

# Queen Mary, University of London

Advice and information for parents and carers



Queen Mary  
University of London





---

# Contents

At Queen Mary, we recognise that many parents have concerns regarding their son or daughter's transition to higher education, from worries about how their child will be supported and where they will live, to financial considerations – and whether a degree really does improve career prospects. The Education Liaison Office has produced this booklet in order to address these issues. We have a huge amount of experience of advising both students and their parents on a whole range of higher education-related topics, regularly visiting schools to give talks, and meeting thousands of students each year through these visits and attendance at UCAS conventions. We keep up to date with the issues that concern you and are happy to pass on our knowledge.

We hope you will find this booklet useful, but if you have any queries about higher education in general and Queen Mary in particular, please do not hesitate to contact the Office. Either email [education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk) call 020 7882 3064 or visit [www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/educationliaison](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/educationliaison)

Brigitte Burrows  
Head of Education Liaison and Access

<b>Why choose Queen Mary?</b>	4
<b>Why study at the University of London?</b>	6
<b>Support for students at Queen Mary</b>	8
<b>Accommodation at Queen Mary</b>	10
<b>What are the career advantages of a degree?</b>	12
<b>Student finance explained: fees, loans, grants and bursaries</b>	14
<b>Help your child to budget</b>	17
<b>Studying at home – help your child get the best out of university</b>	19
<b>Student-Parent case study: Karin and Sophie Kimber</b>	21
<b>Off to university...</b>	22
<b>What happens next?</b>	24
<b>Useful contacts and websites</b>	25

# Why choose Queen Mary?

Sending a child off to university can be a daunting prospect for many parents. However, you can rest assured that your son or daughter will be fully supported in a welcoming environment during their time at Queen Mary.

Here are just some of the reasons why Queen Mary is a great place for your child to study:

## The University of London

Queen Mary is the third largest University of London college, with around 15,000 students, and all Queen Mary graduates gain a University of London degree – recognised world-wide as a guarantee of quality.

## High-quality research

The vast majority of our academic staff also undertake research. This means that students will benefit from being taught by real experts in their subject, often doing cutting-edge research – whose enthusiasm and knowledge is guaranteed to rub off. Students get a real buzz from, for example, reading their tutor's comments on a news item in a national newspaper, or seeing them in a TV documentary.



---

## Teaching quality

At Queen Mary we take teaching very seriously. We use small group teaching and tutorials in many subject areas, and students' feedback is encouraged and acted upon. We also have an excellent modular scheme which allows students considerable flexibility to choose topics which interest them. The 2008 National Student Survey (which asks final year students their views on their university experience) confirms that the vast majority of our students are satisfied with the quality of their degree and of the College.

## Good career prospects

Our location between the City and Docklands gives our students a huge advantage in the job market, and many of our graduates go into financial careers such as investment banking, accountancy and management consultancy. The quality of Queen Mary graduates is well-known, and many blue-chip companies advertise their training places with us and visit the College to recruit students.

According to this year's *Sunday Times* league tables, Queen Mary's graduates have the seventh highest starting salaries in the UK.

## Accommodation

The new Westfield Student Village at the Mile End Campus adds a further 1,000 study bedrooms to the existing on-campus accommodation giving a total of over 2,000 rooms.

## Campus lifestyle

We are one of very few city-based campus universities, and the only one in central London, so students mix with people from many departments and never have to walk far. Your child will never be bored here! We have a vibrant student body who are able to take advantage of extensive sports, social and entertainment activities.

## Friendly community atmosphere

Everyone who visits Queen Mary is struck by our friendliness. Relations between staff and students are excellent, and the social life of the College is legendary. The Students' Union supports a big range of clubs and societies. Never underestimate the value of a healthy social life at university!



---

# Why study at the University of London?

You'll know that Queen Mary is part of the University of London, but what exactly does this mean for your child?

## Choice and reputation

With 4,500 courses to choose from in around 40 colleges and smaller institutes, virtually every degree subject you can think of can be studied somewhere in the University of London – from anthropology and ancient history to tropical diseases and zoology. The quality of the teaching and research at the colleges and institutes of the University is consistently high (check the league table scores in *The Times* or the *Guardian* online), and the University as a whole also has an outstanding international reputation.

## Career prospects

Employers know about the University of London and the calibre of its graduates. Wherever in the University your child studies, he or she will get a University of London degree, respected world-wide as the sign of a well-qualified graduate – giving your child a head start in their chosen career. Nearly half of all the University's graduates stay in the capital after completing their degrees, are highly sought after by top companies and organisations – and earn good salaries

## University of London Students' Union (ULU)

Based in Bloomsbury, ULU is one of the largest students' unions in the UK, representing all 150,000 students in the University. ULU campaigns on educational and regional issues such as student finance, fair trade and ethical employment. It supports a long list of clubs and societies, and publishes the London Student newspaper. They also run the Duck and Dive pub, the Gallery restaurant and a live music venue.

## Sports

For the more athletically inclined, Queen Mary now boasts a brand new industry leading gym, with two fitness studios, daily fitness classes and a ladies only section. QMotion Health and Fitness Centre is the place for your son or daughter to keep fit and have fun. But ULU also runs some very high quality sports facilities. Energy Base is open to all the University's students and membership includes use of the 60-station gym and 33-metre swimming pool, exercise classes and even beauty therapy treatments (at reasonable prices). Students can also take part in London-wide intercollegiate sports leagues or play for ULU itself. Recent ULU successes include top rankings in the British University Sports Association (BUSA) championships for the water polo and ice hockey teams, and other medals in sailing, karate and volleyball.



## Culture

Is your son or daughter a culture vulture? Good news: several of the University's Colleges house important museums and galleries. These include The Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art at SOAS, and the Petrie Museum of Archaeology at UCL. Many others also collaborate with cultural institutions like the British Museum, the British Library, the Natural History Museum, the V&A, the South Bank Centre, the Science Museum, the National Theatre, the National Film Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe and Tate Modern. Free (the magic word for students) lectures, concerts and events on a wide range of subjects are organised by all of the Colleges. Recent popular events at Queen Mary have included lectures by impressionist Rory Bremner (on 'The Art of Political Impersonation') Jon Snow, Channel 4 News anchor (on 'The Reporter as Witness'), and Andrew Marr (on 'Journalism and History')

## Libraries

If one library just isn't enough for your child, then you will be pleased to hear that they also have access to not only all the other Colleges' collections, via the Inter-Library Loan system, but also to the main University Library at Senate House in Bloomsbury. This is a fantastic resource, housing important special collections in a range of subjects including English literature, history, palaeography and manuscript studies and even magic! It's definitely worth joining.

---

# Support for students at Queen Mary

Although your son or daughter will obviously be treated as an adult once they start university, it is reassuring to know that he or she will be fully supported should any problems arise. At Queen Mary we take our students' welfare very seriously and pride ourselves on providing a real community atmosphere in which your child can flourish and make the best of the student experience. Most students have a trouble-free time at university, but just in case problems do arise, your child will have access to the following support:

## **Personal tutor**

This is a member of the teaching staff of your son or daughter's department, with whom they can discuss academic issues such as module choice, and any difficulties they might be having. They should meet with their personal tutor early in the first term and will usually keep the same tutor for their entire degree.

## **Advice and Counselling Service**

The Advice and Counselling Service at Queen Mary, University of London offers a range of free and confidential one-to-one professional services for students.

Our Welfare Advisers have specialist training allowing them to offer professional advice on a range of financial, practical and legal issues. These include: financial support and fee payment problems; disability benefits; extenuating circumstances affecting academic performance; NHS funding; housing rights; council tax; and more.

As well as helping students find solutions to problems, the Advice and Counselling service can also give advice on how to avoid problems before they happen. For example, students can be advised on budget-planning and can check that they are getting all the funding that they are entitled to.

Our counsellors and therapists are professionally qualified to offer support with emotional, personal and psychological concerns. Being a student can present personal and emotional challenges. Counselling can help people to understand difficult experiences, feelings and behaviours, even when they do not know exactly what the problem is.

The Advice and Counselling Service welcomes enquiries from prospective students. Your son or daughter can contact them on 020 7882 5175, or visit their website at [www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk)

## **Disability and Dyslexia Service**

The Disability and Dyslexia Service is very experienced in providing advice and guidance to students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, as well as providing support to students who may be coming to terms with a recent diagnosis of a disability or learning difficulty.

A wide range of students can make use of disability/dyslexia support at the College. Many students who do not necessarily consider themselves to be disabled are offered support and guidance, as well as students with short-term disabilities and those with dyslexia.

---

Most central resources are free to all students; students are not expected to pay for College services but funding is arranged from a variety of different sources.

Students with disabilities or dyslexia who are interested in studying at the College may contact the Disability and Dyslexia Service staff on 020 7882 2756 for an informal discussion about their support needs whilst studying, or email [disability@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:disability@qmul.ac.uk). Prospective students with sensory or mobility difficulties are invited to evaluate the College environment on a campus tour. Queen Mary, University of London, is a campus-based university; this makes it particularly attractive to students with disabilities.

### **Health Service**

Queen Mary's onsite Health Centre provides a number of medical services for its students including treatment for minor injuries and illnesses, immunisation and psychological counselling. It is open from 9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. During term time students can attend the on-site surgery to see a GP, a registered nurse or a health care assistant. Information about other health services such as dentists, opticians and family planning is also available at the Health Centre.

It is recommended that students register with the Health Service as soon as they arrive at College in their first term.

### **Careers Service**

As a parent, you are undoubtedly concerned about your child's career prospects. Queen Mary's Careers Service supports our students

through all aspects of career planning and job applications throughout their time at the College.

As well as offering the opportunity to talk to a Careers Adviser one to one, the Service runs a comprehensive Careers Information Library and organises a wide variety of on-campus events throughout the year: employer presentations; workshops and skills sessions; and our careers fairs.

In addition, we run an online Jobs Board giving students 24-hour access to details of part-time jobs, work experience opportunities, internships, vacation work and graduate jobs. This service is currently being extended to include international opportunities.

Queen Mary Careers Service is part of The Careers Group, University of London, the largest careers service in the country. This means that our students have access to major recruitment fairs and sector specific careers courses. The Careers team regularly visit employers to find out what they are looking for in new graduates, and spend time researching the graduate labour market on your child's behalf. In addition to their one-to-one and group work responsibilities, careers staff produce a wide range of targeted written materials for students to take away.

To find out more about all of our Careers Office services and how they can offer your child support during their time at Queen Mary, please visit: [www.careers.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.careers.qmul.ac.uk)

# Accommodation at Queen Mary

When picturing university student halls, it's not uncommon for parents to imagine old-fashioned, dark and damp rooms ranged along dimly-lit corridors. But not at Queen Mary! We can offer your child high-quality award-winning accommodation in our recently developed Westfield Student Village.

## Rooms

Our spacious **en-suite** rooms come complete with a self contained shower room, plenty of storage space and an under-desk fridge/freezer unit. En-suite flats typically comprise six rooms so students share a large kitchen with five others. **Non en-suite** rooms are equally spacious and feature plenty of storage areas as well as a sink. Students will be sharing a shower room and kitchen with only five others. For **both** types of rooms, Internet connection and daily communal-area cleaning are provided as standard.



## Eating and drinking

There is a variety of food outlets on campus.

**The Curve** is just one of several catering facilities where students can enjoy breakfast or lunch.

Situated in the Student Village, students can visit the sandwich deli bar, hot food counter or even our Coffee bar, where we proudly brew Starbucks coffee. There, they can enjoy a good meal or snack with friends. For a game of pool, a place to drink and space to relax away from their rooms, students can chill out at **World Marché**. Situated within the Village and offering great views of the Regent's Canal, World Marché is ideally located for students living in the Village.

**Bar Med** also provides a relaxed café environment offering coffee/tea and snacks as well as a substantial meals.

## Groceries

For all grocery requirements, students can visit the reasonably priced **Village Shop**. There are other food stores and supermarkets near the Campus.

## Laundry facilities

The village boasts three separate areas for laundry so Queen Mary students no longer have any excuses to send their dirty washing home for cleaning!



## Reception point and stewards

Plenty of support is available to all of those staying on campus. Each flat is overseen by a residences steward who is available 24 hours a day to provide any assistance that may be required. Furthermore, should a student's light bulb expire at 3am, don't worry, as the Village 24-hour manned reception is available to help.

All of this is just a few minutes' walk from the lecture theatres.

**Although we aim to accommodate as many requests as possible, due to high demand we cannot always guarantee room availability, especially if your child lives close enough to commute. However, we will always help students find alternative accommodation in the areas. To find out whether your son or daughter is eligible for a room on campus, or for any further information on our accommodation, please visit our Residences Office website at**

**[www.ccrs.qmul.ac.uk/residences](http://www.ccrs.qmul.ac.uk/residences)**

# What are the career advantages of a degree?

## Update on the graduate job market

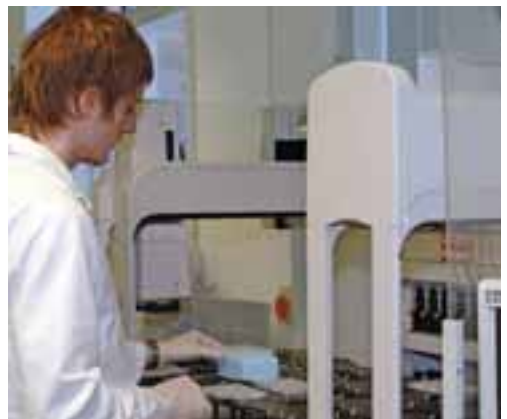
Investing in a degree is about far more than having a great social life at university: what will a degree do for your child's career? Will s/he get a job? Is it worth it financially?

Prospective students apply to university for a range of reasons: for some it's about sheer love of their subject; for others it's because their chosen career requires a degree – and for some people it's the social aspect that attracts them (they often call this 'personal growth', which sounds better to their parents!). Nowadays, though, most students will be thinking of what happens after they graduate. In other words: "Will I get that dream job and earn lots of money?" The good news is that, as well as giving your child endless opportunities to deepen their subject knowledge and meet large numbers of new people with whom socialising is more or less compulsory, getting a degree greatly improves his or her chances of landing the dream job.

## Will my child get a job?

It is obviously difficult to predict what the job market will be like in a few years' time, but to start with the basics, graduates are half as likely as the general population to be unemployed. We have a good idea of what the UK's graduates are doing six months after they graduate. This is because of something called 'Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education' – or the *First Destinations Survey*. It's possibly not a very accurate picture of what university graduates end up doing over their

working lives, as many people at that point are still planning their careers, or on a post-university Gap year (or just still recovering from their final exams). But it is still useful to know, for example, that only 6 per cent of 2006 graduates were unemployed the December after their courses finished (incidentally, this is the most recent year for which we know the figures). It's also quite interesting to see how many (around 14 per cent) go immediately onto another course, whether it's an academic course such as a Masters degree or PhD, or a training programme such as the Legal Practice Course for would-be lawyers, or the PGCE for teaching.



### **Interesting fact 1:**

Many employers offer their graduate recruits the chance to continue their study while working for them.

### **... and how much will they earn?**

Graduates are also likely to earn more during their career than someone who doesn't have a degree. In fact, statistics show that graduates can, over a lifetime, earn up to £150,000 more than someone who has only A Levels. On average, graduates earn 35 per cent more than non graduates according to Graduate Prospects, whose Prospects Directory advertises thousands of graduate jobs, salaries for 2008 graduates ranged from just under £15,000 to £39,000. In May 2008, the average was £24,048.

### **Why are graduates so in demand?**

All these impressive figures highlight a very important fact: employers like the skills that graduates bring to the workplace, and are willing to pay more for them. Most major multinational companies have excellent training schemes open only to graduates. However, most graduates actually join much smaller companies – firms that in the past rarely took on graduates, but have realised how beneficial they are for their businesses. Furthermore, a recent survey of companies found that the number of graduate vacancies looks set to increase for the foreseeable future.

### **What about the relevance of my child's degree?**

Obviously some jobs are going to need specific knowledge: trying to design a bridge without a civil engineering degree, for example, is a recipe for disaster (probably literally). However, over two-thirds of graduate job vacancies are open to all graduates: any subject is acceptable. Many employers just want Mr or Ms A Graduate, so whether your son or daughter studies English or economics, physics or politics, they will be able to apply for a large range of jobs. This is because employers value the transferable skills that students develop during their time at university: time-management; communication skills; problem-solving; team-working; presentation skills; IT skills. Many of these 'soft' skills, as they are sometimes called, are actually developed through getting involved with non-study activities like voluntary work – and having a healthy social life. Also, encourage your son or daughter to get as much work experience as possible before graduating.

**Interesting fact 2:** Graduates in science and technology subjects have the highest earning potential as their numeracy skills are in great demand.

A degree in itself may not guarantee employment, but there's no doubt that it will greatly improve your child's career prospects. It really is a great investment in their future.

# Student finance explained: fees, loans, grants and bursaries

Most parents worry about the costs associated with going to university. Fortunately, there is no requirement for students to pay tuition fees up-front or while studying (although they can do so if they wish). The overall support package available should cover essential living costs and universities also offer non-repayable bursaries. For full details of financial arrangements for students go to: [www.dcsf.gov.uk/studentsupport](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/studentsupport) [www.aimhigher.ac.uk/student\\_finance](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/student_finance)

## Tuition Fees

For most courses in 2009, full-time students will have to pay tuition fees of up to £3,225 per year of their course (university websites detail fees). This figure rises annually in line with inflation. However, students can choose to pay their fees after graduation by taking out a Student Loan for Fees from the Student Loans Company, which then pays the fees direct to the university.



## Student Loans for Fees

Student Loans for Fees are available to all, irrespective of household income. Responsibility for paying fees rests with the student – not with parents, unless you want to pay them. Students on nursing and para-medical courses such as physiotherapy and radiography (plus medics and dentists from the fifth year) may not have to pay fees and also receive NHS bursaries. Go to [www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs Careers.nhs.uk) for details.

## Student Loans for Maintenance

The main source of cash for living expenses is the Student Loan for Maintenance, again from the Student Loans Company. The amount a student can borrow is limited. For 2009/10, the maximum is £6,643 a year for those living in London, but away from the parental home; outside London it is £4,745 a year; and those living at home can borrow £3,673. 75 per cent of these amounts are available to everyone, but how much of the remaining 25 per cent they can obtain will depend on your household income.

## Repaying the Loans

Student loans for fees and maintenance are combined and income-related loan repayments start the April after graduation, through the tax system – but only if the graduate is earning £15,000 per year. If a graduate is earning less than £15,000 a year they won't pay anything; after that they pay nine per cent of their

income above £15,000. So, at £20,000 it will be £38 per month. If they never work, or never earn above £15,000 a year, they will never pay anything back; any debt outstanding after 25 years is written-off. They will also have the option (if they graduate from 2011 onwards) of a 'repayment holiday' of up to five years to give them some financial breathing space. The rate of interest charged is 'low and is linked to the Retail Price Index. Parents are not responsible for repaying their child's Student Loan!

## Additional sources of funding

### Maintenance Grant

Under the current student support arrangements there is also 'free' money available to students from lower income families, including a non-repayable Maintenance Grant to help with living costs. For 2009 entry, the maximum grant is £2,906 a year, where household income is under £25,000 a year. Where income is between £25,001 and £50,020 a partial grant is available. Up to £1,200 of the Maintenance Grant will be paid in substitution for part of the Student Loan for Maintenance.

Students can apply on-line for all forms of Government support from the Spring of the year they go to university by completing form PN1, which is available at [www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancedirect.co.uk)

An assessment of household income will determine how much of the Student Loan and Maintenance Grant they are entitled to.



### Disabled Students Allowances

Students with disabilities can also apply for these allowances, which are neither means-tested nor repayable.

### Queen Mary bursaries

Queen Mary offers income-assessed bursaries to help students with the cost of studying. Bursaries are paid in each academic year and they are non-repayable. Students do not need to make a special application for a bursary but they do need to agree to sharing their information with the universities they have applied to on their PN1 form. In 2009/10 Queen Mary students may get a bursary of £1,077 if the household income is £25,000 or less. Students with household incomes between £25,001 and £34,613 also receive £861.

For more details go to [www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesfinance/](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesfinance/)

# Student finance explained: fees, loans, grants and bursaries (cont)

## The Access to Learning Fund

This is Government money which Queen Mary is given to help students in financial hardship. Students must have first applied for the maximum amount of Maintenance Loan that they are eligible for. Students can apply to this Fund in every year of their course, and the money is non-repayable. The Fund can help students who have a difference between their income and their basic expenditure, and can also help if a student has special circumstances or a sudden financial emergency. The Fund cannot help pay tuition fees.

## Student bank accounts

These usually include an interest-free overdraft facility, which, if used effectively, can be a useful source of cash, especially at certain times of the year, for example when waiting for the next loan instalment. However, please encourage your son or daughter to do their homework and choose the best overall deal – not just the best freebie! [www.fool.co.uk](http://www.fool.co.uk) is a good starting-point.

## Earnings from part-time work

Many students choose to work part-time and in the vacations to top up their income, but to avoid this compromising their studies we recommend that your son or daughter first check with their department for guidance on the maximum number of hours a week they should work.

## Sponsorships

Some companies pay students to go to university, so sponsorships are well worth applying for. Your son or daughter should ask his or her careers teacher for guidance here.

## Trusts and charities

Some trusts and charities can help with a small grant but this is usually a one-off payment and students generally need to have exceptional circumstances to get this type of financial help. Your child should speak to a Welfare Adviser at the Advice and Counselling Service if they are interested in applying, as we can advise on trusts and charities that fit their circumstances, and on making an application.

Students can work out how much money they are eligible to receive by reading the Student Financial Support (undergraduates) leaflet, written by the Advice and Counselling Service at Queen Mary [www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/money/ug](http://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/money/ug)



# Help your child to budget

As a parent, one of the most important ways in which you can support your soon-to-be-a-student son or daughter is by encouraging them to plan and stick to a realistic budget.

Queen Mary's experienced Finance Advisers suggest that you **encourage your child to:**

## 1 Plan in advance

The worst pitfall awaiting the badly-organised student is the failure to budget in advance. Your son or daughter really does need to think about their spending. This means sitting them in a room with a calculator and getting them to total up their income for the months they're at university: Student Loan; any Maintenance Grant payment, university bursary or scholarship, part-time job earnings and so on. The next step is to plan their expenditure...

## 2 Be realistic

Where does the money go? If your child is leaving home, rent will obviously be the biggest chunk. Then they'll spend at least £50 a week on food, including snacks during the day, £5 or more a week on toiletries; a minimum of £15-20 on their social life; and £10 on mobile phone (a conservative estimate!). Then there are books and equipment, photocopying, TV licence, possibly field trips... and so on. The vast majority of students find that their outgoings are more than their income (see tip no. 7, below).

## 3 Remember the hidden extras

These include rental deposit, club membership fees, travel home at weekends and other unforeseen expenses.



## 4 Avoid credit and store cards

The message for your student son or daughter will be this: you are poor – if you can't afford it now, don't buy it – you won't be able to afford it next week, either.

## 5 Shop around for the best bank deal

Get them to look beyond the freebies, and consider what the account can actually do for them. Ask them to look at the overdraft facility in particular.

## 6 Open bank statements

It's vital that your son or daughter knows if it's all going wrong financially, so that they can get help before going into melt-down.

# Help your child to budget (cont)

## 7 Sort out a part-time job early on

This is the key to most students' financial survival, and it makes sense to organise it as soon as possible. If your child already works for a chain, they could ask to be transferred to a branch near their university. We advise the 'little and often' approach right from the start, rather than leaving it till the summer (ie exam) term and then working when they should be revising. Also, encourage him or her to get some office skills, especially word-processing, and approach office temp agencies – their hourly rates are higher than for shop or security work. Working during the holidays is also a good option. University summer holidays can be as long as 14 weeks, giving plenty of scope for some full or part-time work.

## 8 Learn to cook; avoid the takeaway trap

Being a student means eating cheaply, which usually means going self-catering. You can pass on some essential money-saving tips early on: no ready meals; no living on takeaways. Make sure they locate cheap food sources as soon as they arrive (discount supermarkets, street markets and so on). They should also invest in a student cook book.

## 9 Shop within one's means

That means no designer clothes or sports cars!

## 10 Get help as soon as things go wrong

This is probably the most important advice. They can book an appointment with one of the College's Finance Advisers who will help them with their budgeting, sort things out with the bank and, if necessary, help them apply for a hardship payment from the Access to Learning Fund.



# Studying at home – help your child get the best out of university

More students are choosing to live at home and commute to a local university, and this can make sound financial sense for your son or daughter – but what can you do to make sure that they get the best from their university experience, both academically and socially?

## Independence

University is very different from school or college: your child will be treated as an adult – and the apparent lack of school-like discipline might come as a shock to both you and him or her! Instead, self-discipline will be the order of the day, with your son or daughter facing the challenges of meeting coursework deadlines and getting to early morning lectures without reminders or nagging from teachers. It is therefore important that you give your child space to develop their own way of organising their time. Ultimately, getting that project/essay/lab report/exercise in to their tutor on time is your son or daughter's responsibility – the university will not write to you if a deadline is missed or a tutorial not attended – and you might need to resist the urge to try and manage their academic studies for them. This ability to work independently is one of the key transferable skills which employers will look for in a graduate: it's therefore vital that you allow your child to find their best method, whether it's the 'keeping on top of things and handing work in early' or the 'I can't study until I the adrenaline flows' (ie the night before it's due in) approach.

## Study space

As well as psychological space, physical space in which to actually study is a good idea, if you can provide it: somewhere quiet and conducive to intellectual activity, ideally with a desk or table for books and a computer. If this is not possible, remember that your child will have access to their university's extensive library and computer suites, which usually have long opening hours during term-time. It is not unusual for students to spend entire evenings in the library, especially if an exam or essay deadline is looming.



# Studying at home – help your child get the best out of university (cont)

## Social life and extra-curricular activities

Just as universities typically look for non-academic activities in a UCAS application, graduate employers also like to see a rounded individual with evidence of communication skills and other abilities developed outside formal study. It's therefore important that your child takes full advantage of all aspects of university life, not just the academic side – from developing new friendships and joining clubs and societies to taking part in sport and voluntary work or getting involved with the Students' Union. Some students who live at home neglect this side of student life and can be at a disadvantage when applying for jobs, as their CVs can be rather

narrow. Students who live at home are not barred from entering the Students' Union! Encourage your son or daughter to take part fully in Freshers' Week at the start of their first year. This means attending the Freshers' Fair and signing up for some clubs, maybe putting their name down for a couple of sports teams. Encourage them to get involved from the start with any departmental social activities and to consider undertaking voluntary work such as helping out in a local school or care home. Encourage them also to make new friends: living at home can mean sticking with their existing social group, and obviously they will want to maintain these friendships – but if they ignore new ones they are missing out on a whole new horizon, not to mention holiday destinations.



# Student-Parent case study: Karin and Sophie Kimber

We spoke to recent Queen Mary graduate Sophie and her mother Karin about their experiences of Sophie starting university



## Karin (mother)

### What advice did you give Sophie?

I was worried about the cost of university so I encouraged

her to save money – I also advised her to get a part-time job and was pleased when she found work with the College, as it was flexible and didn't interfere with her studies. I was quite keen for her to live at home to keep costs down, but she wanted to move. I encouraged her to learn to cook as she's never taken an interest in it. However, I was unsuccessful and she still calls me asking how long something needs to be in the oven, or if you can cook it from frozen.

### How did you approach the financial side?

I'd already had to fill in financial assessment forms for my eldest daughter so had got quite good at it. We then approached a few banks about student accounts and looked at their various selling points. We decided she should stay with her existing bank as they gave her a five-year free Young Person's Railcard and an interest-free overdraft. Above all, I encouraged her to budget rather than spending her entire student loan in the first week of term. Also, to put some cash into a savings account, which worked well – for a while.

### How was moving in day?

Sophie's dad drove her to Queen Mary on her first day – I thought I'd get too upset and embarrass her. We did lots of shopping beforehand, though. It was like starting from scratch, buying everything from cutlery to a duvet. I was sad to see her leave home, but I took her siblings to see her the week after she moved in. It was nice to see where she was living and meet her flatmates.

### What tips would you pass on to parents whose children are starting university?

Any paid work your child can fit in before starting university will really help them financially. (If they can save, of course...)

## Sophie (daughter: BA Contemporary History and Journalism)

### How have you coped with being away from your family?

No offence to my parents, but I love the independence! I didn't move that far and tried to go home when I could (taking my washing with me, of course). I liked having the chance to look after myself and get up when I wanted. I had had a lot of freedom at home, but it was nice to run to my own timetable.

### How much did your parents help you through university?

They've helped me financially which I've really appreciated. Also, my degree was in Contemporary History and Journalism and we had some really interesting discussions, as much of what I studied actually happened in their lifetimes.

# Off to university...

It's natural for parents to worry about their children starting university, especially if they are leaving home. Apart from the practical side, from now on your son or daughter is going to be treated as the adult they have become, and will have to take responsibility for managing their life. However, there are lots of things you can do to ensure a smooth transition.

## Getting there

Students often assume that they just get somehow beamed-up to university, whereas in fact it is likely to be their parents who will drive them there at the start of term. If your child is showing signs of independence and announces that they are going by themselves on National Express, strongly encourage them to re-think this plan. In reality, attempting to transport all their belongings, including duvet and computer, by coach, will be a huge mistake.

## What's provided?

Find out what they need to take with them: for example some halls provide bed linen, others don't. They'll need towels too, plus, possibly, mugs, salt and pepper, a tin-opener and tea-towels. The university will send information on what's supplied, so get your child to check.

## The next Jamie Oliver?

Make sure they can cook, at least the basics – not just making coffee, although this is, of course, an essential skill. Most university self-catering accommodation is cheaper and the food will probably be healthier than the institutional

cooking on offer in some catered halls. Teach them some of their favourite dishes; make sure they know how to cook pasta, rice and baked potatoes.

## Insuring their worldly goods

Insurance is essential: most students now have mobile phones, laptops, iPods... the list is almost endless. If they have a break-in and their things aren't insured, who will re-stock their rooms? Sometimes parents can get their children's belongings added to their own insurance policies.

## Do they need a TV licence?

Probably, if they have their own television in their room – check this with the university.

## The mysteries of cleaning

Most halls have a cleaning service, but it is still advisable for students to keep their room, at the very least, tidy enough for a cleaner to get through the door. They might even have to wield a Hoover themselves, so it would be a good idea to know the basics (how to turn it on?). Then there are clothes: many students have never had to do their own washing and ironing (not that the latter features heavily in most students' lives). You have a choice here. You can accept the fact that they will return home halfway through term with a huge bag of washing; or you can show them how to use a washing machine.



## Essential equipment

All students feel more secure with certain vital items: coffee, sugar, milk, biscuits. With these they can start out on their social life at university. You should also expect that when they return home for a weekend they will raid your food stores for luxury items.

## The goodbye lunch

When dropping them off on their first day at university, resist the temptation to take them out for a goodbye dinner. It's vital that they are around that first evening – that's when friendships are forged and cliques start to form. Take them for lunch instead.

## Homesickness

Some students take longer than others to settle in and this stage this can last anything from five minutes to several weeks. Some students go home virtually every weekend in their first term, but this usually tails off after that. If they are talking about leaving within the first week persuade them to give it more time – it's a very drastic decision to make based on only a few days' experience. All universities have counselling services, so there is always someone they can talk to if they feel down.

# What happens next?

Waiting for decisions from UCAS		October onwards
The student could receive any of the following:		
Conditional Offer	This means that your child will have to achieve certain grades to get a place at this university (for example 300 points or BBB at A-levels, DMM in a BTEC National, etc.).	
Unconditional Offer	This means that your son or daughter has a place, if they want it, with no conditions attached, at this university. This is only likely if s/he already has A-levels or the equivalent	
Rejection	This means that your child's application has been unsuccessful, and s/he will not be given an offer from this university	
	Those universities that have made offers might invite your son or daughter to an Open Day to help them make their final choices. Some universities call applicants for interview before making a decision.	
Accept/decline offers	The student needs to choose between their offers – they can accept two: a firm (or first) choice and an insurance (or second) choice; the latter will normally be asking for lower grades/points	Will vary but generally by the end of April
UCAS extra	If your child has received no offers or has rejected all their offers, s/he can make another application via UCAS extra This system allows applicants to make a single application to one university, then another if that does not produce an offer	
A-level results day	Judgement day! Make sure your son or daughter is in the UK and not on a Mediterranean beach! They might need to make some important decisions Has your son or daughter achieved their required grades and met their university offer? If they have, then well done to them! Their first choice university will write to them with enrolment instructions For 2009, a new feature is a week following A level results when students who have done better than expected can look for the course with higher entry requirements If they have not met their offer, the student should still contact their first choice university to see whether they will still be accepted; they might, if they have only missed by a grade or two If conditional offer grades have not been met, and the first choice university withdraws their offer, then the student should contact their insurance choice	Mid August
Clearing	If the insurance choice grades have also not been met, the insurance choice university may also withdraw their offer. If this is the case, the student is automatically entered into Clearing. Your son or daughter can apply for courses still available at universities across the UK. Full lists of <b>vacancies</b> can be found on the UCAS website – once they find a course which interests them they call the university and ask to be considered. NB YOUR CHILD MUST CALL, NOT YOU!	Throughout early September
Enrolment	The start of your son or daughters university career. Good Luck!	Late September/ early October

---

# Useful contacts and websites

## Queen Mary, University of London

### **The Education Liaison Office**

For general enquiries regarding higher education and Queen Mary

email: [education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk)  
Tel: 020 7882 3064

### **Admissions and Recruitment Office**

For all enquiries about admissions to the College

email: [admissions@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@qmul.ac.uk)  
Tel: 0800 376 1800

### **Residences Office**

For up to date information on our halls of residences, including eligibility, facilities and prices

email: [residences@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:residences@qmul.ac.uk)  
Tel: 020 7882 5522

### **Advice and Counselling Service**

To find out about the types of support available to Queen Mary students, including support for students with disabilities, plus advice on student finance and budgeting

email: [welfare@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:welfare@qmul.ac.uk)  
Tel: 020 7882 5175

## External contacts

### **UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)**

For enquiries about your child's application, plus extensive additional information on higher education in general and a special section for parents

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)  
Tel: 01242 4680468

### **The Department for Children, Schools and Families**

Information on student financial support, for both parents and students

[www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/)

### **Aimhigher**

Extensive information on all aspects of higher education

[www.aimhigher.co.uk](http://www.aimhigher.co.uk)

### **Prospects.ac.uk**

A huge amount of information on graduate careers, including the current jobs market, what employers look for in a graduate and a breakdown of career destinations by subject

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

---

# Notes



**This guide has been produced by  
the Publications and Web Office for the  
Education Liaison and Access Office - Pub3662**

**For further information contact:  
Education Liaison and Access  
Queen Mary, University of London  
Mile End Road  
London  
E1 4NS  
Tel: 020 7882 3064  
Fax: 020 7882 3158  
email: [education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk)**