Year 7 - Year 11 Students’ Guide to University
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Intro

We have put together this short guide to help highlight the important things you can think about throughout school and how these will help you with your long-term education and career choices.

As you read this guide, if there are any unfamiliar words used, see the jargon buster bubbles spread throughout to find out more!
Who are we?
Queen Mary University of London

Queen Mary University of London:
• Is a campus-based university in central London
• Has over 18,000 students
• Is part of the Russell Group
• Offers courses in arts, social sciences, medicine and dentistry, and science and engineering

For more information about all our courses, please go to www.qmul.ac.uk

A campus is where the university buildings are.

The Queen Mary Mile End campus includes teaching rooms and accommodation on the same site.

The Russell Group represents the top 24 UK universities.

Arts subjects include English, drama and music.

Social Science subjects include economics, history, law, international relations and psychology

Degree: the qualification students study for at university.

Undergraduate: students studying at university for their first degree.

Graduate: person who has completed their degree
Our graduates go on to a range of rewarding careers, from surgeons and barristers to scientists, teachers and political commentators.
Your journey into the future

What you do at school and beyond can open up many doors for you. Below is some information about what you should consider at each stage of your school life.

Y7 Start Secondary School
Starting secondary school can be a big change. You make new friends, and more is expected of you. This is a good time to be open to new ideas. Remember how it feels to start somewhere new. Think about your strengths and weaknesses, and how to build on these. It is your choice to make the most of your education.

Y8-9 Selecting GCSE options
1. Check which subjects are compulsory and optional in your school.
2. Think about what you may wish to study at A-Level. If you drop geography, you may not be able to study it in year 12.
3. It is important to study the subjects that you enjoy!

Y10-Y11 (or earlier)
Sitting your GCSEs
Many universities look at GCSE results when deciding which students to accept on their courses.

Our tips:
• It is a real test of character if you say you are going to do something and you do it i.e. completing coursework ahead of time.
• You must learn the best revision techniques which work for you.
• Don’t leave things to the last minute. You will never regret trying your best.
What are you going to do next?

It is important to consider your options and what is best for you – it may be a mistake to do something just because your friends are. Please note: it is not easy to do A-Levels when you are older. If you are unsure what you want to do, it may be worth considering this – keep your options open.

Every young person should consider university. Therefore, it is important to research universities now and what qualifications they require for their courses. They have specific entry requirements.

Post-16 Education and/or Training

While studying in post-16 education, you will be considering your future options. Universities hold open days where you can look around the campus and ask questions about their courses.

Research, research, research! You cannot consider university without finding out entry requirements, campus location, courses offered and what career opportunities there are.

Extra Curricular Activities

Every student should take part in one or more of the following during their time at school:
- Work experience
- Volunteering
- Helping younger students
- Playing sports
- Being actively involved in your interests and hobbies.

These activities build up your skills and help you discover your strengths.
Why go to university?

The career/profession you want to go into requires a degree
There are many jobs where employers now expect applicants to have a degree. Examples of these could be: charity worker, banker, web designer, researcher, journalist, engineer, roles within the NHS or fashion designer.

However not all jobs require a degree in a specific subject. Bankers do not all have finance or economics degrees. Many banks look for staff who have varied knowledge (eg an engineering degree).

Also, many people think that to become a journalist, they should study journalism – however, studying a foreign language would often be accepted.

Overall – it is important to know that having a degree in any subject is highly valued and have many career opportunities that you wouldn’t expect.

You would like to study a subject in more depth
This is one of the best reasons for going to university: it is so important to study something you enjoy because degrees usually take a minimum of three years to complete.

You would like to become more independent and move away from home
Going to university is not just about your academic studies. If you move away from home, you will learn to live with people you haven’t met before, and other useful life skills like budgeting, cooking and cleaning up after yourself!

To meet and work with students from a mix of backgrounds and countries
To learn from them and open your mind to new ideas.

To have the opportunity to try new things
At university, you could join clubs and societies that you have never been a part of before. You may choose to mentor other students, learn a new language, spend a term studying overseas, volunteer in the local community or run a campaign about something you believe in. All of these things help you to grow as a person, and university helps make these things possible.
Entry requirements

Entry requirements are the subjects and grades universities require before you will be accepted onto a degree course.

While considering if university is right for you, you should try to decide which course you would be interested in studying. Then, look at which universities offer these courses and what entry requirements they ask for.

Some require GCSE AND A-Levels, and may ask for specific subjects with specific grades.

UCAS is short for ‘Universities and Colleges Admissions Service’. If you apply to study at a UK university full-time, you will apply through the UCAS system online. To search for university entry requirements, go to www.ucas.com

Be careful – some universities do not accept resits.

BA: Bachelor of Arts degree
BSc: Bachelor of Science degree

You may wish to consider studying a BTEC or NVQ but you should bear in mind that some universities do not accept these within their entry requirements.

Research research research! Some universities will accept a BTEC if it is studied alongside A-Levels.
BA Medieval History requires A level ABB including B in History

BEng Sustainable Energy Engineering AAB, must include maths and either physics or chemistry.
Course choices

When you are considering university, the first thing to think about is which subject area you are most interested in.

Business studies at one university is likely to be very different to Business studies at another; the differences may be the topics you can choose to learn about, the class sizes, the amount of practical experience and how much coursework vs exams you complete.

You should choose what subject/course you would like to do first before looking at which universities offer it; and it is very important to study something that you know you'll enjoy. Have a look at the UCAS website (www.ucas.com) and remember that you can apply for up to 5 courses/universities.

If you don't know what you want to study:

1. Think about the subject area you most enjoy at school.
2. Search on the internet for which universities have a department focused on your favourite subject.
3. Then look at the degree courses available within that department (eg search ‘English department university’ – within the results, each English department will offer different courses such as English and American studies or Comparative Literature.)
4. Look at the content of each of these courses – every university course is different and they can offer courses you have never heard of before.

If you have an idea what you want to study:

1. Search for which universities offer the course you are interested in.
2. Look at the content of the courses, how they differ at each university and which grades are required.

If you enjoy English, you might choose a course in creative writing or journalism. If you like history, you might want to know more about politics or international relations.

Use this website to compare university courses: www.unistats.direct.gov.uk
When considering different degree courses, there are some things to check:

**Entry requirements** – what grades do you need from your GCSEs and A-levels/BTEC/IB to do the course? This is very important as you need to have the right qualifications to apply. Are there particular subjects that you need to have for the course?

**Course content** – what topics can you study as part of the degree course? What is compulsory and what is optional about the course? The most important thing is that the course interests you.

**Teaching and assessment** – do you have to do lots of exams as part of the course or will it mainly be coursework?

**Career prospects** – what do graduates from that course do afterwards?

**Year abroad/working in industry** – some courses may include a period when you can work in industry or business. This will allow you to get experience in a particular field, such as business, computing or engineering. If you decide to study a language, such as French or Spanish, then part of your degree may be spent in a country where that language is spoken. Some universities have partnerships with universities overseas which allow their students to study in another country for a term or full year. For example, Queen Mary has study abroad programmes with universities in Australia and America.
Choosing universities

Once you have an idea of which courses you might be interested in studying, the next step is to find out more about the universities which offer these courses.

There are over 100 universities in the UK and they are all very different. Some things you might want to consider are:

**Location campus or town/city:**
a city-centre university could be very handy for shops, restaurants, cinemas and theatres, while a campus university has everything on one site – from the library and lecture theatres to accommodation and students’ union.

**Size large v small:** universities range from the very small (2,000 students) to the very large (up to 30,000 students). They are much bigger places than school, there will be a lot more students around than you are used to and they will come from all over the country and the world, not just the local area.

**Accommodation:** going to university may mean moving away from your parents/carers and living independently with other students. Most universities will have some accommodation for first year students, either in self-catering flats or houses. Find out how much the accommodation is, whether it’s guaranteed for all first years, and what is included in the price. For example, will you be expected to cook for yourself (self-catering) or are meals provided?

**Clubs and societies:** universities will offer hundreds of clubs and societies for you to join. Check out what different universities offer.

**Student Support:** universities are set up to help students throughout their time on the course and will all offer support to students. This normally relies on you contacting staff at the university to access this support, you might want to see what is available before you choose to apply.

**University rankings:** some universities are known for being very good at teaching particular subject areas. There are lots of university league tables and rankings online, and while these can be helpful, nothing is better than visiting a university to make sure you like it. If your aim is to achieve top grades at college, you should consider researching the top 24 universities in the country – Russell Group universities – because they have high entry requirements.

This map can give you an idea of where some major university cities in the UK are.

1. University of Birmingham
2. University of Bristol
3. Cardiff University
4. University of Cambridge
5. Durham University
6. Newcastle University
7. Queen’s University Belfast
8. University of Edinburgh
9. University of Exeter
10. University of Glasgow
11. University of Leeds
12. University of Liverpool
13. University of Manchester
14. University of Nottingham
15. University of Oxford
16. University of Sheffield
17. University of Southampton
18. University of Warwick
19. University of York
20. London
   - Queen Mary University of London
   - University College London
   - London School of Economics
   - Imperial College London
   - King’s College London
Parents/Carers

Students often spend a lot of time thinking about their future and talking about their options with friends and teachers. But these big decisions should also be shared with parents and carers. It is important to explain to them the process you are going through as they may have questions. If they do want more information, or ask you something you do not know the answer to, you can direct them to our Parents’ Guide. University staff at Open Days are also able to offer advice to parents and carers, and can reassure them as they will inevitably worry about you!
Finance Information

Many people are worried about the costs of going to university, however the facts are that you do not pay your fees up front and there are sources of support available.

For many years students have financed their studies by taking out a student loan(s).

Student loan(s) are used to cover the cost of tuition fees and living costs. The amount of student loan a student gets depends on their family circumstances, how much they request and whether they choose to move out of home.

This loan does not need to be paid back until the student has finished university and is earning a set amount of salary in a job.

During University students learn a lot about budgeting and managing their money. Depending on their course they can work part time alongside their study which also helps them to gain additional skills.

As the system of student loans is subject to change we recommend that students and parents/carers begin to look into this when they reach year 11 and 12 and seek as much advice from professionals as possible to fully understand the process.

Some universities offer bursaries for students. Students will either be considered for these automatically or they may need to complete a separate application form. Check each universities web-pages to find out if they offer bursaries, the application process and whether you are eligible.

For current information please look at: www.gov.uk/student-finance/overview

Tuition Fees is the money paid to a university to cover the cost of your degree course

Bursaries are set amounts of money which students are awarded which they do not need to pay back.

Higher Education Finance
www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesandfunding
www.studentcalculator.org.uk
www.moneysavingexpert.com/students
www.scholarship-search.org.uk
Useful links and Finding out more

We hope this guide has been useful and provided you with some information to help you on your way with your future decision making. Below are some websites that can provide you with further details about all of the areas covered.

Choosing university courses and careers

- www.qmul.ac.uk
- www.ucas.ac.uk
- www.opendays.com
- www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices
- www.brightknowledge.org
- www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning
- www.morrisby.com
- www.ukcoursefinder.com
- www.bestcourse4me.com
- www.icould.com
- www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk
- www.careersbox.co.uk

Call us for answers!

Tel: 0207 882 3064
email: ukstudentrecruitment@qmul.ac.uk
www.qmul.ac.uk/uksr

or

Tel: 0207 882 7805
email: wp-enquiries@qmul.ac.uk
www.qmul.ac.uk/wp

Once you have read this booklet from cover to cover and got all you need from it, why not pass it onto someone else? Or be sure to recycle it.

Information is correct at time of going to press, the suggested websites are not endorsed by Queen Mary University of London.