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So, you want to go to university? Our guide is here to help you think about important decisions and be informed about what is involved in going to university.

You can pick and choose what you want to read using the links in the index, or just browse through.

To begin with, it’s good to understand the differences between studying at school and university.

**TEACHING METHODS**

Rather than just referring to study periods as lessons, there are different types at university.

- Lectures – course content is delivered to a large group (bigger than school classes), with students taking notes on the subject.
- Tutorials – these are small groups, with in-depth analysis and interaction between lecturer and students on a specific topic.

Depending on the course you study, you may also take part in practical workshops or field visits.

**INDEPENDENT STUDY**

There is structured learning at university, teaching you the basics of a subject, but you are expected to do much more independent study than at school. This involves reading and researching to fill out your knowledge.

Academic staff won’t prompt you to do this, so you need to be self-motivated. Tutors are there to support you though if you need help.

**TIME MANAGEMENT**

In line with the independent study, you take more responsibility for managing your time and your course work. You must be aware of deadlines and stick to them, otherwise this could affect your grades. Tutors won’t constantly remind you when work is due, but they are there to help if you have any issues.

**UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE**

This is very different from your experience at school, in an exciting way.

- It is a more adult environment.
- You’ll meet a diverse range of people from different countries and cultures.
- You’ll feel more independent.
- You’ll learn different life skills, such as money management.
- There are more opportunities to try something new, with lots of clubs and societies to join.

Any big life changes can be daunting at first. It does take a while to settle in, but everyone starting university feels nervous, so you’re not alone.

**UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT**

This is very different to school. Even if you go to a large school, university is much bigger, with more people and larger campuses. Sometimes more than one campus.

There will be bigger and more facilities available than at school – IT centres, specialist training areas such as NHS simulation wards and fully equipped laboratories, plus sports centres, cafes, bars and arts facilities.
Whether you are planning on going to college or university, you should be aware of the main benefits and things you need to consider – it pays to be prepared!

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STAYING ON IN EDUCATION?**

- Better career or pay prospects – formal qualifications can lead to jobs in higher paid professions, for example, engineering, health and medicine and law.
- Greater independence - you can learn to make your own decisions and start taking responsibility for your own life, especially if you live away from home.
- Gaining new and important life skills - communication, technical, social and analytical skills that enhance both your personal and working life.
- Self-discovery - you might learn new things about yourself on the way, such as a passion for student politics or natural leadership ability.
- Good social life - you can meet interesting people, form new and lasting friendships, try new activities and visit new places.
- Daily variety - with different classes and lectures to attend, and learning about different subjects at different levels, you can enjoy a varied experience before settling into a specific career.

**WHAT DO YOU NEED TO CONSIDER?**

**The cost of studying**
If eligible, the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) will pay your tuition fees (if studying in Scotland) and you may be eligible for a bursary and other allowances. However, particularly if you are planning on studying away from home, you will likely need to take out a student loan to cover your living costs, including accommodation. Think about how much this could amount to over the course of your studies. Many students have a part time job to help with costs.

**Long-term commitment**
You need to be sure that you have the enthusiasm and drive to commit to further study, which could be from one to four years (sometimes longer), depending on the course. When doing your research, find out how much study time is involved in a course – not just in terms of attendance, but work you’ll need to do outside of the classroom.

**Being responsible for your own time**
You’ll need to be disciplined with your time management as there will be deadlines to meet, lessons/lectures to attend and you may need to juggle this with a part time job. You also need time for a social life, so you have to find the right balance, otherwise you could fall behind with your studies.
Choosing what to study at university is a big decision, unless you have a definite career in mind, for example medicine or dentistry. There’s a lot of choice, and many subjects you may not have considered at university level. Even within areas like business or engineering, there are many courses to choose from. Consider the following before choosing what to study at university.

Remember these tips
• Speak to teachers, parents or a careers adviser to get their feedback.
• Take your time to figure out what you want to achieve career-wise.
• Research universities and courses.
• Don’t stress – there is plenty of help and support!

Although you need a specific work-related degree to get into some careers, there are many graduate-entry jobs you can get into with a degree in any subject.

Many university courses permit you to study a number of different subjects in your first year, allowing you to delay your choice of specialism until the second year. Arts, Science and Social Sciences degree courses are particularly flexible.

There is also the option of studying a combined degree. For example, you could study languages with law, or geography with chemistry.

CAN YOU CHOOSE A COURSE THAT KEEPS YOUR CAREER OPTIONS OPEN?

There are many different types of courses on offer at university. It could be a mainly academic based subject such as social sciences, or subjects with practical elements such as music or nursing. If you are unsure which would be best for you, try the CareerMatch and CourseMatch quizzes in Planit. These will give you suggestions based on your interests. You can also explore the UCAS subject guides.

WHAT ARE YOU GOOD AT?

Studying a subject that you regularly get good grades in is an excellent starting point. Remember that when you move onto university, you’ll be studying at a more advanced level, so you may find it difficult if the course includes a subject you struggle with.

WHAT SUBJECTS WOULD MOTIVATE YOU TO STUDY FOR AT LEAST FOUR YEARS OF STUDY?

Even if you are good at a subject, you still have to be interested in it, because you will be committing to at least four more years of study. However, don’t rule out a subject if you find bits of it boring – that’s normal, and something that all students and professionals alike learn to deal with.

WHICH COURSES WILL MAKE THE BEST USE OF YOUR INTERESTS, ABILITIES AND STRENGTHS?

In addition to your school subjects, have a think about yourself in terms of what you like to do, your skills and personal qualities. These aspects include things like communication and analytical skills, patience and confidence, plus what you enjoy doing in your free time. If you need some help to work these out, have a go at the interactive tools in the ‘My Profile’ section of the Planit Portfolio.

WHAT TYPE OF COURSE WILL HELP YOU TO ACHIEVE YOUR CAREER GOALS?

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• Take your time to figure out what you want to achieve career-wise.
• Research universities and courses.
• Don’t stress – there is plenty of help and support!
Choosing Where to Study

With thousands of courses to choose from, choosing the right university can be difficult. Each institution differs in how and what they teach on each subject. Depending on where you live and if you’re willing to live away from home, you may have one local university or several to choose from.

Firstly, you should research which universities offer the subject you want to study. You can use the Planit website, which lists all the full time courses in Scotland, as well as the UCAS Search Tool.

Make sure to compare the courses, as subjects and course content will vary, as will the structure and teaching methods. Some universities offer specific courses with industrial experience, or more academic courses so it’s important to look at each in detail.

Once you have decided which universities you are interested in, take a look at their websites to get as much information as you can. This will tell you about the institution’s history, student life, facilities and student and staff numbers. This will give you a good idea of whether you would like it there or not. Many universities also offer a virtual campus tour on their website.

Open Days

If you can, get along to open days and tour the campus and facilities. This will give you a feel of the place and the chance to talk to students and lecturers. Having the opportunity to speak to current students will give you an insight into how well organised the course is, the quality of the teaching and what the lecturers are like. You may have to book a place to attend. These events are popular so try and book early. You can find out more from the Making the Most of Open Days section in this guide as well as a list of open days under Upcoming Events on Planit. There is more information on open days on page 8.

Location

Wherever you are going to study, there are some things you need to consider, such as transport links to the campus. If you are moving away from home, you’ll need to think about accommodation and living costs.

Reputation

You should also explore the reputation of the universities you are considering. Some institutions are renowned for having excellent links with industry and big employers, which is good for making contacts with potential employers. Others are better known for their academic reputation.

You should also look at the success rates of students at the university by taking a look at employment rates after graduation. These statistics are likely to be advertised on the university’s website.
CHOOSING WHERE TO STUDY

FACILITIES
The facilities available are also something you should consider when choosing a university. Particularly if you are studying a subject with practical elements, you’ll want to consider the availability of specialist equipment, such as medical training or engineering facilities. Other important facilities include access to IT equipment, library and student support services.

TASTER COURSES AND SUMMER SCHOOLS
Many universities offer short taster courses which give you the chance to get an idea of student life. Some are aimed at people who have no previous knowledge or family history of university. Others are designed to give students an insight into a particular subject or industry. These courses are a fantastic way to get some experience of what it’s like to study at university. These tend to be very popular so be sure to book early to avoid disappointment!

ACCOMMODATION
If you are planning to study away from home, one of the deciding factors will be the cost of student or privately rented accommodation and the cost of living in the locations you are considering. Accommodation can vary from place to place and each institution can provide details of the types available. Take a look at your chosen university’s website for advice on the costs of living and budgeting.

Many universities offer distance learning courses that you can study from home, with some occasional, or no required on-campus attendance.

The facilities available are also something you should consider when choosing a university. Particularly if you are studying a subject with practical elements, you’ll want to consider the availability of specialist equipment, such as medical training or engineering facilities. Other important facilities include access to IT equipment, library and student support services.

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Choosing the Most of Open Days

Open days are really useful in helping you to choose a place of study. They are a great opportunity to visit the different institutions you are interested in and find out what life would be like there.

You will likely attend a few open days so you can compare institutions and see which one you think fits best. Have a look at prospectuses and websites to see which places teach your subject. Make a list of places you’d like to visit and then check to see when open days are happening and whether you need to book a place. For help deciding where and what to study have a look at the ‘Choosing where to study’ and ‘Choosing what to study’ sections.

Some open days are subject area specific so make sure you pick the right open day for your chosen course. Open days are usually advertised on college and university websites, but you can also find them on the upcoming events calendar on Planit.

Plan Ahead

Once you’ve decided which open days you want to attend, take a more in-depth look at each institution and what is happening during the open day. Have a look at their prospectus, website and social media. Some institutions now have apps for their open days, with information like maps and timetables.

Make Sure That You:

- read up on where the college or university is – especially if you’re considering moving away from home
- take a look at any timetables for the open day as there might be tours and presentations
- make a note of anything you want to see as well as the times and venues
- make a list of any questions you have – this could be about the course, the institution, the facilities or even the town or city
- plan your journey and arrive in plenty of time to make sure you get the chance to see and do everything you want to.

Top Tips

If you get the opportunity, try talking to current students. You can find out what it’s like studying at the college/university, what the facilities are like and what the course is like.

You should also talk to tutors or lecturers as this will give you the chance to find out as much as you can about the course and the people who teach it.

Find out about the student union and any clubs or societies available – you might want to get involved in something outside your studies. Make sure to explore the campus, either with an organised tour or by yourself.

If studying at the institution will mean moving away from home, make sure that as well as exploring the campus you also explore the town or city. You could be living there for at least 3 years so you need to make sure you like it.
You might decide you don’t want to study full time, or you may be in a situation that makes full time study difficult. This could be lack of financial support, health issues or care commitments. Here are some alternative options.

**PART TIME STUDY**
Most colleges and universities offer part time study options alongside their full time programmes. These can range from anything up to 16 hours per week, depending on the course. You could attend classes during the day or evening. This means you have better access to tutors, can attend lectures at a suitable time and use the institution’s facilities, such as the library and IT suite.

**OPEN LEARNING**
If attending classes at the same time each week does not suit you, open learning could be an alternative. There are two main options:

- **Flexible Learning**
  This gives you the ability to choose where, when and how you learn, meaning you can study around other commitments, and go at your own pace.

- **Distance Learning**
  This would mean studying mostly at home via an online portal. You will be able to contact tutors by phone or email and you may occasionally have meetings or seminars to attend.

A number of institutions also offer courses online. This is done through an online virtual learning environment (VLE) provided by the institution, so you need access to a computer and the internet. You will get access to materials and tutor support. You can also get in contact with other students through chat rooms and discussion boards.

Taking an online learning course allows you to learn at a pace that suits you. For further information contact individual colleges and universities.

Open learning is not always easy. You need to be organised, self-motivated and good at managing your time.

**WHO PROVIDES OPEN LEARNING COURSES?**

The Open University (OU) is the largest university for part time higher education in the UK.

You would study part time, mainly from home with full tutor support. You don’t need formal entry requirements for most undergraduate courses. You can study a single course or work towards a Certificate, Diploma, BA/BSc degree, higher degree or professional qualification.

The Open University offers around 200 qualifications in a wide range of subjects, including business, health and social care, information technology and computing, social sciences, humanities, science and technology. They also offer short, pre-entry introductory courses known as Access modules.

Depending on how many hours of learning you do, you may be eligible for a part time fee grant from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

They also have over 900 free courses available on their learning website OpenLearn. The courses cover a wide variety of subjects from business to languages.

Students with an HNC or HND can progress to OU degree-level study. The OU gives students credit points for their previous HNC/D qualifications. This process of credit transfer can help you get a degree in less time than it would normally take.

For more information, visit the OU website.
Choosing

STUDYING ABROAD

Studying in another country appeals to many students for a variety of reasons, the main ones being learning a new language, gaining more independence and meeting different people. Another good reason is knowing it can make your CV stand out to prospective employers.

INDEPENDENTLY ARRANGED STUDY PLACEMENTS

You don’t need to go through an official exchange programme if you want to study abroad. For example, you might like the idea of a longer stay, and studying the whole degree abroad. This has its advantages in that you have more control over choosing the place you study at, course content and your length of stay. However independent study abroad means lots of discipline and funding your own studies and expenses – including medical insurance. You will have to either take out a loan or secure a scholarship from your chosen institution or from home. You may have to find a part time job when you are there, however some countries may not allow students to work off campus, even part time.

THE TURING SCHEME

Since September 2021, students are able to apply to work and study across the world through the Turing Scheme. The scheme replaced the Erasmus+ programme, which the UK is no longer participating in since leaving the European Union in 2020.

The scheme provides funding for those undertaking education and training in the UK to go on study or work placements across the world. You can choose from over 150 destination countries and territories around the world. Here are some of the main points regarding the new scheme for HE students.

• You should apply through your university. They will be able to tell you what funding is available, which can vary depending on the type of placement you do and the country you visit.
  • You will not need to pay additional tuition fees, as it is expected that the partner university abroad will waive fees for the placement.
  • Placements may last between four weeks and twelve months.
  • Students from disadvantaged backgrounds can receive additional financial support.
  • Students with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can also apply for additional funding to cover up to 100% of costs directly related to their special requirements.

Speak to your university and visit the Turing Scheme website.

Students of all subject areas can take part in these schemes. Subjects offered range from engineering to the history of art. However, you will need to check with your academic department which universities abroad are participating.

Take a look at the following useful links

StudyAbroad
Global Graduates
British Council
Prospects
The Complete University Guide
The Fulbright Commission

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Take a look at the following useful links

StudyAbroad
Global Graduates
British Council
Prospects
The Complete University Guide
The Fulbright Commission
If you intend to go to university, or other higher education institution in the UK, you apply through UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

The UCAS website has lots of information and guidance on how to use the online application system, called Apply. There are a number of video guides to help.

Here are some important dates for 2024 entry, along with a brief outline of the application process.

16 May 2023
UCAS Apply for undergraduate courses opens, so you can begin to make choices and start filling in your application.

5 September 2023
You can start submitting your application.

16 October 2023
If you’re applying for Oxford or Cambridge universities and most courses in medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, apply to UCAS by 6:00pm on 16 October 2023.

31 January 2024
For the majority of courses apply to UCAS by 6:00pm on 31 January 2024. Always check course details for the correct closing date. Applications received after this date may not be considered and some popular courses may not have places after that date. Check with individual institutions.

28 February 2024
Extra 2024 opens - If all your decisions are in and you didn’t get any offers, or you want to decline those you have, you can apply to more choices for free with Extra.

30 June 2024
Deadline for late applications before the Clearing system begins. Applications received after this date are entered into Clearing.

5 July 2024
The Clearing system opens and you can search for and choose courses. Contact institutions to discuss your application before you add your choices to Track.

25 September 2024
If you haven’t already made an application to UCAS, this is the last date that you can submit one to go into Clearing.

21 October 2024
Clearing vacancy search system closes; you can still use Track to add Clearing choices but contact institutions to discuss course places.
Applying & Getting In

USING APPLY
You can use Apply anywhere with internet access and you do not have to complete the form in one sitting. The following sections should be completed.

REGISTRATION
Register to use the system – add some personal details, get a username, create a password and establish your security questions. Your school, college or centre will give you a buzzword before you register; this links your application to the school or college and allows staff to add your reference.

PERSONAL DETAILS
This includes your name and address, recorded through the registration process. You complete the funding and sponsorship options, your residential status, indicate if you have any special needs or disabilities and any criminal convictions and then nominate someone to act for you if you will be away during the application period.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Provide details about your ethnic origin, national identity, any summer school/taster courses you attended, parental education and occupational background. Three new equality questions are now included which are used for statistical reports but it is not compulsory to provide this information.

CHOICES
Insert up to five course choices or four if applying for medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or veterinary science courses – plus one other subject. Note that you can only apply for one course at either the University of Cambridge or the University of Oxford.

FINANCE
Complete this section if you plan to apply for student finance and you would like a reminder about when to apply. If you agree, UCAS share this information with the student finance companies.

EDUCATION
Provide details of schools you have attended since you were 11, where you are currently studying and what qualifications you have – do not send certificates. You will also need to know your Scottish Candidate Number.

DECLARATION
Provide confirmation that you’ve completed the form accurately and honestly and agree for UCAS to share the information with HE institutions and your school.

PERSONAL STATEMENT
This is your chance to explain why you should get a place on the course – the UCAS website provides a lot of guidance on writing your personal statement and there are some tips in the ‘Writing your personal statement’ section of this guide.

EMPLOYMENT
Provide information on any full time or part time jobs you’ve had.

PAY/SEND
The application fee for 2024 entry is £27.50. This is a one-off application fee.

REFERENCE
One of your teachers will add this to back up your application.

FULL INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE ON THE UCAS WEBSITE.
Conservatoires are higher education institutions that specialise in the teaching of music, dance and drama; there are nine in the UK, one of which is the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

For entry to any of the nine conservatoires listed below apply through the online system, UCAS Conservatoires Apply. You can apply to up to six conservatoires at one time. The application fee for 2023 entry is £27, regardless of whether you apply for one course or six.

There are also audition fees, which vary depending on the conservatoire. You may have to pay these at the same time as your application fee. Visit the UCAS Conservatoires website for more information.

12 July 2023
UCAS Conservatoires Apply for undergraduate courses opens, so you can start making choices and filling in your application.

2 October 2023
This is the deadline for ‘on-time’ applications for music courses. If you want to apply after this date you must check with the conservatoire directly if they have any places left.

Dance, drama, musical theatre and production courses may have different deadlines – check with the conservatoire.

31 January 2024
This is the deadline date for most undergraduate dance, drama or musical theatre courses.

If you miss the deadline for your course, you must ask the conservatories whether they have any places before applying.

For information about audition dates, visit the conservatoires’ websites or contact them directly.

When UCAS receives your application, it sends you a welcome email that lists your choices. Use your personal ID (confirmed in the welcome email), username and password (that you used to make your application) to view your application on UCAS Conservatoires Track, the system that allows you to see its progress.
The purpose of the personal statement is to show course providers why you want to study a course and what makes you a great student.

You should aim to highlight your skills, knowledge, achievements and experience and link them to the course you want to study. Places are competitive, so you are trying to persuade the admissions tutor to offer you a place.

**Plan Your Statement**

Firstly, you should find out when you need to complete your UCAS application. The UCAS closing date for 2024 entry is 31 January 2024 (16 October 2023 for medicine, veterinary medicine and veterinary science) but your school or college will have a deadline date for forms to be completed.

Give yourself plenty of time to prepare and write your statement. Make a list of the information you want to include. Don’t focus on the length at first, it is important to get your ideas down on paper. UCAS has the following tools to help:

- The Personal Statement Mind Map
- Personal Statement Worksheet
- Personal Statement Builder

Do make sure the final statement is your own work because UCAS will check this with similarity software.

**Your Course Choice**

Explain why you’re applying for the course you’ve selected. Highlight the reasons why the subjects interest you and include examples which demonstrate you understand what’s involved in the course.

**Why Should A University Choose You?**

Think about your strengths academically. What do your interests say about you? Are you creative, reliable, practical or ambitious? Writing about yourself is not something you do often so you will complete a few versions before you are happy with it.

Also think about your skills, work experience, hobbies and achievements. Use these to demonstrate your interest in the courses you’re applying for and to explain why you’re a strong candidate.

Remember!

- It is one personal statement for all courses so do not mention universities by name. Try to select similar courses. If your choices are varied then write about common skills and experience like problem solving and communication.
- Write a draft and ask your friends, family or teachers to read it. They might think of other information to include.
- You can enter up to 4,000 characters (including spaces) or 47 lines of texts (including blank lines). You cannot use italics, bold, underlining, tables or bullet points.
- Make sure to check spelling, grammar and punctuation. Ask someone you trust to check it again. Remember you are competing for a place against other applicants and your use of English and grammar should be at a standard appropriate for entry to higher education.
- When you are satisfied with your statement, copy and paste it into the online system.
Applying & Getting In

HOW TO APPLY
To apply for dental or medical school you need to apply through UCAS by the 16 October of the year before entry. (This is an earlier deadline than most other undergraduate courses). You can apply to a maximum of four courses in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or veterinary science. A fifth course with a different deadline can be applied for later.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
Getting into medical courses is highly competitive, so the entry criteria are very high. Potential candidates are required to have an average of 5 good Highers in one sitting, usually in the region of AAAAB, but more realistically accept those holding AAAAA. Some universities offer widening access entry, which requires slightly lower grades, so if applicants meet the criteria, they can apply by that route. To find out more about entry requirements for individual institutions, see the Planit list of courses for Dentistry and Medicine and Surgery.

NON-ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
Securing a place on a course requires more than academic ability. Competition is high and universities are looking for candidates who can match the academic requirements, but also demonstrate they are involved in a variety of other activities.
Your personal statement should include details about your:
• commitment to the dental or medical profession
• awareness of the qualities and commitment required of a dentist or doctor
• involvement in teamwork.

OPEN DAYS
Contact admissions departments as admissions criteria varies between schools. Make sure to visit the institution to ensure you are making a suitable choice. Explore the location, the school facilities and talk to staff and current students. It’s also important to attend any open days, which will tell you a lot more about that particular school. Take a look at the ‘Upcoming Events Calendar’ on Planit, which has details of open days and other useful events.

PERSONAL STATEMENT
A good personal statement will demonstrate what you think a dentist’s or doctor’s core qualities are and how you display these. There are certain activities that you can get involved in which you can use in your personal statement. Examples include:
• gaining an appreciation of the concerns of patients
• undertaking paid or unpaid work of a caring nature
• undertaking work which benefits school colleagues
• getting involved in caring/charity groups
• gaining personal experience of using ‘people skills’ in social/work situations
• getting experience of working in a team
• gaining experience in managing your time effectively.

WORK EXPERIENCE
Voluntary work, shadowing in a hospital or with a dentist or GP is desirable, but universities recognise that opportunities vary across the country. Some voluntary work in a caring environment would be beneficial. You should try to develop personal qualities such as communication, teamwork and flexibility while on work placement, as these will be assessed at interview. Rather than listing all the work experience you have undertaken, try and describe what you have learned about a medical career and its implications.

ADMISSION TESTS
As part of the selection process to all Scottish dental and medical school, applicants are required to pass an admission test. See the Admission Tests for Dental and Medical School section of this guide for more details.

USEFUL WEBSITES
NHS Medical Careers – everything you need to know about considering a role in the NHS.
NHS Scotland Careers – information on careers in NHS Scotland and what you need to get in.
British Medical Association – advice about careers in medicine.
British Dental Association – advice on careers in dentistry.

It’s also a good idea to show you have developed your sense of social awareness and demonstrate you can shoulder responsibilities, such as getting involved with school life, mentoring, attending clubs, buddy and anti-bullying campaigns or undertaking paid part-time work.
In Scotland, admission tests are used by some universities as part of the application process for medical and dentistry degrees.

**UNIVERSITY CLINICAL APTITUDE TEST (UCAT)**

UCAT is used by universities to assist with choosing applicants for medical and dentistry programmes. The focus is not on academic ability, but on the other aptitudes required to succeed in these fields of work, such as mental ability and professionalism. It is also intended to promote fairness in the selection process, by widening the participation of under-represented social groups within these professions.

You need to check with the universities you have applied to whether you are required to sit the UCAT.

**THE TEST**

You would take the test at a Pearson VUE Test Centre.

The different components of the test are:

- **verbal reasoning** - critically evaluate written information
- **quantitative reasoning** - critically evaluate information in numerical form
- **abstract reasoning** - use convergent and divergent thinking to infer relationships from information
- **decision making** - make sound decisions and judgements using complex information
- **situational judgement** - understand real world situations and identify critical factors and behaviour in dealing with them.

Each section is in multiple choice format and is separately timed. You can try practice tests on the UCAT website.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

If you do need to sit the test, be aware of the key dates. For those sitting the test in 2023 for course entry in 2024, the following dates have been published:

- **registration** for the test - open from 20 June 2023
- **deadline** for booking the test - 21 September 2023
- **sitting** the test - 10 July to 28 September 2023
- **UCAS application** deadline date - 16 October 2023.

The fee for the 2023 test is £70 if taken in the UK and £115 if taken outside the UK.

**RESULTS**

Once you have sat the test you are given a copy of the result to take away with you. This is just for your information and you do not need to send it to your chosen universities. Once the UCAS application deadline passes, UCAT liaise with UCAS and your chosen universities and pass the results to them in the first week of November.

For more detailed information, including information on applying for a bursary to cover the test fee, how to reschedule your test and help preparing, visit the UCAT website.

**SCOTTISH GRADUATE ENTRY MEDICAL PROGRAMME (ScotGEM)**

This course is offered by the University of Dundee and University of St Andrews. The application requirements include:

- academic qualifications
- personal statement and reference
- the Graduate Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT).

**GAMSAT**

The purpose of GAMSAT is to assess the ability to understand and analyse written and graphically presented material. It also measures the ability to reason, make logical conclusions and form judgements.

The test takes place over a full day. It is split into 3 sections and consists of 5.25 hours testing time, 21 minutes of reading time and 1 hour of break time.

Section 1 is reasoning in humanities and social sciences; section 2 is written communication and section 3 is reasoning in biological and physical sciences.

The test is offered twice a year, in March and September. The fee is £271.

You receive an email when your results are ready and these are sent directly to your universities of choice.

For detailed information, see the GAMSAT website.
In Scotland, admissions tests are used by some universities as part of the application process for law degrees. The information below outlines what these tests are and where you can find more details.

**THE LAW NATIONAL APTITUDE TEST (LNAT)**

Currently, the only university in Scotland that uses this test is the University of Glasgow. This test isn’t concerned with your academic knowledge. Rather, it assesses your aptitude for the skills you need to study law.

**TEST FORMAT**

The LNAT consists of two sections. Section A is a multiple-choice exam, which involves reading passages of text and answering questions based on your understanding of them. You have 95 minutes for this section and you are given a mark out of 42. This is referred to as your LNAT score.

Section B involves writing an essay from a list of three subjects. You are given 40 minutes for this. This section isn’t marked by the test centre, so doesn’t contribute to your score, but it is used by the university to see your ability to construct persuasive arguments and draw conclusions.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

You need to sit the LNAT in the year you are applying to the university and can only sit the test once in that period. The important dates for 2023-24 cycle, for entry to university in autumn 2024 are:

- **registration and booking** the test – 1 August 2023 to 20 January 2024
- **UCAS application** deadline – 31 January 2024
- **sitting** the test – 1 September 2023 to 25 January 2024.

There are other deadlines up to 25 July 2024 for late applications, but these usually only apply to international applicants. The fee for sitting the test is £75.

**RESULTS**

If you sit the test on or before 25 January 2024, you should receive your results in mid-February. For dates after that, you will receive your results in mid-August. Starting on 21 October 2023, the first batch of results (for tests taken between 1 September and 20 October) are released to universities. Following that date, your LNAT score and essay are made available to your chosen universities within 24 hours of you completing the test. They see your score before you do.

For more detailed information, including information on applying for a bursary to cover the test fee and rescheduling your test, visit the LNAT website.
When UCAS receives your application, it sends you a welcome email that lists your choices.

Use your personal ID (confirmed in the welcome email) and password (which you created when you registered) to view your application on Track, the system that allows you to see its progress. UCAS gives your chosen institutions access to your application form – they do not know where else you have applied.

**OFFERS**

Each institution then decides whether to offer you a place. They may ask you to achieve certain exam results – a conditional offer, or you could be given an unconditional offer, which isn’t dependent on your results.

Provided your application is in by the January deadline in the year you wish to enter, the institutions you applied to will reply from March onwards and by early May at the latest.

When you have heard from all your institutions, choose two offers to hold until you get your exam results. Choose one as your first choice - firm acceptance, and a second as a back-up choice – insurance acceptance. If you accept an unconditional offer, you cannot hold any other offers.

Use Track to reply to offers. Make sure you meet the deadlines shown on the UCAS website.

**GAP YEAR**

If you intend to take a gap year, check that the university or college will accept a deferred entry application. There is an option on the UCAS application form for this. You must still meet the entry requirements as stated when you apply, even if starting the following year.

**UCAS EXTRA**

If you have no offers, you can apply for other courses through this service, which opens in February each year. You apply for one course at a time, through Track.

You need a Clearing Number to apply – you will find it through Track. There is lots of guidance on the UCAS website.

Look through the courses, find one that interests you and contact the university or college to ask if they will accept you. The admissions tutor you speak to will tell you what to do next.

When you get your exam results in August, be prepared to act fast with clearing applications. The Clearing system closes mid October. If you get a place through Clearing, UCAS will send you an official letter confirming it.

**CLEARING**

When the exam results come out in August, if you still have no offers, or do not get the required exam results, apply for other courses through Clearing. The UCAS website lists courses with places.
Some universities use interviews as part of their selection process. You’ll receive an invitation for interview either in UCAS Track or by letter from the university.

Interviews can last from 15 minutes to an hour. They can vary from subject to subject for example, for Maths or a science subject you may be asked to solve a problem or demonstrate your understanding of a topic. For some courses, a portfolio of your work will be considered.

As part of the interview, you may be asked to:
• write an essay
• deliver a presentation
• take a test
• take part in a group discussion
• answer an unexpected question to see how you react.

Find out beforehand what is involved, so that you can prepare. Ask if there are sample tests available. Always take paper copies of your presentation as backup in case of any technical problems on the day.

**WHAT DO I NEED TO PREPARE?**

The key to a successful interview is to prepare well.

Research the course and university - the more you know about the course and the university the more enthusiastic and well informed you’ll appear.

Think about your reasons for applying for that course, at that university - list your skills, personal qualities, previous employment/relevant experience and future career aims and think how best to demonstrate these at the interview.

Read your UCAS application, particularly the personal statement - the content of your statement will form part of the interview so you need to be ready to discuss and expand on it.

Be in the know - show you keep up to date with the latest news in your subject area as they might ask your views.

Practise - arrange a mock interview with a teacher or careers adviser.

**Interview tips**

Dress appropriately - your school uniform or smart clothes shows you are treating the interview seriously.

Good body language - smile, speak clearly, sit up, be alert and make eye contact.

Ask questions - prepare questions to ask, to demonstrate your interest in the course and university.

Know where you’re going - check out the location of the interview and how to get there in advance.
WHAT WILL I BE ASKED?

• Why you want to do a degree?
• Why this particular course and what aspects of it interest you most?
• Why you want to study at this university?
• Why you would be a good student on the course?
• How will you manage your time, fitting in study around everything else in your life?
• What are your short-term and long-term goals?
• How you think you will adapt to the difference between school and university?

If your interview is for a vocational course such as medicine, vet medicine, nursing, architecture, law, teacher training or social work you’ll likely need to discuss relevant work experience, or visits/work shadowing to show your understanding and commitment to this career.

Be prepared to talk about yourself – your interests, the courses or work you are doing now. For example, what you enjoy most about the subjects/course you’re currently studying.

SHOULD I TAKE ANYTHING TO THE INTERVIEW?

For some courses such as art and design, the university will usually ask for a portfolio of your work. They will give you detailed advice on the required content of the portfolio. If you have interesting and relevant evidence such as reports from your work experience or previous coursework, take it with you to the interview.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Shortly after the interview make notes of the questions you were asked and your answers. Reflect on what you answered well and what could be improved. Carry out further research on questions you found difficult to answer. This will help if you have other interviews to attend.

UCAS Track will inform you of the outcome of the interview. This may result in a conditional offer, which is dependent on your exam results.

Further help

Use the UCAS website for further help about attending a university interview.
Summer schools and taster courses are offered by most universities, giving you a chance to experience academic and social life at university. You also get a first hand insight into the subjects you’re interested in.

**WHAT’S INVOLVED?**

These opportunities vary in length – they could be a one-day course, take place over a weekend or up to two weeks (sometimes longer).

There are opportunities open to everyone and some aimed at pupils applying for widening access entry.

Content and activities will vary between universities, but generally you will take part in lectures, discussions and tutorials. This allows you to get an insight into the subjects, meet academic staff and experience all the facilities.

You will also find out about other aspects of student life, such as the clubs or societies you could join, cultural and sports activities and, in some cases, what it’s like to live away from home in university accommodation.

Some summer schools and taster courses have fees. Check university websites and speak to advisers to find out if you can get financial help to cover these.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?**

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

- You can gain knowledge in your subject of interest and decide if it’s for you.
- You can find out if you like the university and what it has to offer.
- It can help prepare you for studying at higher education level.
- You can include your experience on your UCAS application.
- It can prepare you for moving from school to university.
- You get to meet other like-minded students in a new environment.

**WHO CAN GO TO SUMMER SCHOOL?**

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

- in S5 or S6
- recommended by your teacher

- meet widening access criteria
- 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.

Check with individual universities for application requirements and deadlines.
Taking a gap year can provide the chance to travel, learn new skills or languages, do something charitable and enhance your CV. It can help you to improve confidence, maturity and give you a taste of independence.

It’s important to be clear about why you want to take a gap year and decide if it’s right for you.

WHY TAKE A GAP YEAR?
Before deciding whether to take a gap year, think about the reasons why you want to do it. It’s important to have goals in mind about what you want to achieve so that you can get the most out of it. This may be:
• gaining valuable ‘real’ work experience
• learning a language
• experiencing new countries and cultures
• learning new skills, such as diving or teaching English as a foreign language
• learning more about yourself as a person
• earning money
• taking time to reflect and focus on your next steps.
This is important as a wasted year won’t look good on university applications.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Once you have decided the reasons you want to take a gap year, think about what you want to do.
• Voluntary work, at home or abroad – you can gain valuable experience and support a worthy cause.
• Paid employment, at home or abroad – get experience and get paid.
• An internship or work placement – you could get experience in the career that you are aiming for.
• Travel – learn about diverse cultures, learn a new language, develop independent living skills.

After you graduate, the experience of having had a worthwhile year out can impress employers. If you work in industry, the company may sponsor you during your degree and employ you after you graduate. Your work contacts can help open doors.

WHO CAN HELP?
There are lots of websites with advice and organisations who arrange gap years. Here are some get you started.
• Year Out Group
• BUNAC
• Volunteer Scotland
• International Citizen Service

DO YOUR RESEARCH
If you decide to spend your gap year abroad, there are many gap year providers you can use. Make sure that you choose a reputable one. Research providers carefully to make sure that your year out is well planned, and that you will receive appropriate support and assistance throughout your programme.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website has guidance on gap years, volunteering overseas and adventure travelling.

FINANCING A GAP YEAR
In most cases, if you plan a gap year abroad, you will have to fund it yourself. You might get some help from charitable institutions and grant-making trusts. Make a list of everything that you need to cover, such as flights, visas, accommodation and living costs, then produce a realistic budget that you can stick to. Consider the living costs of the countries you intend to visit. This will help you work out how much you need to save.

DEFERRING YOUR YEAR OF ENTRY
If you intend to defer entry to university for a year, you should apply in the normal way but indicate clearly on your UCAS form that you wish to enter in the following year. Give details of how you intend to spend the year.
Check that your institution of choice will accept a deferred application. Some departments do not accept deferred applications.
A properly structured gap year can improve your chances of being accepted at university. The personal qualities and skills highlighted by a year-out experience can make a difference when universities are trying to distinguish amongst applicants.
The UCAS website has more information.
Higher education courses are those at HNC level (SCQF Level 7) through to degree level (SCQF Level 9-10).

Student finance is complex and depends on a range of factors including the type of course you are applying for, your age and personal circumstances.

Here we’ve outlined funding options that could be available to you.

**TUITION FEES**

If you meet certain residency requirements, the Scottish Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) will pay your tuition fees. You must apply to them each year to have your fees paid and all deadline dates are on the SAAS website.

If you live in Scotland but go to a university in England, Wales or Northern Ireland you may have to pay up to £9,250 towards your fees each year. You can take out a student loan to pay the fees and pay it back after you graduate.

Visit the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) website for full details.

**INDEPENDENT STUDENTS’ BURSARY**

If you don’t meet the criteria for a Young Students’ Bursary then you may be eligible for an Independent Students’ Bursary. The amount you receive depends on your household income. If it is £20,999 or less a year, you are entitled to £1,000. If your income is more than that then you are not eligible, but can still apply for a student loan of up to £8,000, depending on your income.

Specific details are available on the SAAS website.

**YOUNG STUDENTS’ BURSARY**

You’re a ‘young student’ if at the start of your course you’re under 25, are not married, in a civil partnership or living with a partner and you’ve not been supporting yourself financially for three years. You should have no dependent children.

You don’t have to pay back the Young Students’ Bursary. How much you get depends on your household income. You must be studying in Scotland.

- If your household income is £20,999 a year or less, you should get the maximum bursary of £2,000 a year.
- If your household income is between £21,000 and £23,999 a year you will receive £1,125 a year.
- If your household income is between £24,000 and £33,999 a year you will receive £500 a year.
- If your household income is over £34,000 you won’t be eligible for the bursary. You will be dependent on a student loan and contributions from your parents or guardians.

Apply online through SAAS as soon as you have an unconditional place on a course.

**CARE EXPERIENCED STUDENTS’ BURSARY**

If you have ever been looked after by a UK local authority, which started before age 18, then you could be eligible for a bursary of £9,000. This is not means tested.

Specific details are available on the SAAS website at www.saas.gov.uk.
FUNDING  full  time  higher  EDUCATION

PARAMEDIC, NURSING  AND MIDWIFERY BURSARY
You should apply online for a Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (PNMSB) through the SAAS website. Apply as soon as you have a place on a course. You get £10,000 for the first three years and £7,500 in your fourth year. You also get an extra Initial Expenses Allowance of £60 in your first year of study and may also be eligible for other allowances, depending on your circumstances. Contact SAAS at 0300 555 0505 for information and advice.

STUDENT LOANS
A student loan is to help with your day-to-day living costs, such as accommodation and food.
For 2023-2024 the maximum loan available for someone studying a course in Scotland that lasts 30 weeks and who lives at their parents’ home is:
• £7,000 for household income of up to £33,999 a year
• £6,000 for household income of £34,000 or more a year.
For independent students, the amounts are:
• £8,000 for household income of up to £25,999 a year
• £7,500 for household income of between £24,000 and £33,999 a year
• £6,000 for household income of £34,000 or more a year.
You should apply to the SAAS as early as you can before the closing dates. You don’t repay your loan until the April after you have graduated or left your course. You start paying when you’re earning over £27,600 a year.

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MEDICINE
You will get the same support as most other students. If you are studying medicine in the rest of the UK you can apply to have your tuition fees paid from the fifth year of study. (Medicine students at the University of St Andrews pay for their fourth year if studying outside Scotland, but can reapply for funding years 5 and 6.)

DENTAL STUDENT SUPPORT GRANT
If you are enrolled for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) at the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee or Glasgow, you can apply for the Dental Student Support Grant (DSSG). This provides £4,000 each year for those whose annual household income is less than £34,000 a year. You must commit to working in NHS Dentistry in Scotland after graduation. Full information is available on the MyGov website.

PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION (PGDE) STUDENTS
If you are studying for a PGDE, you will receive the same funding as an undergraduate student regardless of any previous postgraduate study.
SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS, ALLOWANCES AND OTHER SOURCES

These allowances may be available if you need extra financial help because of your circumstances. You don’t have to pay them back. Except for the Disabled Students’ Allowance, how much you get depends on your circumstances. Contact the relevant organisation for information on the following funding:

- **Adult Dependent’s Grant** - [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).
- **Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)** - [SAAS website](https://www.sas.ac.uk).
- **Care Experienced Accommodation Grant** - [SAAS website](https://www.sas.ac.uk).
- ** Estranged Students’ Grant** - [SAAS website](https://www.sas.ac.uk).

TRAVELLING EXPENSES

- **Travelling Expenses** - your university student support team.
- **Discretionary funds** - your university student support team.
- **Childcare funds** - your university student support team.
- **Universal Credit** - [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

WORKING WHILE STUDYING

Many students work part time while studying. You may need to pay tax depending on how much you earn. Employers use the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) process to deduct tax and National Insurance (NI) from your earnings. You will only pay NI Contributions (NICs) if you earn more than £242 a week.

If you need any advice or guidance on finding a job, see our [Job Seeking Skills Modules on Planit](https://www.planit.ac.uk). It’s important to read the relevant information carefully. You normally need to apply early in the year before you start your course, and at least by the time you apply through UCAS.

This can be a great way to bring in extra money and get valuable work experience. SAAS do not consider any income from scholarships or sponsorships, so it doesn’t affect your eligibility for other funding.

You can find information on scholarships and bursaries on individual university websites or visit the [Scholarship Hub website](https://www.scholarshiphub.ac.uk), where you can register for free and search what is available.
If you plan to study part time (up to 16 hours a week) you will usually have to pay course tuition fees, but there are exceptions, such as:

- you are on a low income
- you are claiming certain benefits
- you have a disability
- you are an asylum seeker or refugee who wants to take a non-advanced course or a course in English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL).

If you have to pay, there are several ways to fund part time study.

### PART TIME FEE GRANT (PTFG)

If you want to study a part time higher education course (HNC up to degree level) at a college, university or private training provider and your income is £25,000 a year or less you might qualify for a grant towards your tuition fees. The amount depends on the qualification you are studying and the number of credits it is worth. Contact your learning provider to find out if they are approved to offer the grant by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). You can find more information on the [SAAS website](#).

### DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

These funds are run by individual institutions on a discretionary basis, so apply directly to your college or university. The funds are limited. How much you get depends on your circumstances.

### UNIVERSAL CREDIT

You may be able to claim Universal Credit if you are studying part time. You’ll need to meet other eligibility criteria, like being available for work.

### WORKING WHILE STUDYING

You may need to work part time while studying. If so, you might need to pay tax depending on how much you earn. Employers use the Paye As You Earn (PAYE) process to deduct tax and National Insurance (NI) from your earnings. You will only pay NI Contributions (NICS) if you earn more than £242 a week.

If you need any advice or guidance on finding a job, see our [Job Seeking Skills Modules on Planit](#).

Contact the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644 for more information or see the [GOV.UK website](#).

Useful links

There is more information on the [Student Information Scotland website](#).
Doing an internship or work experience has many benefits. Some employers prefer work experience and in certain career areas it is expected. Whichever career you are aiming for, by doing this you could:

- Gain an insight into working in that industry or that particular role.
- Learn the skills, knowledge and training you need to get into a specific career.
- Find out if a job ‘fits’, or if you want to work in that industry, or career.
- Make important contacts who could help you into a job when you graduate.
- Add to your CV and stand out from the crowd.
- Earn some money on the way, though some internship roles are unpaid.

Work experience and internships come in many shapes and forms; it can be a year in the industry as part of an on-course placement or it could be a summer spent working in a business. Some employers, such as the BBC and finance companies, run recruitment schemes offering work experience and internships, although they are often highly competitive.

**INTERNSHIPS**

Internships are formal placements working in a particular role, where you learn the right skills in the right job. They are usually offered by large companies or organisations and can last anywhere between a week and a year.

There are two types - student and graduate. Student internships usually take place in the second last year of your studies. These can be paid or unpaid, although often on an organised placement, you should receive the National Minimum Wage.

In some careers, such as media and marketing, you are expected to take on an internship, and in many cases, this can lead on to a graduate job. Getting a position is like applying for a job; filling out an application form and attending an interview. Competition for internships can be fierce, so apply early and be prepared.

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

This is usually a shorter-term placement, with the exception of degrees that include a sandwich placement (in between years of study), which can last anything between three days to a month or more. Work experience is beneficial as it helps you assess what skills you already have and which ones you need to gain for your preferred line of work.

Here are some of the more common types of experience you can get:

- Work placements while at school can last up to one week, or could follow a pattern such as half a day a week for the school year. You attend a place of business to get a taste of the world of work and gain some insight into the career that you might be interested in. You can even get accreditation for your work placement, for example the SQA Work Placement Unit (SCQF Levels 3 - 6).
- Work placements as part of a higher education course may last a part of a semester or it may be a year spent in industry, built in as part of your course (known as a sandwich placement). This is normally between your second and final year.
- Unpaid or voluntary work provides a bit more freedom of choice, since an employer, especially a small company who usually can’t afford a paid placement, will offer free experience for a short spell. You can approach an employer directly as placements are usually only advertised when required.
- Temporary or temp work, which can range from working in a supermarket to admin work, can be valuable work experience even if it is not related to your studies. As well as earning money, you will learn valuable transferable skills that employers want, which could also be indirectly relevant to your chosen career. Registering with a recruitment agency is the best way to find temporary work.
- Work shadowing usually lasts only a few days. You’re not actually doing any work, but as the name suggests, you watch a professional work to see what a typical day in their job entails. You should research and look for the person you would prefer to shadow for maximum benefit.

**WHAT SHOULD I THINK ABOUT?**

Before arranging a work experience placement remember to think about:

- How much time do you want to spend?
- Where do you want to work?
- What do you want to learn?
- What skills do you want to develop?
- Gain an insight into working in that industry or that particular role.
- Learn the skills, knowledge and training you need to work in that industry, or career.
- Make important contacts who could help you into a job when you graduate.
- Add to your CV and stand out from the crowd.
- Earn some money on the way, though some internship roles are unpaid.