

Welcome...

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Your son/daughter will need your support as they decide what to do and where to go after their sixth form or college course. Many students choose to continue their education, some after a gap year, whilst others would prefer to get a job or start an Apprenticeship.

Higher Education

What is higher education (HE)?

Higher education (HE) refers to courses taken post-18 which lead to a Level 4 qualification. There have been a lot of changes in both the structure and funding of higher education in recent years. In order for you to guide and advise your teenager, you need up to date information to help them to make realistic, well informed decisions.

Why do HE?

Some are looking to go into a career which requires a degree, or they just want to have an HE qualification, while others purely enjoy studying and wish to continue with a subject for another three years. Research

shows that graduates are less likely to be unemployed in their working lives and are likely to earn on average more than those who have completed advanced level courses.

Important HE questions

- If your son/daughter has decided to take a degree should they opt for a single subject or combined degree, an academic or vocational course, a sandwich course?
- What other courses are there?
- Is location a factor? This may be influenced by financial considerations, distance from home, cost of living, student accommodation available.

This newsletter cannot do justice to such important questions. Your son/daughter will have received a copy of the Year 12 guide in the spring term via their school or college.

Help is also available from their Connexions PA, teachers and on the Internet. The UCAS www.ucas.ac.uk and Central London Connexions www.centrallondonconnexions.org.uk websites are useful sites to visit.

Key things to remember

There is so much to remember, and so many deadlines to be met, during sixth form. The following will help you identify what your son/daughter should be doing during each stage of their sixth form, whether they are applying for higher education, employment, voluntary work experience or a gap year.

Year One

By Easter in Year 12/Lower 6th, your son/daughter should have:

- Checked subject choice against any course or career ideas. Maths and English language GCSEs grades A*-C are required for many (but not all) careers and courses. They should re-sit GCSEs if necessary.
- Arranged work experience or work shadowing. This enhances their university application and some courses require relevant work experience. Work experience indicates to both universities and employers commitment and motivation as well as developing skills and confidence.
- Researched higher education courses, using reference books, attending higher education events, reading prospectuses and using the internet.
- Started to research job opportunities if considering employment.

Year Two

By September

- Start to put together their personal statement for the UCAS application.
- Begin planning their gap year if they wish to defer entry to higher education. Remember the gap year needs to show some relevance to the course they wish to pursue.
- Look at sponsorship information and contact companies as some may require them to apply to particular institutions.
- Attend university and/or department open days.
- Review their future plans in the light of exam results.

September to November

- Finalised higher education choices. UCAS electronic applications may be available in school/college.
- UCAS applications start 1st September 2009 and the deadline is 15th January 2010 but **apply as early as possible**. Popular courses fill up fast.
- Oxford, Cambridge and some other courses e.g. Medicine, Veterinary and Dentistry, must be applied for by 15th October 2009. Art and Art Foundation courses have different deadlines depending on route, so check the UCAS website at www.ucas.com.
- Don't wait for the deadline **apply as early as possible**. Popular courses fill up quickly.
- If your child is considering employment, encourage them to put together a CV.

Year Two continued

January to April

- UCAS application form to be submitted by 15th January 2010.
- Offers will have been made and it is time to make decisions regarding them.

May to August

- Register with your local Connexions centre if looking for work.
- Results are published in August and clearing starts.
- Higher education vacancies published in national newspapers, on teletext and on the internet.
- Help with Clearing is available at your school or college and at local Connexions centres.

Gap year

Increasingly, before moving onto university or into employment, students are opting to take a 'year out' or gap year. This needs to be carefully planned. Most universities and employers look favourably on students taking a gap year, providing they have used it profitably by travelling, gaining work experience, or developing new skills.

So how can Connexions help?

Connexions can help your son/daughter by providing:

- help with researching information
- impartial advice on the range of post-18 options
- help to identify suitable university and college courses
- access to a post-exam results service – expert advice and information on course vacancies
- information on local, national and international training and employment opportunities
- advice on the preparation of CVs, application forms and interview questions
- an explanation of sources of finance.

Personal Advisers are based in schools/colleges/youth clubs and Connexions One Stop Shops, to find your local Connexions centre visit: www.centrallondonconnexions.org.uk or call **020 7938 8080**.

Help is also available from 8am – 2am, 7 days a week from Connexions Direct. Young people and parents/carers can contact the service by calling **080 800 13 2 19***, text **07766 4 13 2 19** or web chat/web cam with adviser/secure message board at www.connexions-direct.com.

(*Calls from landlines are free but the mobile networks may charge. Ask the adviser to call you back).

Student finance and support

Tuition Fees

Higher Education institutions are able to charge new students in the Year 2009/10 up to a maximum of £3,225 a year.

Higher Education Maintenance Grants

These are available through local authorities to lower income households (family income of up to £50,000) and can be worth up to £2,906 a year if family income is below £25,000. Contact your local authority to find out more about how the calculation is made. Grants are paid directly to students in three instalments – one at the start of each term.

Bursaries

If a university is charging £3,225 per year in fees it **must** award a minimum of £319 to those in receipt of a full maintenance grant of £2,906. Check with the student advice service at the university of choice to find out what is available as some are more generous than others.

Scholarships

Some universities award scholarship's for particular courses, check with each individual university.

Student Loans

There are two types of student loan:

Loan for Tuition Fees – Loans **must** be set up through your Local Education Authority before going to university and are paid direct to the institution up to the amount of fee being charged. They are not means tested.

Loan for Living Costs (Maintenance) – The maximum value varies depending on where a student studies and lives: from £3,838 per year if living with parents, to £4,950 if living and studying outside of London and up to £6,928 if studying in London and living away from parents. The last 25% of the loan is means tested. The maximum loan entitlement is reduced by receipt of maintenance grant.

Repayment of these loans begins when the course finishes and only when the individual is earning over £15,000 per year and a repayment holiday of up to 5 years can be taken.

For further information consult www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance or call **0845 300 50 90**.

Applying for work

If your son/daughter is planning on going into employment following their advanced course, they need to start researching companies, and may even apply, in the January/February of the year they wish to start. Personal Advisers linked to their school/college or based at your local Connexions centre can help with job applications, CVs and interview techniques. Young people can also register for work at the Connexions centre, if they complete their course and do not have any job offers.

Apprenticeships

An Apprenticeship is a planned, training programme leading to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) which combines work-based training with education. Advanced Apprenticeships are suitable for students completing advanced courses, and train young people for supervisory and junior management positions.

An Apprentice works for an employer and receives a wage. For more information visit: www.apprenticeships.org.uk or phone **0800 015 0600** for a free information pack.

This information is available in alternative formats, please contact Central London Connexions on **020 7938 8080** or info@centrallondonconnexions.org.uk.

If you have any comments on this publication, email: info@centrallondonconnexions.org.uk.