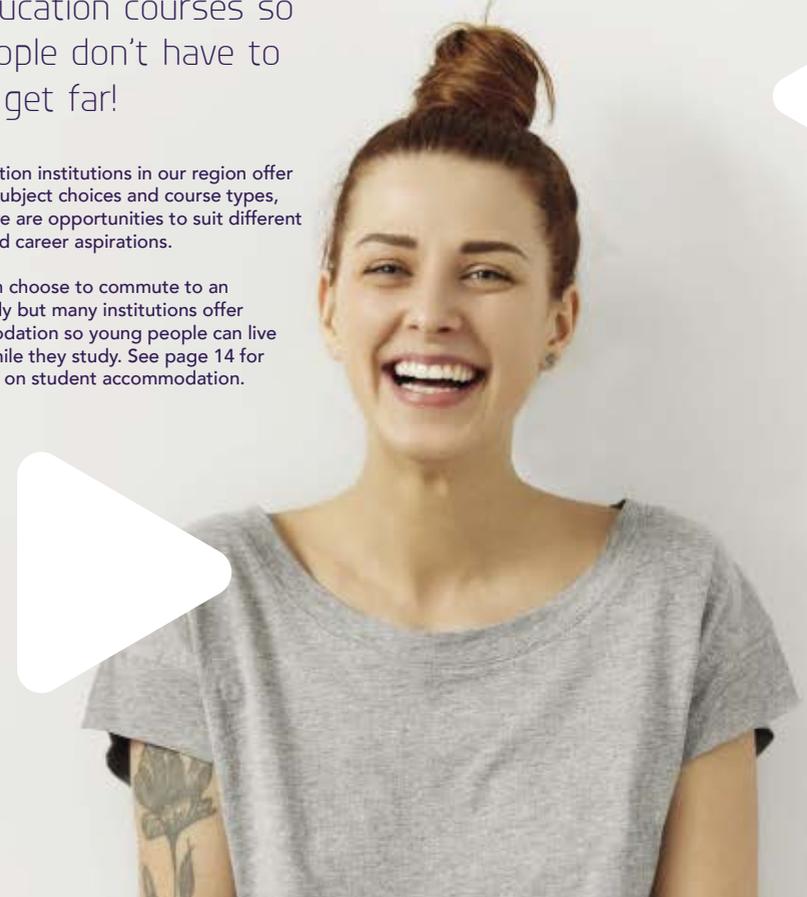
▶ Universities and colleges in the North East.

Higher education in the North East

The North East benefits from five universities and many colleges that offer higher education courses so young people don't have to go far to get far!

The higher education institutions in our region offer a huge range of subject choices and course types, which means there are opportunities to suit different learning styles and career aspirations.

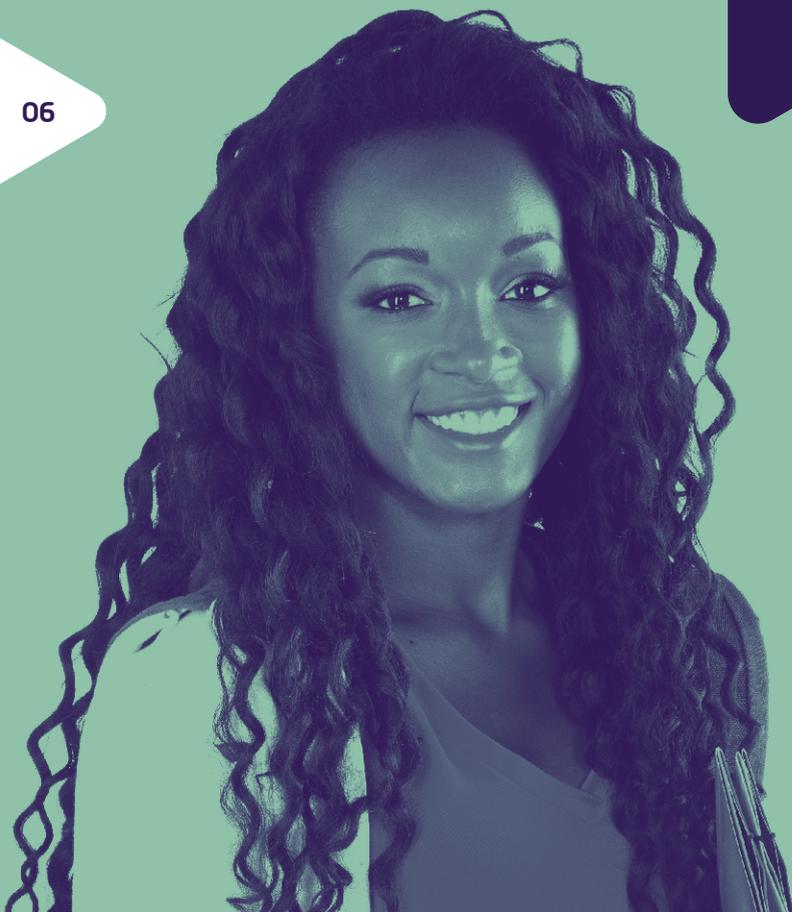
Young people can choose to commute to an institution to study but many institutions offer student accommodation so young people can live independently while they study. See page 14 for more information on student accommodation.



Why higher education?

Higher education will bring benefits to your child that last throughout their life, no matter which pathway they take.

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Career Benefits

- Access to a wider range of jobs and the opportunity to earn a higher wage
- The opportunity to 'fast track' in certain sectors (e.g. the police or the civil service)
- The opportunity to gain real work experience while studying. Some course types will offer a lot of opportunity for this (e.g. courses with a year in industry or a higher or degree apprenticeship)
- Gaining a range of transferable skills while studying that can be applied both to the world of work and also to adult life generally

Personal Benefits

- The opportunity to try new activities and meet new people. As well as core learning through their course, there will be lots of opportunities for learning and experiences beyond this through extra curricular activities
- Living and learning more independently will help develop skills that will be valuable throughout life. For example, as a student your child will learn budgeting and money management skills that will be useful even when in work
- Travel opportunities and the chance to experience a new town, city or country
- Increased confidence. Students are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and many courses will involve elements of public speaking, presenting their work and working in teams

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Applying to higher education

The first step to applying is for your child to decide what, and where, they would like to study.

Key things to consider when making this decision are:

- Whether they want to live at home or move away
- What subjects they are good at and are interested in
- What courses would help them with any career plans that they have
- How they best like to learn
- What different institutions can offer them in terms of facilities and support

Encourage your child to begin their research early. There is lots of information available to help and we've suggested some helpful websites on page 19.

Universities and colleges will hold open events where prospective students and their families can visit the institution, view the facilities and speak to staff and students. Open events may include subject specific talks and taster sessions and the opportunity to have a look at accommodation. It is a good idea to attend these events when possible as they give you and your child the opportunity to experience the institution first hand.

Employers may hold smaller scale recruitment events for those who are interested in apprenticeships. At these events prospective apprentices will hear about careers in their chosen sector, what the apprenticeship will entail and may also have the chance to speak to some current apprentices.

Applying through UCAS

Applications for higher education courses at most universities and colleges are usually made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

Your child will need to register and create an account on the UCAS website and their school or college can usually support them in doing this.

The UCAS application form contains seven sections:

- **Personal details**
The form will ask for personal contact information to allow UCAS to contact your child.
- **Additional information**
This section is not compulsory but gives your child the option to include additional details about themselves and any activities they have taken part in to prepare for higher education.
- **Student finance**
Your child will have the option to give UCAS permission to share their information with Student Finance England which can help speed up the student finance application process.
- **Course choices**
Your child can apply for up to five courses. Institutions cannot see where else students have applied to.
- **Education**
This section is where all qualifications with either achieved or predicted grades should be recorded.
- **Employment**
In this section students can include details of any paid work. Volunteering should not be added to this section and instead should be included in the personal statement.
- **Personal statement**
This is your child's opportunity to express why they would like to study their chosen subject area and demonstrate the skills and achievements they have that will enable them to succeed.



The deadline for most applications is **15 January** in the year a course would begin, however for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge or to Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine at all institutions the application deadline is **15 October** in the year before the course would begin. Universities and colleges will send their responses to applicants through a service called UCAS Track. Here are some of the terms you or your child may see on UCAS Track:

- **Conditional**
The university or college have made your child an offer but the offer is reliant on certain conditions. These are usually linked to achieving specified grades.
- **Unconditional**
The university or college have made your child an offer regardless of the grades they hold or are predicted.
- **Decline**
The university or college have not made your child an offer. In some cases they may offer a place on a different course instead.

Once your child has received replies from all of the institutions they have applied to they will need to choose a first and second choice and decline any additional offers they are holding. The first and second choice are referred to as **firm** and **insurance**.

- **Firm**
This is the place that your child will take providing they meet any conditions of the offer set by the institution.
- **Insurance**
This is the place your child will take should they fail to meet the conditions set by their firm choice (they will still need to meet the conditions of this offer).

On results day

On the morning of results day UCAS Track will notify your child to let them know whether their firm or insurance choice has accepted them onto their chosen course.

If your child does not meet the conditions of either their firm or insurance offer then they may still be able to get a place on a higher education course through Clearing. Clearing is the process universities and colleges use to fill any places that are still available once results have been released. Clearing vacancies can be found on the UCAS website and students call universities and colleges directly to enquire about gaining a place on a course.

If your child achieves better results than they were predicted and no longer wants to attend their firm or insurance choice then they will be able to call universities and colleges to enquire about spaces on the course they are interested in. This process is called Adjustment.

Top tips for results day:

- Students should get to school or college as early as possible to collect their results – if they need to go through the Clearing process then the earlier they start this the more chance they have of getting a place.
- Before results day make a plan of what to do if things don't go as expected – help your child think about what their next steps will be. If they would be interested in attending different institutions or studying different courses, have the numbers of the institutions ready to call straight away. Most institutions will set up dedicated Clearing hotlines.
- Universities and colleges will only speak to the applicant about their application. You can help your child but they should make the calls themselves. Before they call an institution either for Clearing or Adjustment make sure they have their results and are ready to talk to an institution about their application.

Applying for an apprenticeship

Applications to higher and degree apprenticeships are made directly to the employer and should be treated as a job application. This means the application will be different for each employer but usually includes application questions, providing details of previous employment and qualifications and submitting reference. It could also include submitting a CV. Applicants to apprenticeships will also be required to attend an interview. Some larger employers may run assessment centre days when your child will be invited to attend a day with other candidates to take part in group work exercises, discussions, role plays and presentations in addition to a formal interview.

As apprentices spend time at a university or college their application is also screened by the institution to ensure they meet the academic requirements for the course.

Course or Provider not on UCAS?

Not all higher education institutions use UCAS for admission to their higher education courses and in these cases students should submit an application directly to the institution. These applications may ask for personal details, predicted or obtained qualifications, employment or volunteering experience and for your child to explain why they would like to study the course at that institution.

Finance

Although most higher education courses charge a tuition fee, your child is not expected to pay this upfront. Student Finance England provides student loans to cover the cost of tuition and to support the cost of living.

- **Tuition fee loan**

Paid directly to the university or college to cover the full amount of the tuition fee for the course.

- **Maintenance loan**

This is a means tested loan which will be paid to the student in instalments throughout the academic year. The amount of this loan depends on parental household income and whether students choose to live at home or move out while studying.

Students apply for student finance online

If your child applies to take out a maintenance loan you will be asked to submit details of your household income which influences the value of the maintenance loan your child is entitled to.

Universities and colleges can also offer grants, bursaries and scholarships to students meeting certain criteria. These are monetary awards that do not need to be repaid. Sometimes these are awarded automatically based on the information on your child's UCAS application form or sometimes they might require a separate application to the university or college. Each institution is different so students should investigate this with each institution they are interested in applying to.



Repayment

Your child won't pay any tuition fees upfront when studying and will also not be expected to make repayments on their loan until the April after they have finished their course.

Repayments will be taken automatically only once a threshold amount is being earned. The most up to date threshold amount can be found at www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan

Under the current repayment threshold an example of monthly repayments would look like this:

Annual Salary = £27,000

Monthly salary = £2,250

Repayment per month = £9*



N.B. all figures before tax.

If your child's income drops below the threshold their loan repayments will stop until their wage reaches the threshold again.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

Students completing a higher or degree apprenticeship have their tuition fees met by the government and their employer. They will not be eligible for a maintenance loan as they will be paid a wage for the duration of their apprenticeship. Apprentice wages depend on the employer, the level of apprenticeship and the age of the student.

*Example correct as of June 2019. Please check the Student Finance England website for the most up to date figures.

Student Life

Higher education isn't just about the time spent studying, there are many social activities on offer and opportunities to try new experiences. Your child will also need to consider whether they would like to move out or remain at home while studying. Whatever they decide the institution they are studying at will be able to offer information and advice.

Accommodation

Depending on where they decide to study your child may move out and live independently while studying for their higher education qualification. When considering student accommodation, or 'halls', there is a lot of choice available. Some key points to consider when talking to your child about student accommodation are:

- **Would they like to live in catered or self-catered accommodation?**
Catered accommodation often provides breakfast and dinner during the week and offers a social opportunity for students to come together at meal times. In self-catered accommodation students will share a kitchen with other students and will need to buy and cook their own meals.
- **Would they like to share a bathroom or have an en-suite?**
Some accommodation offers an en-suite bathroom, some offer a wash-basin in the room and some offer shared bathroom facilities. The number of students sharing facilities will vary but the accommodation will be able to provide this information.
- **How close to the campus would they like to be?**
In some cases when accommodation is further away from campus there may be free busses offered to students.
- **What is the budget?**
Many institutions offer accommodation at varying rates depending on the facilities it offers. Encourage your child to begin thinking about budgeting early!



Social

In addition to the academic element of a higher education course students are also encouraged to get involved in the many social activities that are on offer. These include sports teams, extracurricular groups and volunteering opportunities. These activities are a great way for students to meet likeminded individuals, make lasting friendships and balance the academic side of studying. Encourage your child to ask about these opportunities at any open days or events they attend.

If your child chooses an apprenticeship they will still have access to all of the activities on offer at their college or university but they will not always be on campus so may not have as much time to participate in these activities. However, they will also have access to any social activities on offer through their employer.

Support

The transition to higher education can seem daunting but your child will have access to a range of support to help them be successful during their studies. Some institutions pair new students with those in higher years of study to provide a friendly face on campus and some peer support. Institutions also have a range of support systems in place to help your child make this transition and it can be reassuring to ask about what is on offer before students start their course.

Higher education institutions will also have teams in place to support students who have a disability or learning support need, or need support with wellbeing or finance.



How can you help?

We know that students value their parents and carers as sources of support when thinking about future decisions. No matter what your own experience is with higher education there are a number of ways you can support your child to make an informed choice about their future education.

- **Engage in open conversations about their future**
Chatting to your child about their future, what they might like to do, and how their current education is going can help them begin to think about these things themselves.
- **Encourage them to be open minded**
With so many options for higher education available it is worth encouraging your child to be open minded. They may have heard about a route a friend is taking and have assumed this would be best for them too, when in fact they could be better suited to a different route.
- **Speak to their school or college teachers**
Your child's teachers will be able to advise on whether they are on track to meet the academic requirements that their chosen higher education course is asking for. They can also provide information and advice on how best to support your child to reach their full academic potential.
- **Encourage extracurricular activity**
No matter what path your child follows extracurricular activity will equip them with skills that can be transferred to many environments. Universities and colleges often run free summer schools for young people and these are a great opportunity to help students develop skills and give them a taste of student life. These opportunities are advertised on institutions' own websites.
- **Attend open days and events**
Open days are a fantastic opportunity to hear more about specific courses and institutions and can really help you understand what it would be like for your child to study at a particular place. It is great if you can attend with your child as it provides time for you to have your questions answered and see where your child could be living and studying.





Support for you

www.futureme.ac.uk

- Our website provides lots of further information to support you and your child when thinking about higher education.

www.ucas.com

- The UCAS website provides information for students and their parents and carers on course choices, applying to higher education and student life. There is also a parent newsletter you can sign up for.

www.gov.uk/student-finance

- This website provides information about student finance and allows you to see an estimate of what your child may be entitled to.

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

- This website provides information on apprenticeships, how to apply and what makes a good application.



Contact Us



If you have any questions about higher education or the contents of this guide contact us at info@futureme.ac.uk

 [futureme_ne](https://twitter.com/futureme_ne)
 [/futuremenortheast](https://www.facebook.com/futuremenortheast)

