

Choices Guide

Helping you choose
your next steps





Apprenticeships
Skills
University
Finance
Priorities
Options



An introduction to Hello Future...

Everyone should be able to make informed and inspired choices about their future, whoever they are, wherever they're from.

We're part of the Uni Connect programme, run by the Office for Students, which is designed to offer activities, advice and information on the benefits and realities of higher education.

Bringing together a partnership of universities, colleges and employers from across Cumbria, we're committed to helping Cumbrian learners make informed decisions about their future, the pathways to get there and how to successfully transition into the next stage of their education.

This guide is designed to introduce you to your choices and options in higher education, as well as share our top tips to help you take your next steps.

For more information, head to:
www.hellofuture.ac.uk

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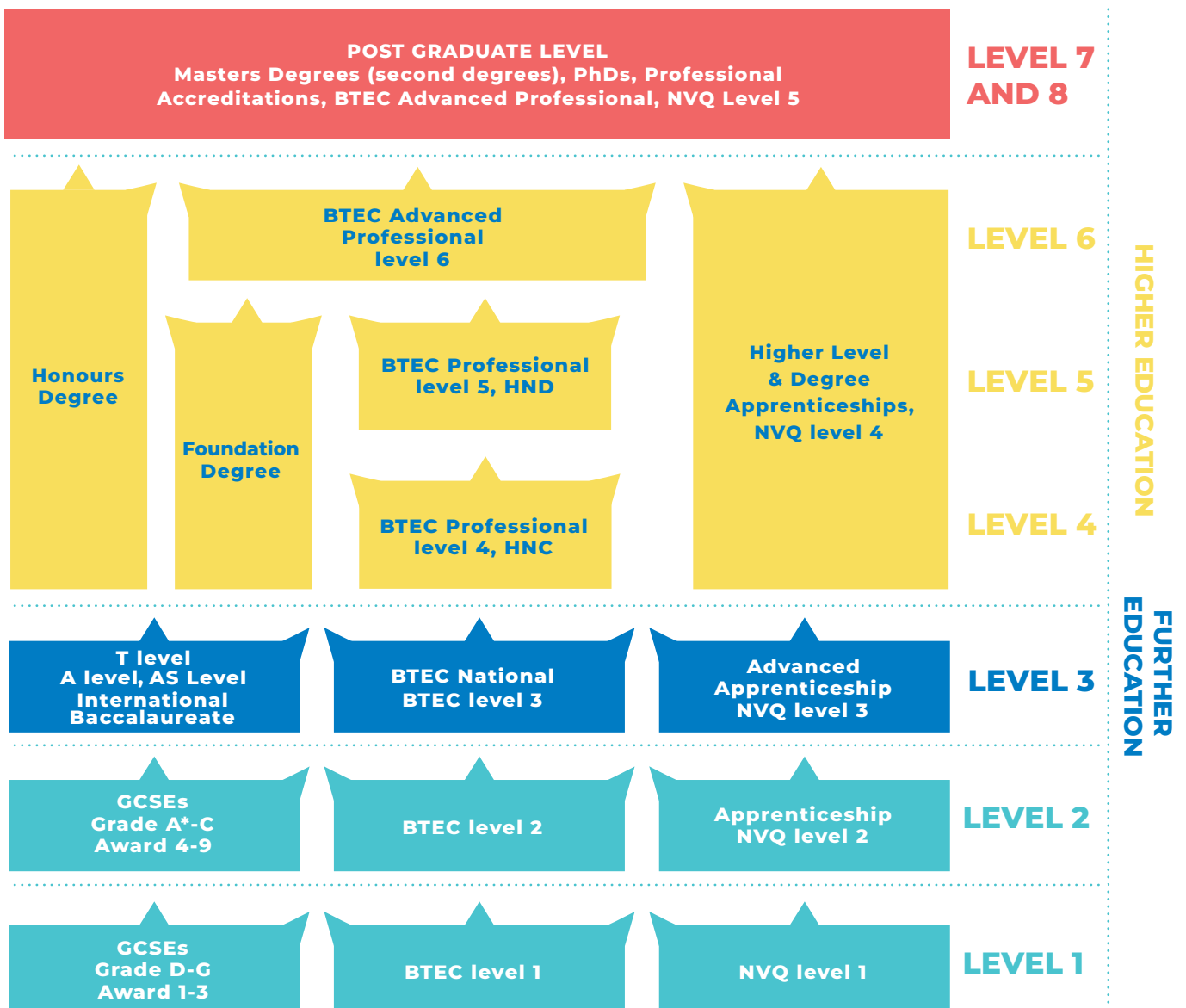
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Options

Exploring your options and identifying the best one for you can be difficult but is extremely important when making your next step to your dream career. In this section, we'll be exploring two of the main options available to you: Apprenticeships and University.

Begin by looking at the chart below showing the different routes and their corresponding academic levels.





Options Quiz

Read through this booklet, then come back and test your knowledge on our quiz!

1. How many courses can you apply for in your initial UCAS application?
.....

2. What kind of apprenticeship is the academic equivalent of A Levels?
.....

3. How many universities and colleges there are in the UK?
.....

4. What does UCAS stand for?
.....

5. True or False: As an apprentice, you earn a wage and officially work for a company
.....

6. Please describe what is meant by an unconditional offer
.....

7. When completing an apprenticeship, on average, what percentage of time is spent learning away from your employer?
.....

8. True or False: A level 6 qualification is equivalent to a masters degree.
.....

Score
.....

Answers: (1) 5 (2) Advanced Apprenticeship (3) Over 350! (4) University and College Administration Service (5) True (6) An offer where there are no further academic requirements to meet (7) 20% (8) False, a Level 7 qualification is the equivalent to a masters.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are one of many options for school leavers and offer young people the chance to learn whilst earning a wage in a real job and workplace. There are a wide range of apprenticeships available across a number of different industries and locations. As an apprentice, you work as part of a business but at least 20% of your time will be designated to learning away from the employer; this may be at a university, college or another training provider.

Case Studies

Check out the case studies below of Rhys and Katherine



Name: Rhys

Apprenticeship:

Software Engineering

Training Provider: Carlisle College

Employer: Theldol.com

Why did you decide on this subject / area?

I decided I wanted to go into this area because I've always had an interest in computers and I'd always wanted to learn to code and develop programs, so the next logical step for me was to take my hobby and turn it into a career.

Why did you decide on this employer?

I have previously done work experience at Idol and once I had finished my week working alongside developers and seeing how everything is done, they contacted me and asked if I wanted to come back as an apprentice once I had finished my exams.

'The best part about being an apprentice is the fact I learn methods and skills which are applied to real-world situations when web developing, whilst learning on the job. I also go to college, where I also expand upon my knowledge of software engineering'



Name: Katherine

Apprenticeship:

Transport and Logistics Operations

Training Provider:

via online portal with the Institute of Supply Chain Management

Employer: Cyclife UK Ltd

Why did you decide on this subject / area?

I have always had a keen interest in how things are moved round the world from point of manufacture to point of use. I wanted to get an insight into how this works.

Why did you decide on this employer?

I was fortunate to get a week's placement with my Cyclife UK Ltd through Dream Placement which is facilitated by the Centre for Leadership Performance. After my placement, I was offered a job with the company. As I've always wanted to do transport and logistics, my academic course was in this field, with other areas of development within the company to suit the company's requirements.

'The best thing about working for Cyclife and completing an online course is that I am on site all the time and I can put what I learn through my coursework into practice on a day to day basis'

If you would like to read the rest of Rhys and Katherine's case studies, go to:
www.hellofuture.ac.uk/case-studies

Levels

There are different types of apprenticeships and each represents a different level of academic qualification. Take a look at the table below to learn more.

Intermediate Apprenticeship



This apprenticeship is a level 2 qualification, this is the equivalent to GCSEs at grade A*- C/ 9 - 4

Advanced Apprenticeship



This apprenticeship is a level 3 qualification, this is the equivalent to A-Levels

Higher Apprenticeship



This apprenticeship is a qualification that can be between levels 4-7 and is the equivalent to a foundation degree

Degree Apprenticeship



This apprenticeship is a qualification that can be level 6 (equivalent to a bachelors degree) or 7 (equivalent to a masters)

Find out more

Below are some websites where you'll find more information about apprenticeships

www.hellofuture.ac.uk/resources

www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

www.ucas.com/apprenticeships

www.prospects.ac.uk

University

One of the most popular options that young people choose following school or college is going to university. There are over 350 universities and colleges in the UK where you can complete a degree. There are also a wide variety of courses to choose from spread across numerous different subject areas. You can study from home or move away and there is no upper age limit to go to university.

All applications for university and college go through the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS). Check out the application timeline below:



Question

How many different degree courses do you think are available in the UK?

1 APPLY

All applications are online through UCAS and you can apply for up to 5 different courses. Find the right courses for you using the UCAS search tool where you can check entry requirements and application deadlines.

Universities then make a decision on your application and if successful will make you an offer. This offer will be unconditional or conditional (see glossary below). If you are not made an offer by any university or you decline your offers, you can use UCAS extra where you can apply for more choices one at a time.

2 HEAR BACK

3 REPLY

Once all the universities you applied to have responded to you, you then need to make a decision about which offers you accept and which you decline. You'll need to select two to accept: one as your firm choice and an insurance choice.

You can use UCAS Track on the morning of results day to see if your place is confirmed. If you haven't met the requirements of your conditional offer, you can then register for Clearing and apply for more courses that day. Universities have clearing hotlines to assist you with this.

4 RESULTS DAY

University Terms Glossary

Unconditional Offer = this is an offer from a university where there are no further academic requirements to meet

Conditional Offer = this is an offer dependant upon your exam results

Firm Choice = this course is your first choice

Insurance Choice = this course is your back up choice just in case you don't get a place on your firm choice

Case Studies

Check out the case studies below featuring Matt (who's graduated university) and Sophie (who's about to start university) To see our full list of case studies, head to: www.hellofuture.ac.uk/case-studies

Name: Matt

Age: 24



Matt moved away from home in Staffordshire in 2013 to study Policing, Investigation and Criminology at University of Cumbria. He graduated in 2016 with an Upper Class degree.

Did you always want to go to university?

Yes, I'd always envisioned myself going to uni after sixth form. I changed my mind about what I wanted to study but when I saw the modules available within my course, I knew it was definitely for me.

What was the best thing about university?

I'd say firstly that you're studying just one subject and it's something you're passionate about and secondly, the non-academic benefits you get from going, you become more confident, learn new skills and meet loads of new people from all over the world.

Name: Sophie

Age: 18



Sophie has completed a level 3 qualification in Health & Social Care (Emergency Care) at Newton Rigg College and is now getting ready to go to Liverpool John Moores University to study Paramedic Practice.

What did you want to do growing up?

I was certain I wanted a job in the NHS. I knew I wanted to do something which was different every day and hands on.

What are you most looking forward to about university?

I am so excited to meet loads of new friends and begin this journey. Most of all I am excited for my placements because a big city like Liverpool will be more exciting.

Consider your top three priorities for choosing a university and write them here...

- 1
- 2
- 3

OPEN DAY TOP TIPS

Always plan your day in advance

You won't have time to do everything on the day so plan what's most important to you before arriving.

Ask lots of questions

An Open Day is an opportunity to ask as many questions as possible to current students and lecturers. There's no such thing as a stupid question.

Make the most of your time

There is so much to see at an Open Day beyond just your course. Make sure to check out accommodation, student unions, societies, location and more.

Find out more

www.ucas.com
www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
www.studyin-uk.com
www.timeshighereducation.com



DON'T FORGET - University websites contain lots of useful information about their courses and campuses

Skills

Identifying your skills, as well as how you want to improve them, is important in order to show a future employer, apprenticeship-provider or university why they should give you a place. Use the following table to track what skills you have, what your strengths are and how you would like to improve them.



| Skill | Progress I have made... | Improvements I can make... |
|---------------|---|---|
| Communication | I feel more confident speaking in front of my class | Use opportunities to deliver presentations to groups and seek feedback from my teacher on how I can continue to improve my communication skills |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Personal Statements



Struggling to recognise your strengths? Ask the people around you—they can help identify the skills and attributes you might overlook.

Read your personal statement aloud to yourself—it might feel embarrassing but you will soon spot any grammatical errors and will be able to adjust it so it captures what you are trying to say.

Remember that this is a personal statement—it is possible that, if interviewed, you will be asked about what you've included—so make sure it includes things that you can easily discuss and feel genuinely passionate about. Take a look at course descriptions for prompts!

Top Tips

Start writing your personal statement as soon as possible so that you have time for several drafts. This will mean you're not rushing to meet the deadline.

If you have any idea of what career you would like the course/position to lead on to—include them.

Your UCAS personal statement goes out to all universities applied to—so it might be a good idea to leave out specifics and stick with the degree subject you have in mind.

Extra information on writing a personal statement for your UCAS application can be found at: www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/how-write-ucas-undergraduate-personal-statement

Interviews

An interview is a chance for your future employer/apprenticeship provider/university to determine your suitability for the position or course. Below are some of the interview types you might experience moving forward.



One-to-one Interviews

These are the most traditional interviews and tend to be used across a variety of workplaces. They allow the interviewer to get to know you in more depth and read your facial and verbal cues clearly.

Such interviews allow for more detailed questions to be answered — so use this as your opportunity to show your thinking process, values and skills in depth.



Panel Interviews

These will include an interview panel of two or more interviewers. They can often involve a presentation or interview task. Panel interviews can often be more formal in nature, but are your chance to build rapport with multiple interviewers.

Make sure to speak to, and involve, all members of the interview panel.



Group Interviews

This allows the employer to conduct numerous interviews at a time. They might involve an interview task or problem solving exercise—this is your chance to showcase your leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

They will often be for jobs with high pressure environments, or that require certain levels of confidence and team work.



Keep in mind that you may also come across **phone** or **video interviews** which will require as much preparation and focus as all the others.

Don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to repeat or clarify a question

Top Tips

Take your time. Don't rush your answers—this is your chance to show off your decision making and thinking process!

You are usually asked, towards the end of the interview, if you have any questions, so think of them beforehand by researching the employer or provider.

Take a look at the job or course specification and make a list of the key skills required. Think about how your current skills relate, and which skills you would like to further develop in the role.

Get ready ahead of time—this will keep you from rushing and help you to stay calm

Interview Techniques



During interviews you will come across questions which aim to find out how you, as a possible future employee, will react to certain scenarios. The STAR technique, as explained below, is used to provide you with a structured answer which involves using specific examples to back up your arguments. Use the boxes below to think of, and break down, two examples you could use as part of the STAR technique.



Situation

Use this to set some context for your answer. You might want to think about who you were working with and roughly what date it was. It helps to be specific to really set the scene for your answer.



Task

Now you need to relate your role to the situation. What was required of you? Make sure to include any problems you faced and what situation you were individually tasked with.



Action

What processes or activities did you undertake to resolve the situation? This is a good chance to showcase your problem solving capability.



Result

What was the positive outcome? It is important to back this up with evidence.



| Situation | Task | Action | Result |
|-----------|------|--------|--------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

Student Finance

This section explores how student finance works and explains some of the different loans and support you may be eligible for. We will look at some of the key terms you will come across when applying for student finance, offer some top tips and respond to some student finance myths.



How it works

You can apply to Student Finance England for financial support to help you meet the costs of university. You can get a tuition fee loan to cover your course fees, and this will be paid directly to your university by the Student Loans Company (SLC). You can also get a maintenance loan to help cover living costs, which is paid into your bank account in instalments, and you can apply for these together. These loans are repayable when you stop studying and earn above the repayment threshold. You don't need to have a confirmed offer or place at university to start the process of applying for student finance.

Student Loans Company

The government body that provides student loans for students in the United Kingdom.

Household Income

The total amount you and your parents/carers in your household earn each year before tax and National Insurance.

Tuition Fee Loan

A loan to cover the cost of your tuition fees. Paid directly to the university or college, this is non means tested, and you can usually borrow the full amount. This is repayable once you have graduated and earn above a certain threshold.

Means Tested Support

The amount you are eligible to receive will depend on your household income.

Jargon Buster

Tuition Fees

These fees cover the cost of your studies and vary depending on the institute and course.

Maintenance Loan

A loan to cover your living costs such as: accommodation, food and travel. It is means tested, so the amount you could borrow will vary. This is repayable once you have graduated and earn above a certain threshold.

Scholarship

A payment made to support a student's education, given for academic or other achievement. May be given by a university or college, an employer or another organisation. This does not need to be paid back.

Student Finance



1.

If you get a low paid job when you finish university, the loan repayments will be financially crippling



True
False

☐
☐

2.

If you have a mental health problem, long term illness or another disability you may be entitled to additional, non-repayable funding



True
False

☐
☐

3.

Your student loan debt is wiped after 30 years



True
False

☐
☐

4.

You need to be able to pay up to £9250 upfront to be able to go to university



True
False

☐
☐

5.

Student loans have interest so your overall debt will be more than you borrowed



True
False

☐
☐

6.

Your student loan will affect your credit rating which may impact you getting a mortgage



True
False

☐
☐

Score

1) False (you only begin to pay it back once you earn over a certain threshold) 2) True - Check out Disabled Students' Allowance 3) True 4) False 5) True 6) False

Student Finance



Top Tips

Start your application early to ensure you have plenty of time and to be certain your money will be in place before you start your course.

Look around for the best student bank accounts.

Always check what funding is available—look into the scholarships and bursaries offered by different universities. These are separate to the loans from the SLC, and there are substantial amounts on offer.

Spend some time making a rough budget so that when you apply for student finance you'll have an idea of what your loans will cover.

Further resources



Student Finance England Youtube channel:

[youtube.com/sfefilm](https://www.youtube.com/sfefilm)

Martin Lewis student loans mythbusting:

moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes/

Gov.uk overview of student finance, and link to where to apply:

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

UCAS guide to student finance:

[ucas.com/sfe](https://www.ucas.com/sfe)

Which? University guide to student banking and budgeting:

theuniguide.co.uk/advice/student-finance

Gov.uk student finance calculator:

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

Your Priorities

It can be hard to decide what your next steps are, but one way to look at your options is to consider your priorities and how these align with your potential career route.

Below are some examples of priorities, order them from most important (1) to least important (14) and then think of how this relates to your options.

Work-life balance – which option allows the most appropriate work-life balance for you personally?

Flexibility – how many hours/holidays will the options give you? (may be part of work-life balance?)

Money – how much of a priority this is may affect your decision

Independence – e.g. do you want to move away?

Challenge – how will each option challenge you? And is this enough/too much?

Teamwork – do you work better independently or in a team?

Family – how close do you want to be to your family?

Helping others – is this a priority for you?

Social life – what aspects are important and would you be able to access them?

Making a difference – are you motivated to make an impact?

Leadership – is this important to you, or are you happy to be part of a team?

Travel – could it be part of your apprenticeship or course?

Learning – which option provides the level of learning you prefer?

Job security – how secure is the industry? Is this a priority?

**Don't forget,
we're not
just in the
classroom!**

We have lots of
resources and
information
available on our
website to
support you:

**Subject
experiences &
academic Q&As**

e-courses

**Finance and
budgeting**

**Case
studies**

**University
options**

**Apprenticeship
routes and
support**

**Studying at home
activities and
support**

**Events &
Activities**



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