



# Parents & Supporters Higher Education Guide



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# Welcome

## Who we are

The University of Reading is a global, research-intensive university with student experience at the heart of what we do. Your young person will be taught by passionate academics whose teaching is informed by the latest research. Our degree courses are designed to give your young person more choice in what they study and how they study it. They'll join an inclusive, welcoming student environment that actively encourages a strong student voice. Here, they can make a real impact. More importantly, we'll help equip your young person to make an even greater impact in the world beyond graduation. Our fantastic teaching, research and study facilities are nestled within 130 hectares of stunning parkland.

## About this guide

Navigating the higher education system can be daunting for lots of parents and supporters, especially those whose young person is the first in the family to attend university. This guide gives you an overview of key topics to enable you to support your young person through the process of applying to university. We have included links to useful webpages and other resources throughout this guide, to ensure you are fully prepared and kept up to date.



# Higher Education journey

## Timeline and key dates

### Year 12 or Year 1 of College

#### May UCAS Registration Opens

Your young person can sign up to the UCAS Hub and start collating their research! They can save open day dates to their calendar, read up on different courses and compare university facilities to form a list of potential universities and their courses.

#### June University Open Days

Many universities hold their open days in June, so come along and visit some on their list. Ask questions, explore the campus, and meet students from their course of interest to get a feel for if the university might be right for them.

### Year 13 or Year 2 of College

#### September UCAS Applications Open

Now they can start filling in their application. There are multiple sections they will need to complete but this doesn't need to be done all at once.

#### October University Open Days

If they didn't get a chance to visit in the summer, many universities hold open days again at this time of year.

#### UCAS deadline

**15 October** is the deadline for applying to Oxford/Cambridge and most medicine, dentistry, and veterinary science courses.

**"The support that Reading provides really helped me settle into all aspects of university, from writing my first academic assignment to embracing the University's social side"**

Tom, recent graduate

#### January UCAS deadline for most other courses

#### February Student Finance Applications Open

Your young person can submit their student finance application online. Make sure they complete this on time so their finance is available for the start of the course.

#### February/March University Visit Days

They may be invited to attend a visit day or applicant day at this time. These are a fantastic way to find out even more about the course, as well as meet the lecturers and other students.

#### May/June Offers received and decisions due

By May they should have received responses from the universities they applied to. They now need to reply to these offers through UCAS Hub and choose a firm choice university and insurance.

#### July Clearing Opens

Clearing opens for anyone without a university offer.

#### August A Level/BTEC Results Published

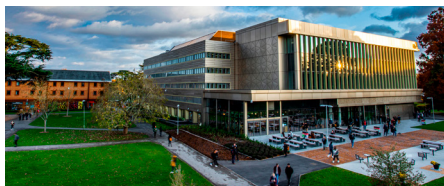
Once they have received their results their conditional offer may be confirmed. Alternatively, they can use Clearing to find a place with the results they have achieved.



# Doing the research



## Things to consider



### City or Campus?

Is everything together in one location, or spread out across the city?



### Facilities

Labs, simulation wards, art studios, post-production suites, theatres, libraries, computer suites – what is it that's important for their course? Ask about any specialist equipment.



### Accommodation

Do they want to be catered or self-catered? Is an en-suite essential to them or would they be happy to share a bathroom? Remember to ask where the accommodation is and how far it is from the campus.



### Student experience

What is it that they're looking for? Great nightlife, a particular sport or society? Talk to ambassadors and ask what's on offer and what they enjoy most.



### Assessment style

What assessment style suits them best? Are they great at exams or do they prefer a mixture of practical assessment, essays, and coursework?

**"A very positive experience. You have set the bar high for future open days we are attending"**

Student who attended our Open Day July 2021



### Location

Do they want to be in a rural town, a city, somewhere near the coast? There are universities all over the UK!



### Teaching hours

Would they prefer lots of contact with lecturers and teachers, or do they prefer to work more independently?



### Additional opportunities

What else would they like from their university experience? Are there opportunities to study abroad or gain some industry experience through a placement year?

## Why attend an Open Day?

Open Days are a brilliant opportunity for you and your young person to hear from current students about their experiences of university. Often, they shed light on an important part of the university experience your young person hadn't even considered.

There's no better way for them to understand what they'll be studying than to hear it from the lecturers themselves. Not only will they find out about the syllabus, but they'll be able to ask questions and get a feel for the teaching style.

It's also a chance to explore the campus, see the facilities and visit the town or city the university is situated in. An important aspect, particularly if they'll be moving away from home to study.

**"The student representatives were so confident and approachable; this is what I want for my daughter. In fact, all speakers struck the right tone, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and rather fun!"**

Parent/Supporter who attended our Open Day July 2021





# The application process

## Personal Statements

The personal statement is your young person's opportunity to tell the university about their skills and experiences and why they want to study a particular course or subject. It may be the first time they have had to write reflectively about themselves and if your young person is struggling with this, they are not alone. It is important to start early, to give them lots of time to write drafts and make edits before they submit their application.

The personal statement is only 4,000 characters or 47 lines so it is important they write a focused personal statement. Our Resource Hub has more top tips for your young person writing their personal statement here: [reading.ac.uk/resource-hub](https://reading.ac.uk/resource-hub)

UCAS have written a helpful guide of how to start a personal statement here: [ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement](https://ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement)

**"It was very informative, the handout is really helpful, thank you"**

Young person who attended our UCAS application process webinar May 2021



## Introduction

- It is important for your young person to explain why they want to study this course?
- Your young person should talk about relevant experiences which have increased their enthusiasm for the course.
- Avoid overused openers such as "From a young age..." or "I have always wanted to study..."

## Main body of text

- The middle paragraphs need to show evidence to support your young person's interest in the course.
- Examples of work experience, extracurricular activities, volunteering and relevant skills should be included.
- Remember the ABC's method, where A= Activity, B= Benefit, C= Course. Your young person needs to link every example to why this experience has benefited them for studying their chosen course.

## Conclusion

- Do not bring any new examples into the conclusion.
- Your young person should summarise why they are a suitable candidate for this course.
- Aim to leave the reader with a clear understanding of why they want to study the course they've chosen.

## Apply through UCAS

Students create a UCAS Hub account to begin their application. This gives them everything they need in one place. They can explore their options, compare courses and save their favourites as they go. Your young person can sign up to an account at: [accounts.ucas.com/account/login](https://accounts.ucas.com/account/login).

The application fee is £22 if they're applying to just one course, or £26.50 for multiple courses, and for late applications sent after 30 June.

## Types of offers

### Unconditional offer

An unconditional offer is made if a young person has already met the entry requirements or based off an interview/portfolio.

If your young person makes an unconditional offer their firm choice, then they will be accepted onto the course, regardless of what grades they get in the summer.

### Conditional offer

A conditional offer will be based on your young person achieving certain exam results.

If your person makes a conditional offer their firm choice, the university will update their status when they have their exam results in August.

### Contextual offer

Contextual offers recognise that academic potential is not always indicated in grades and considers how personal circumstances may have impacted achievement.

Universities will publish the eligibility criteria for receiving a contextual offer on their websites.

At the University of Reading if you meet the eligibility criteria, you will receive a contextual offer that is typically two grades lower than published grade range. For example, ABB could become BBC.

Full information about contextual offers at the University of Reading can be found at: [reading.ac.uk/what-offer-will-i-get](https://reading.ac.uk/what-offer-will-i-get).

**"All sessions we have attended have been really helpful. Reading have impressed us in how they support students and parents"**

Parent/Supporter who attended our Clearing webinar July 2021

UNDERGRADUATE ENTRY

Find a course >

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Each course has specific entry criteria. For some you will need to have a certain level of knowledge in a subject before you begin the degree - this is called a subject requirement. Entry onto all courses is dependent on you reaching a particular standard in your education and achieving certain exam grades.

Most courses will list a typical offer with their course information. Entry to all courses at the University of Reading is competitive, so even if you hold or are predicted to achieve grades matching our typical offer, you are not guaranteed an offer of a place on a degree course.

# How to pay for university

There are two main costs when going to university. The **tuition fee cost** and the **living costs**. The maximum UK universities can charge for home students for 2023/24 entry is £9,250 per year. Living costs include things like accommodation, food, travel, books, social life, etc.

## What student financial support can my young person get?

Eligible\* students can apply for a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan from the government. Students who reside in England will apply through Student Finance England online at [gov.uk/student-finance](https://gov.uk/student-finance). If your young person resides in one of the devolved nations, they will apply to the respective student finance authority for that nation. Visit the pages below as the facts and figures do differ slightly:

- Student Finance Wales [studentfinancewales.co.uk](https://studentfinancewales.co.uk)
- Student Finance Northern Ireland [studentfinancenir.co.uk](https://studentfinancenir.co.uk)
- Student Awards Agency Scotland [saas.gov.uk](https://saas.gov.uk)

[\\*gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies](https://gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies)



## Tuition fee loans explained

A tuition fee loan will cover the full cost of your young person's course per year, so if their course costs £9,250 per year they'll be awarded £9,250 per year. This money is paid directly to their university when they enrol, so it will never be in their bank account – they can't accidentally spend it!

## Maintenance loans explained

The maintenance loan will be paid directly to your young person in 3 instalments throughout the year, so it's a good idea for them to learn how to budget before they start university. The amount of maintenance loan they get will depend on:

- Household income
- Where they live and study whilst at university

Encourage your young person to use the **Student Finance Calculator\*** to see the amount they might be eligible for.

For more information, take a look at [gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance/household-income](https://gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance/household-income)

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

## How do repayments work?

For students starting their studies in 2023, repayments will start from the April after they graduate or leave university, but only when their income is over £25,000 a year. Repayments are based on income; not how much is borrowed.

The tuition loan and maintenance loan are combined to create one loan balance. Graduates repay 9% of their income over £25,000 and deductions are made from their pay through the HMRC tax system. If their income falls to £25,000 or below, their repayments would stop. Any outstanding loan balance will be written off 40 years after entering repayment.

## How does my young person apply?

Your young person will apply for student finance online. It's easy to apply and only takes around 30 minutes. There are a few things they'll need to have ready before they fill out their application.

They would typically need:

- Their valid UK passport details
- Their National Insurance number
- Their bank account details
- University and course details – they just need to use their preferred choice, there's no need to wait for a confirmed place.

As a parent/supporter, you may be asked to provide details of your household income and will be emailed a link to create your own account 24 hours after your young person has submitted their application.

You can find information on supporting a student finance application at [gov.uk/support-child-or-partners-student-finance-application](https://gov.uk/support-child-or-partners-student-finance-application)

## Additional funding

Some students may be eligible for additional funding if they:

- Have a child or adult who is dependent on them
- Have a disability, long-term health condition, mental-health condition, or specific learning difficulty
- Study overseas as part of their UK based course or take a clinical placement
- Are leaving local authority care.

Additional evidence may be required. Visit [gov.uk/student-finance](https://gov.uk/student-finance) for more information and to see how much your young person might be eligible for.

## University of Reading bursaries and scholarships

The University of Reading offers a range of bursaries and scholarships for Home, EU and International students.

The Reading Bursary is means-tested, awarded to eligible students. Students who meet the eligibility criteria will be awarded a bursary of up to £1,100. Additionally, The University of Reading has a Care Experience and Estrangement bursary.

[reading.ac.uk/essentials/Money\\_matters/Bursaries-and-Awards](https://reading.ac.uk/essentials/Money_matters/Bursaries-and-Awards).

You can view our full range of bursaries and scholarships at [reading.ac.uk/fees-and-funding](https://reading.ac.uk/fees-and-funding).

All information on this page refers to current arrangements for UK students starting university in 2023/24. The repayment system, including the threshold, repayment window, and interest has changed for new borrowers entering university from 2023/24 onwards. Read about the changes and keep up-to-date by visiting [gov.uk/student-finance](https://gov.uk/student-finance).



# Where to live at university

## Types of accommodation

Moving to university is an exciting time but it can be daunting knowing where to start and what options are available. Your young person has 3 main living choices when attending university:

- Stay living at home and commute to university
- Move into private student accommodation, such as a shared student house
- Move into university accommodation.

The majority of students attending university tend to move into university halls in their first year. This is a great place to make friends and experience all that university has to offer. Each university in the UK has different accommodation to offer, so we recommend taking a look at the websites of all universities your young person is interested in and viewing them in-person at Open Days too.

## University of Reading accommodation

Our accommodation is safe, secure, located on-campus (or close to) and feature all-inclusive prices – utility bills, Wi-Fi and basic contents insurance are all included. All halls have dedicated security patrols and CCTV and our 24/7 Halls Hotline ensures any halls-related issues are dealt with quickly and efficiently.

We have a variety of accommodation options to suit different preferences and budgets, including catered, self-catered, ensuite rooms, shared bathroom, and more! You can take virtual tours of some of our halls and view the up-to-date pricing figures on our website [reading.ac.uk/accommodation](https://reading.ac.uk/accommodation).

**"I love living in halls – it provides such a community between students, with great links to welfare and support when needed"**

Alex Curran, Bsc Psychology



## Room types and prices per week (2022/23)



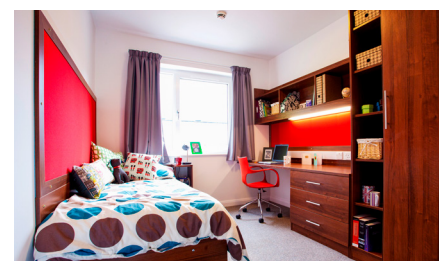
### Room with shared bathroom

**£151.78** St Patrick's Hall  
**£164.01** Sherfield Hall  
**£167.66** Wantage Hall



### En-suite room

**£182.70** Benyon and St George's Halls  
**£182.70** Sherfield Hall  
**£187.25** Greenow and McCombie House  
**£228.55** Dunsden Crescent



### Premium room with shared bathroom

**£164.01** Bridges Hall



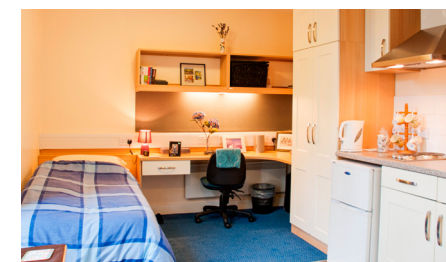
### Premium en-suite room

**£213.99** Benyon and Childs Halls  
**£213.99** Mackinder and Stenton Halls  
**£213.99** Bridges Hall



### Townhouse

**£179.97** Bridges Townhouse  
**£188.02** Stenton Townhouse



### Studio

**£234.78** St George's Hall  
**£234.78** Wessex Hall

# Results and Clearing

## Getting results

Your young person will receive their exam results from their school or college. They will also be able to log in to UCAS Hub account to see if their university place is confirmed.

## Clearing

If your young person doesn't get the grades they were expecting, has declined their offers or applied after 30 June, they can apply for a place at university through Clearing.

- We recommend your young person calls the university to speak to them before adding them as a choice on their application.
- Clearing officially opens in July, but as students must have all their confirmed qualification results to use it, the majority of eligible students will apply through Clearing after results day in August.

## Plan B

Sometimes things do not go as planned, so your young person having some alternative plans can be useful.

- If your young person didn't receive any offers or declined any offers they did have, they can apply for another course through UCAS Extra. Extra opens in February and closes in July.
- Your young person may decide to take a year out and re-apply for university the following year. They could spend this year retaking exams to improve their grades, or gain work experience.

## Top tips



Your young person should be in the country for results day.



Make sure your young person knows their UCAS Hub log in details so they can check on their offers.



If your young person doesn't get the grades they hoped for, it is important they do not panic, there is lots of support available and they can contact universities about places available through Clearing.

**"The clearing experience was simple and easy. I simply called up any university I was interested in and checked if they had any spaces available."**

James, current undergraduate student

# What support is available?

Your young person will have access to a wide range of support whilst at university. Students can access different support services depending on their individual needs, such as counselling, academic development, financial support, and careers advice. We recommend discussing student support services early on with your young person so they can access the support they need in a timely manner if needed.

**"I felt very supported, particularly throughout my first year. Academic tutors help you feel less alone when you have a problem, academic or otherwise."**

Kira, LLB Law

## Disability Advisory Service

The Disability Advisory Service offers advice and guidance to students with any disability, mental health condition, or specific learning disability. With your young person's permission, the team can liaise with appropriate staff to coordinate support for them. For more information, please email [disability@reading.ac.uk](mailto:disability@reading.ac.uk).

## Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy offers support to all students, and acts as a signposting service for all faiths, with information about places of worship, both on campus and in Reading. It organises a range of activities, for example mindfulness workshops, walks around our beautiful Whiteknights campus, and breadmaking classes. Visit [reading.ac.uk/chaplaincy](http://reading.ac.uk/chaplaincy).

## Library and Digital Technology Services

All courses have a dedicated academic liaison librarian to help your young person find the resources they need. There are also Study Advice and Maths Support teams to support your young person throughout their studies, and our IT Team can help with any technical queries they may have. Visit [reading.ac.uk/library](http://reading.ac.uk/library).

## Student Financial Support

From fees and bursaries to financial issues, effective budgeting and more, our Student Financial Support Team can help. Visit our Money Matters page for advice on all things money-related, including the free online Blackbullion course that prepares your young person for managing their finances at [reading.ac.uk/money](http://reading.ac.uk/money).

## Counselling and Wellbeing Service

Our dedicated Counselling & Wellbeing Team is here to support your young person through one-to-one meetings, group therapy sessions and other online resources. Visit [reading.ac.uk/counselling](http://reading.ac.uk/counselling).



# Glossary

## Academic Tutor

The first point of contact for many students for academic and pastoral support. They regularly check in with the student and can offer advice on academic and support services. This is usually a University Lecturer.

## Admission team

The department who receive and consider a university application.

## Conditional offer

A conditional offer of a place on a course means there are one or more conditions that need to be met.

## Foundation year

A one-year course taken in preparation for an undergraduate degree.

## Fresher week

One or two weeks of events put on by the Students' Union to help students settle in, orientate around the campus, and network.

## Halls of Residence or Halls

University-provided student accommodation.

## Interview

Some universities may wish to talk to an applicant before granting a place on a course.

## Joint honours degree

A degree comprised of two different subjects.

## Module

In most universities, degree programmes are divided into modules, which cover different topics. Some modules are obligatory and some are optional which you choose from a list provided by the department.

## Personal statement

A one-page essay about why an applicant should be considered for a course.

## Portfolio

Some subjects such as Architecture, Drama and Art may wish to see an applicant's previous work before granting a place on a course.

## Post-offer visit day/ open day

While it can have a variety of names, this is an additional opportunity to visit a university post-application.

## Sandwich year

An additional work-placement year taken during a degree. This can be beneficial in gaining crucial experience before graduation.

## Student loan

Taken up from the Student Loan Company to cover living costs and tuition fees.

## Student services

A central point of support students can turn to when needing advice on any aspect of university life including mental health, financial advice, legal advice and career support.

## Students' Union (SU)

An organisation independent of the university, led by and for students, where students can join sports clubs and special interest societies, socialise, get involved in charities and much more.

## Term

In many universities the academic year is divided into 3 terms, and each term may be 8–12 weeks long. Some universities have just 2 semesters.

## UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service through which a person can apply to university

# Further resources

## GET IN TOUCH

Contact us at:  
[reading.ac.uk/question](https://reading.ac.uk/question)

You can email our Student Financial Support Team at:  
[studentfunding@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentfunding@reading.ac.uk)

## Become part of our parent and supporter network

Sign-up to our parents and supporters' newsletter to get more information about university and the application process to help you support your young person. We also offer regular webinars on key topics for parents and supporters, see [reading.ac.uk/virtual-events](https://reading.ac.uk/virtual-events) for more details and to sign-up to the newsletter.

## Join our free online course

Delivered through FutureLearn, we offer a free online course called 'A Parent and Supporter's Guide to University Entry', designed to help you support your young person in the university application process. You can start the course at any time, but staff from the University also moderate at set points during the year so you can ask any questions you may have.

## View our courses

[reading.ac.uk](https://reading.ac.uk)

## Chat to a current student

Your young person can use our UniBuddy service to chat to current students. Our student ambassadors are here to help with any question at [reading.ac.uk/chat](https://reading.ac.uk/chat)

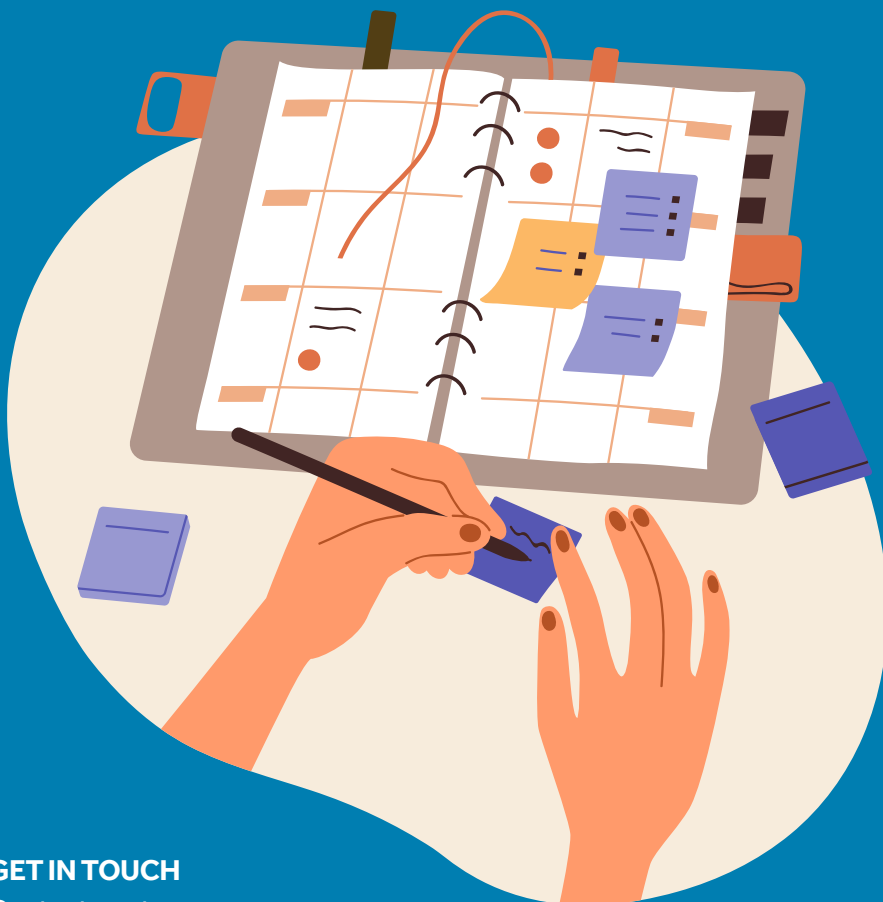
## Explore our upcoming events

For details of our next Open Days and other opportunities to see our campus, visit [reading.ac.uk/opendays](https://reading.ac.uk/opendays). You can also visit [reading.ac.uk/virtual-events](https://reading.ac.uk/virtual-events) to find more information on the webinars and virtual events we have taking place. Your young person may also wish to sign up to our Resources Hub at [reading.ac.uk/resource-hub](https://reading.ac.uk/resource-hub), to access our full catalogue of past content and videos. including subject-specific taster lectures, student finance advice and student-led webinars on life at the University of Reading.

## Other links

The Student Room | [thestudentroom.co.uk/student-finance](https://thestudentroom.co.uk/student-finance)  
UCAS | [ucas.com](https://ucas.com) The Uni Guide [theuniguide.co.uk](https://theuniguide.co.uk)  
Guidance on contacting student finance | [gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-contacting-the-student-loans-company](https://gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-contacting-the-student-loans-company)





## GET IN TOUCH

Contact us at:

**[reading.ac.uk/question](https://reading.ac.uk/question)**

You can email our Student Financial  
Support Team at:

**[studentfunding@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentfunding@reading.ac.uk)**

Sign-up to our parents and  
supporters' newsletter and webinars  
at: **[reading.ac.uk/virtual-events](https://reading.ac.uk/virtual-events)**

This booklet was updated in June 2023, for the  
latest information please see our website.