As the parent or carer of someone thinking of applying to university, you have an important role to play. Encouraging and supporting your son or daughter through the decision making process is key to ensuring they make informed decisions.

It’s very likely you have your own questions about university and that’s why we’ve put together this guide. Here you’ll find useful information about applying to university, accommodation, finance, key dates and deadlines and advice on how you can help your son or daughter along the way.

Important Information

Information provided by the University such as in presentations, University brochures and the University website, is accurate at the time of first disclosure. However, courses, University services and content of publications remain subject to change. Changes may be necessary to comply with the requirements of accrediting bodies or to keep courses contemporary through updating practices or areas of study. Circumstances may arise outside the reasonable control of the University, leading to required changes. Such circumstances include, industrial action, unexpected student numbers, significant staff illness (where a course is reliant upon a person’s expertise), unexpected lack of funding, severe weather, fire, civil disorder, political unrest, government restrictions and serious concern with regard to the transmission of serious illness making a course unsafe to deliver. After a student has taken up a place with the University, the University will look to give early notification of any changes and try to minimise their impact, offering suitable alternative arrangements or forms of compensation where it believes there is a fair case to do so. Offers of a place to study at the University will provide up to date information on courses.

The latest key information on courses, entry requirements and fees can be found at www.leeds.ac.uk/coursefinder. Please check this website before making any decisions.
Why go to university?

Going to university is a life-changing experience which offers a wide range of personal, financial and other lifelong benefits. If your son or daughter is thinking about university it is important for you to understand why a degree is worth the investment of time and money.

Improved career prospects

Competition in the job market is intense. More and more companies now expect applicants to be educated to degree level. Employers value the writing, presenting, problem solving and time management skills which are developed at university. Graduates have a wider choice of career options than a non-graduate and are more likely to progress within their chosen career at a faster rate.

Gain access to a particular career

Many professions such as doctors, nurses, teachers and lawyers are only open to graduates with a related degree.

Personal development

University students are provided with a huge range of opportunities which can broaden their horizons; studying abroad, work placements, taking part in clubs, societies and volunteering. University opens up a world of new experiences, helping them to develop their skills, meet new people and stand out in the job market.

Increased earning potential

The average salary of a graduate is £9,500 more per year than a non-graduate. (Department for Business Innovation and Skills: Graduate Labour Market Statistics April 2016)

How much will it cost?

This is the question which is asked by many parents. It is important to remember there are lots of different types of financial help available for those who need it.

Financial support from the government

Help with tuition fees:
UK and EU students do not have to pay any of their tuition fees upfront. Regardless of your household income, your son or daughter can apply for a government loan which covers the full amount of their tuition fees.

Please visit www.leeds.ac.uk/undergraduatefees for details of the University of Leeds tuition fee rates for students starting a full time degree.

Financial support from the University of Leeds

Leeds Financial Support (LFS):
We offer financial assistance for students from the UK (excluding Wales) with a household income of £42,875 or less. The amount your son or daughter may be eligible for depends on your household income.

University of Leeds scholarships:
A range of scholarships are available from the University worth up to £3,000 a year for three years. Applicants must meet specific personal and financial criteria.

LFS and scholarships are non-repayable and are in addition to the financial support you can receive from the government.

Both government loans are repayable but only after your son or daughter is earning over £21,000 after they graduate. Even then they will only pay a percentage of their income, so those who earn less, pay less.

Increased earning potential

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Making the right choices

There are over 350 universities and colleges in the UK offering 50,000 degree courses. Researching the right course and university is essential and one of the areas where you can help. But with so much choice available, you may be wondering where to start?

What do they want to study?
This is the key question your son or daughter needs to be asking themselves. Do they have a passion for a subject they are currently studying? What are their career aspirations? Are they looking at courses related to a particular profession? Do they want to try a completely new subject? It’s important to be aware that course content and admissions criteria vary between universities. Similar sounding degrees can cover different areas and request a range of entry requirements so do encourage your son or daughter to look beyond a degree title.

Where do they want to study?
Once they have narrowed down their course preferences, the next step is to think about where they’d like to study. Do they want to be close to home? Would they enjoy living in a big city or a small town?

Visit the shortlist together
Visiting a campus with your son or daughter is a great way to get a feel for a university and learn more about the courses they are interested in. A variety of talks, tours and activities take place for all subject areas and you will be able to put your questions to current staff and students.

Research resources
There are many sources of information out there including careers fairs in schools, UCAS fairs, university prospectuses and websites. See page 18 for details.

Making the most of open days

A successful open day visit is all about the preparation. Encourage your son or daughter to check the online information ahead of the event so they can decide how best to use their time on the day and book onto any talks or tours.

Knowing what questions to ask tutors and current students will help your son or daughter get to the bottom of whether a course is right for them.

Top questions to ask
- What does the course cover?
- What assessment methods - coursework/ exams/presentations - are used?
- What are the entry requirements for the course?
- What careers can the course lead to?
- Are applicants interviewed for the course?
- What facilities/resources are available?
- Are there opportunities for work placements or studying abroad on the course?
- What are the fees?
- What scholarships and bursaries are available?
- Does the university provide accommodation for all first-year students?
- What types of accommodation are available?
- What clubs and societies are offered at the students’ union?
When Yolande Sumbele started thinking about studying at university, her mum played an important role providing help, suggestions and advice. We spoke to Priscillia about how she found the experience of supporting Yolande through the process.

Did you have any concerns about Yolande applying for university?
No, I didn’t have any concerns. I knew going to university would provide Yolande with the necessary tools, opportunities and life skills for her future career. The only worry I did have was about the financial challenges I thought we may face.

How straightforward was it to find all the information you needed?
Yolande’s sixth form college provided lots of information about how to apply to universities. They held a parents’ evening which was particularly helpful. Representatives from universities attended and they were able to answer our questions there and then. I learned about how I could support Yolande write a good personal statement and what funding opportunities were out there. It was at this meeting that I became aware that students from disadvantaged backgrounds could be eligible for additional support from universities. The application and entry requirements information on Leeds’ website was also clear and it was useful to have contact numbers online that I could call if I needed any clarification.

What information did you find the most useful?
The information I found essential was about student funding, volunteering, work placement opportunities and how much student support is available. Learning about the personal and academic support provided by the University was particularly valuable as it gave me peace of mind that Yolande would have help available if she ever needed it.

How did you support Yolande?
I accompanied Yolande to university open days and researched course information with her. We also went through the student finance application together. Doing so allowed us to work out how much funding Yolande may be eligible for so I could help her budget properly before she started university.

How involved were you in Yolande’s decision making?
I felt it was important to be involved in Yolande’s choice of university as I could provide a different perspective. After researching online information, talking to different people and asking specific questions at open days I was at peace to then allow her make that final, informed decision knowing we had investigated as much as we could.

Do you have any advice for parents about to go through the process?
Take an active – but objective - role in your child’s decision making process.

“It is important to let your child have the final decision as they need to love wherever it is they want to go.”
Applying to university

It’s much more straightforward than you may think. All university applications are made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website. The online form includes sections for personal details, education, employment history, the personal statement and course choices.

Course choices

Your son or daughter can choose up to five courses on their application. There’s no order of preference and universities won’t be able to see where else they have applied.

Personal statement

This is where applicants talk about themselves, explain their interest in the course and why they’d make a great student. With just 4,000 characters to impress the universities they wish to attend, it can be a daunting section to write. You can help your son or daughter by discussing ideas, reading through their drafts, checking grammar and spelling.

Receiving decisions

Once applications are submitted, universities will make their decisions which are sent to applicants online via UCAS:

- **Unconditional** - this means the applicant has already met the entry requirements. The place is theirs if they want it.

- **Conditional** – this is an offer of a university place which is subject to the applicant meeting the course entry requirements in their exam results.

- **Unsuccessful** – unfortunately the university has declined and not offered the applicant a place.

Replying to offers

If your son or daughter is offered a place at more than one university, they will need to respond to their offers. They can accept a maximum of two choices:

- **Firm**: their first choice. The university/course they most want to attend. If they accept a conditional offer and meet the conditions, they’ll have a confirmed place here.

- **Insurance**: their back-up choice. The university/course they’d want to attend if they don’t meet the conditions of their firm choice.

Confirmation and clearing

Your son or daughter will find out on results day whether they have been accepted by their firm choice university. If they have narrowly missed the conditions of the offer they could still secure a place, or be accepted by their insurance choice. However if their grades are not what they were expecting – don’t panic – they will automatically enter Clearing, the official online list of course vacancies where they may find a university place.

Look out for Access to Leeds

Access to Leeds (A2L) is the University of Leeds widening access scheme. It guarantees special consideration for applicants whose personal circumstances have affected their ability to demonstrate their potential through grades alone. If your son or daughter meets certain eligibility criteria they could receive special consideration from admissions tutors and an alternative offer from the University.

Visit [www.leeds.ac.uk/A2L](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/A2L)
### Application timetable

The university application process involves a number of different steps and stages. Help your son or daughter get organised with our schedule of key actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 12</th>
<th>Jan - Jul</th>
<th>Encourage your son or daughter to start looking into courses that interest them and where they would like to study.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mar - Jul</td>
<td>The annual series of UCAS Fairs begins. These are a great way to pick up information and talk to universities about the courses they offer.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr - Sep</td>
<td>Explore the options – register to attend university open days.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May onwards</td>
<td>Encourage your son or daughter to find relevant work or voluntary experience to support their application.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>It’s a good time for your son or daughter to start thinking about the content and structure of their personal statement.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Year 13 | Sep | Prepare UCAS application. |
|         | Oct | Deadline for UCAS applications to medicine, dentistry and places at Oxford or Cambridge. |
|         | Nov - Apr | Some courses interview applicants in order to consider them for a place. If this is the case for your son or daughter, they will need to prepare for and attend selection/visit days. |

| Jan | • UCAS application deadline for all course (excluding medicine and dentistry). |
| Feb | • Apply for financial support for tuition fee and living cost loans. |
|     | • UCAS Extra opens. |
|     | • University of Leeds scholarship applications open. |
|     | • Access to Leeds applications close |
| Mar | • Decisions start to come through from universities |
|     | • University of Leeds accommodation viewing day. |
| Apr | • Students with a disability or learning difficulty should apply for Disabled Students Allowance as soon as possible. They do not need to wait until they have a confirmed place at university. |
| May | • Decision time – your son or daughter needs to choose which university to confirm as firm and insurance choices. |
|     | • Student finance applications close (England). |
|     | • University of Leeds scholarship applications close. |
| Jun | • Apply for accommodation. |
| Jul | • International Baccalaureate and BTEC results published. |
| Aug | • A level results published. |
|     | • Clearing and adjustment opens. |
| Sep | • University term begins. |
Where to live

Once the UCAS application has been submitted it’s a good time to start looking into student accommodation. If your son or daughter is moving away from home, making sure they are settled in a safe and secure environment will understandably be a priority.

Accommodation options
Where your son or daughter lives will play a big part in their university experience so it’s important to find the right place for them. Student accommodation comes in a wide range of styles:

- Catered and self-catered
- On and off campus
- Traditional halls of residence and modern flat-share
- Private houses and purpose built communal buildings

There is something to suit every preference and budget. How much your son or daughter spends on accommodation will depend on the type of residence they chose.

University of Leeds accommodation currently ranges from £83 - £194* per week. Rent includes all energy costs, internet access and contents insurance.

Explore university residences by attending a range of accommodation viewing days and open days. You can also check university websites for images and virtual tours, information on costs and what is included in their charges.

* Financial details as of March 2017. Prices may increase or decrease.

A supportive environment

Should your son or daughter encounter any personal issues, difficulties with their studies, finances or living arrangements we have a number of specialist support services to help:

Personal tutor
Every student at the University has a personal tutor - a member of teaching staff who is there to support your son or daughter’s personal and academic development.

Student advice centre
Run by Leeds University Union, the centre provides help with any problems concerning life as a student, specialising in housing, money matters and academic issues. All help is free and confidential.

Disability coordinator team
The team is one of the largest in the UK, with a range of specialist staff members working to assess the needs of disabled students and in place individualised packages of support. We also work closely with academic departments and other university services to ensure access for individual students.

Leeds student counselling centre
Offers free and confidential help, guidance and support to students affected by a range of emotional issues. This includes one to one counselling, self-help resources, daily drop-in sessions, groups and workshops.

Our guarantee
The University of Leeds guarantees a place in its accommodation to all new students who apply by 1 July.
Jargon buster

**Bursary**
Financial support awarded to students to enable them to study at university or college. These are usually means-tested and non-repayable.

**Campus**
The grounds and buildings of a university or college.

**Conditional offer**
The university will accept the applicant on their course if they meet certain additional requirements, usually specified grades in the examinations they will be taking.

**Clearing**
Part of the UCAS university application process. Clearing enables universities to fill their course vacancies. It also gives applicants, who do not hold an offer, another chance of finding a university place.

**Degree**
The qualification awarded to an individual after successfully finishing their higher education course at university.

**Entry requirements**
The standard of academic ability an applicant needs to study a course. Set by universities, these are often specific qualifications and/or specific grades in subjects relevant to the course being applied for.

**Firm choice**
The offer from a university that the applicant has accepted as their first choice.

**Fresher**
A first year student at university.

**Graduate**
A student who has successfully completed their university course and been awarded a degree.

**Halls of residence**
Buildings with rooms or flats, built by universities in which students live during term time.

**Higher education**
A range of courses, taught in universities which are studied to degree level.

**Insurance choice**
The offer from a university that the applicant has accepted as their second/back up choice (should they not meet the conditions of their first first/firm choice).

**Means-tested**
The measurement of household income in order to determine eligibility for financial support.

**UCAS**
The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service; the central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to university.
Useful websites

Access to Leeds - www.leeds.ac.uk/A2L
Disable Students’ Allowances - www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas
Leeds Financial Support - www.leeds.ac.uk/universitysupport
Student Finance England - www.gov.uk/apply-online-for-student-finance
The Complete University Guide - www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
The Student Room - www.thestudentroom.co.uk
UCAS - www.ucas.com
UCAS Information for Parents - www.ucas.com/parents
Which? University - www.which.co.uk/university
University Open Days - www.opendays.com
University of Leeds Accommodation - www.leeds.ac.uk/accommodation
University of Leeds Information for Parents - www.leeds.ac.uk/parents
University of Leeds Open Days - www.leeds.ac.uk/opendays
University of Leeds Scholarships - www.leeds.ac.uk/scholarships