

University preparation courses and summer schools

According to an article the Guardian newspaper published in 2012, if you attend a summer school, no matter what your academic or social background, your chances are greatly increased of getting into a better university. Not only that, but pupils from less advantaged backgrounds benefit the most as their confidence increases due to the extra preparation.

This compares to just over half pupils with a similar academic and social background who did not apply for summer school.

Why attend a summer school?

There are many positive reasons for attending a summer school or university preparation course.

It eases the transition from school to university

As the name suggests, it prepares you for the type of work and environment for university life. Many students coming straight from secondary school, used to the learning pace and familiarity of friends of their teenage years, can find it a real culture shock, socially and academically, when they go to university. As a result, this can affect their performance and some may think that university is not suited to them. Attending a summer school can ease this transition process, and make your next year easier.

Subject choice

You may want to study a subject that is not offered at your school (for example Film and TV studies), but you can study this at a summer school. Going to summer school will prepare you in advance for that subject, so that you will already be acquainted with it thereby accelerate your learning when you get to university. You will thus have an advantage of those on your course who did not attend summer school.

It looks good on your university application

Your application will undoubtedly stand out amongst hundreds of other applicants who did not attend summer school. By choosing to study subjects you are interested in during your summer, you are showing the university how serious and enthusiastic you are about studying this subject.

It improves your knowledge of a subject

If you are weak on a subject that you know you need to study as part of your course, such as Maths for example, taking this on as a summer school subject not only prepares you for the standard you will be expected to meet, but will improve your knowledge. This is also true on a subject that you are rusty on.

It introduces you to the university life and environment

You will develop your academic skills to the standard expected of you by the time you start your course, such as writing or presentation skills. While you are there, you will learn about the IT systems, the library, the campus and generally finding your way around (not just to the student union bar!). Not only that, but you will

learn how to make friends in a new environment, as you get to meet people from different parts of the country and different backgrounds from yours, thereby developing your social skills. Most summer schools hold recreational activities, such as sight seeing or games, to do just that.

So who can go to summer school?

Many universities offering a summer school usually have specific criteria for you to meet. For most, you need to be (either one or more criteria):

- in S5 or S6
- recommended by your teacher
- attending a [Focus West](#) school
- a college leaver
- waiting on an offer from university or be planning to apply
- attending as a condition of your UCAS offer.

All universities offering these schemes offer residential accommodation during your stay if you live too far away to travel every day.

If you are intending to apply to a university outside Scotland, you can also attend their summer school.

What to expect

- Some universities allow you to choose up to 2 subjects to study. Summer schools can last anything between 1-4 weeks depending on the subjects you are taking.
- You will attend sample lectures and get an introduction to the social side of university.
- It would normally run Monday to Friday for around 16-20 hours per week.
- For some, you may have to pay tuition fees, which can vary between £200 to £400. However, many pupils can get ILA funding to cover this from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.
- If you live beyond travelling distance you will be offered free accommodation in student halls of residence.
- You will be given a travel pass if you are travelling from your home.
- Depending on the institution, certain subjects may only be on offer, such as science, maths and engineering or the arts and media.