



The Student Guide to making a Higher Education application

For 2021 entry



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1. Introduction

Each year the College supports over 300 students with applying for a full time higher education course at university or college (including Oxford and Russell Group Universities and courses such as Medicine and Veterinary Science).

Gloucestershire College students who apply for a higher education course have a good success rate which is slightly above the national average and most of them end up at their first choice university.

Going on to Higher Education isn't for everyone but there are many advantages:

- Higher salaries
- Earn more over a lifetime
- Better prospects
- More chance of promotion
- More choice of jobs
- Develop skills
- Increased independence
- Study abroad
- Work placements
- Study what you love
- Meet new people
- Develop new interests
- Have a good time!

The types of qualifications you can do are varied and modes of delivery are becoming more flexible including choosing HNC/Ds or a Foundation degree as part of a higher apprenticeship as well as studying for a degree at university or college.



2. Important Information at a glance

Make your application through <https://www.ucas.com/students>

UCAS

Buzzword (links application to GC):

GLOSCOL2021

Deadlines

15th October 2020

(deadline for applications to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and applications for Dentistry, Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Science, **please notify your course leader as soon as possible if this applies to you**)

11th November 2020

Gloucestershire College Internal Deadline (to allow time for checking and reference)

15th January 2021

(deadline for applications to all courses check UCAS first)

25 February 2021

UCAS Extra opens

30th June 2021

Applications received after this date go into clearing

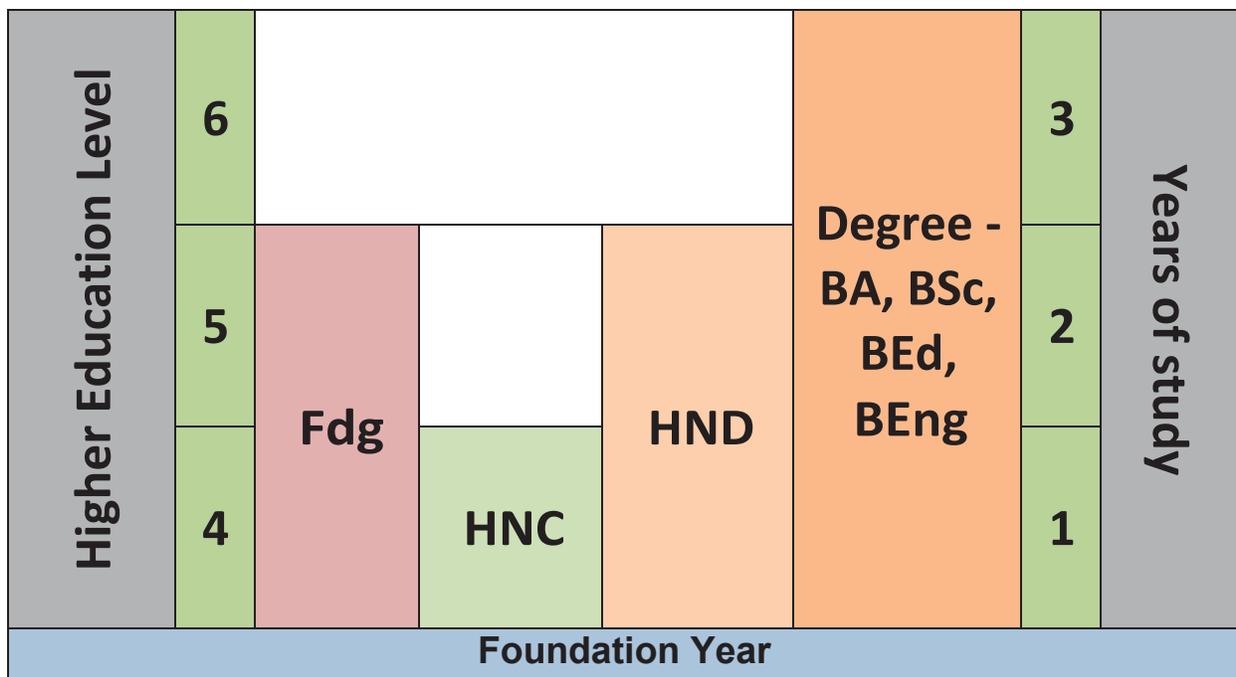
Cost £20.00 for one choice, **£26.00** for 2-5 choices



3. Choosing a Course

When researching different courses, you will come across some unfamiliar words. Do you know what they mean? (Answers are below.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. UCAS tariff points | 2. BA/BSc/BEng Hons |
| 3. Foundation Year | 4. Fdg |
| 5. HND/HNC | 6. OU |
| 7. Undergraduate | 8. Postgraduate |
| 9. Sandwich Degree | 10. Joint Honours |



Answers:

- The UCAS Tariff is the system for allocating points to qualifications used for entry to higher education.
- Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Engineering – different types of degrees.
- Introductory year (like a Year Zero) to build up knowledge – some universities add this to their degree courses.
- Fdg = Foundation Degree – entry requirements are usually lower than a Degree. 2 year vocational course
- Higher National Diploma/Certificate. A year each and can form first two years of a degree, followed by a 'top-up'
- Open University.
- Relates to a first degree, a Bachelors degree or a person studying towards a first degree.
- Relates to higher study taken beyond a first degree or a person studying at a higher level after a first degree.
- A four year degree in which students undertake a placement year in industry, normally after the second year at university. Many courses allow you to combine this with time abroad.
- Joint or combined Honours Degrees allow you to study two subjects in equal proportions.



Choosing a Course - Top Tips

With over **52,000 courses** to choose from there are many factors to consider when choosing what to study, but what do you choose first? The course or the university? Unless you have reasons for wanting to study at a particular university it's probably best to start your research with the type of course first.

- You can apply for up to **5 courses** and you can apply for more than one at the same university or college (you can only apply for 4 courses if it's medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine).
- If you want to study a specialist music, drama, dance or stage production course you can apply for up to 6 courses through **UCAS Conservatoires**. Most 'pure' music courses have an October deadline and others are January. You can apply for other undergraduate performing arts courses through the main UCAS Apply system as well so you could potentially apply for up to 11 courses but you would have pay twice for two separate registrations.
- Bear in mind you will need to choose one course as your **Firm** (first) choice and one as an **Insurance** (back up) choice.
- Know what the **entry requirements** for each course are. Some institutions will ask for a certain number of **tariff points** (see page 8) and others will just ask for grades.
- Know what your **predicted grades** are so that you can make realistic choices. You can consider applying for a course asking for higher grades as you may still be offered a place.
- Choose at least one course that is slightly lower than your predicted grades so that you have a backup (insurance) choice if needed.
- If you have a particular career in mind such as social work or teaching then choose a relevant degree that will qualify you to do work in that profession.
- Choose something you enjoy - over 60% of graduate level jobs are open to graduates with any degree subject.
- Complete a free online questionnaire to identify your interests and narrow down your choices www.sacu-student.com
- Search for courses on www.ucas.com.
- Research courses on provider websites – look at the course content in depth.
- Book virtual open days and events: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/events-and-open-days>
- Think about what careers you can do with a particular degree - www.prospects.ac.uk
- Use subject league tables, the Guardian, the Complete University Guide and the Times.
- Use the official comparison site <https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>
- Use The Uni Guide (part of The Student Room) to search for courses, for help with applying and information on uni life: <https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/>
- For course information including student reviews use www.whatuni.com



Admissions Tests

If you have chosen a course that requires you to take an admissions test such as law or medicine, or the TSA (Thinking Skills Analysis) for certain Oxbridge courses, they are usually taken at the start of the academic year in September so you need to register as soon as possible. Find out more at www.ucas.com/admissions-tests

Study Abroad

More UK students are choosing to study all or part of their degree in a foreign country and many are taught in English in non-English speaking countries. You can often study part of your degree abroad as part of your UK course programme or study all of your degree at a university in another country. There is some handy information on studying in a wide range of countries here: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/study-abroad> and a link to a portal for degree courses around the world here: <https://www.bachelorsportal.com/>



UCAS Tariff

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator>

Level 3 Qualifications									
BTEC					CACHE	GCE			
Extended Diploma	Diploma	90 credit Diploma	Subsidiary Diploma	Certificate	Diploma	A level	AS Level	EPQ	
D*D*D*					A*				168
D*D*D									160
D*DD									152
DDD					A				144
DDM									128
					B				120
DMM	D*D*								112
	D*D								104
MMM	DD				C				96
		D*D*							84
MMP	DM								80
		D*D							78
		DD			D				72
MPP	MM								64
		DM							60
			D*			A*			56
PPP	MP	MM	D			A			48
						B			40
		MP							36
	PP		M			C			32
				D*				A*	28
		PP		D		D		A	24
							A	B	20
			P	M		E	B	C	16
							C	D	12
							D		10
				P				E	8
							E		6

For BTEC marks: 'D' = Distinction, 'M' = Merit, 'P' = Pass
EPQ = Extended Project Qualification



4. Choosing a University or College

There are over **150** higher education providers to choose from in the UK.

You may have an idea about the type of institution you want to attend e.g. a traditional redbrick university, a newer university, campus based university or you may want to go to a local college.

Decide what's most important to you and ask yourself :

- How good are the job prospects and the rate of graduate employment?
- What is the quality of teaching like?
- What are the study facilities like?
- What is the accommodation like? Does the university offer halls, what are the costs?
- Location – do you need a car? If so is there parking? What is local transport like?
- Do you like the environment?
- What opportunities are there to do work placements and which employers do they link with?
- What opportunities are there for part time jobs?
- Does the university or college have a good careers department?
- Are there opportunities to study abroad?
- Do you want to move away from home? If so, how far?
- Do you prefer a traditional or newer university?
- Do you prefer a *campus university* (accommodation and teaching facilities mainly on one site) or a *non-campus university* (accommodation and teaching facilities are located within a town or city)?
- How good are the social and sporting facilities?
- Does the university have a good reputation for the subject you are interested in?
- What student support is available? E.g. disability support, financial advice?
- What bursaries/scholarships does the university offer?

The best way to decide where to study is to make a shortlist of places to visit at an open day. If you can't manage to get to any due to CoViD, you can do a virtual tour:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/open-days-and-events/virtual-tours>



5. Taking a Gap Year

Instead of continuing with your studies straight away you may decide to take a year out. Most universities and courses view taking a gap year as a positive thing as long as you have planned it carefully.

- You can apply through UCAS in the final year of your studies at college and select to defer your place for a year but make sure you check with the courses you are applying to that they accept deferred entry.
 - Or you could wait to apply after you have received your results during your gap year.
 - There can be good reasons for taking a gap year such as needing to gain more experience before applying for certain courses such as those in health care professions.
 - You may decide to do a combination of things including work experience, travel abroad, doing voluntary work, doing paid work to save for your time at university, taking a part time course – all great for your CV in the future.
 - When writing your personal statement make sure you include your gap year plans and say how they will benefit you in the future.
 - If you made a UCAS application but didn't choose to defer your place and then decide to do a gap year, you will need to contact the university to ask if they will give you permission.
 - There are many gap year organisations to help you generate some ideas about what to do including:
 - <http://www.yearoutgroup.org/>
 - www.gapyear.com
 - <http://www.etrust.org.uk/the-year-in-industry>
 - www.gapforce.org
 - <http://www.bunac.org/uk>
 - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering>
 - <https://www.woof.org.uk/>
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6. Completing the UCAS Application

UCAS Apply is a central application system that allows you to apply online for full-time undergraduate courses at universities and colleges in the UK. You will be asked to complete the following sections.

- Registration
- Personal details
- Additional information
- Student finance
- Choices
- Education
- Employment
- Personal statement
- Reference (for internal applicants, college completes this)
- Declaration
- Pay and send

You don't need to complete your application all in one go as it will automatically save what you have done each time you log in. Comprehensive help (with video clips) is available on <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/apply-and-track/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application>

You will need to **complete every section** before you can pay and send your application. (NB: when you pay and send your application, it goes into the *College* system for checking and for the reference to be added before being sent to UCAS.)

The questions on the UCAS form change, according to certain answers you give.

Top Tip: Make sure you submit your application by the college deadline which is earlier than the UCAS deadline. This is to allow plenty of time for the final check and adding the UCAS reference.

Step 1 Registration – go to <https://www.ucas.com/students> and select scheme and year.

The registration process generates your username and you create your own password, which you use to log into Apply. You will also be provided with a Personal ID number. **Keep these details safe; you could record them below or store them in your phone.** (They are case sensitive.)

Password you selected: _____



Username allocated by UCAS: _____

Your personal UCAS ID (10 digit): _____

- You will be asked whether you are applying as an individual or through a school or college. You should **tick the school or college box**.
- You will be asked for the relevant buzzword which is **GLOSCOL2021 (for 2021 starters) and is the same for Gloucester, Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean Campuses**. The College address that is registered is the Cheltenham Campus address.
- You will then be asked to select which subject group you belong to from a drop down menu. If you aren't sure which one you can select 'default' and you will be put into the correct group.

Tip: When you are completing the registration process you will need an email address you can access easily – you will be asked to **verify your email address** as part of the registration process. It's best not to use your college email address, as you may lose access to that before your UCAS process is complete the following summer.

Step 2 Personal details

- Some of this section will be filled in automatically with the details you entered during registration. UCAS asks for further information that universities and colleges require, such as your nationality, residential status and an outline of any disabilities or support needs you may have.
 - It is helpful but not compulsory to enter the **Unique Learner Number** (10 digits) but you can find it on any exam certificates or results slips you have been issued.
 - You need **not enter your Passport details** unless your permanent home is outside the UK
 - Under **Student Support** you will be asked to select a **Fee Code**. Unless you are sure you will not need to apply for student finance to fund your studies you would normally choose **02**.
 - Under **Disability and Special Needs** all applicants are asked to disclose if they have a disability or special need. Your application will be considered on equal merit and it will enable any help support to be put in place for the start of the course.
-



Step 3 Additional information (This section is for UK applicants only)

Additional information is **not received by universities until after you have secured a place with them**. It is used by UCAS and the universities/colleges to monitor applications in terms of equal opportunities.

Disclosing if you are Care experienced, or that you are the first in your family to go to university, may mean that universities or colleges reduce your entry requirements and can give you additional support including financial support. This site ensures young people with experience of Care have all the information they may need:

<https://propel.org.uk/UK/> and this is a handy guide:

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-as-a-care-leaver>

Step 4 Choices

- In this section you enter a maximum of **5** courses for which you are applying (you may choose more than one course at any one institution). For Oxford and Cambridge you can only choose to do one course at either Oxford or Cambridge and you may only have **4** choices for medicine, dentistry or veterinary science / medicine.
 - **Leave the point of entry box blank** if you are going to be starting your course in year one (this is the case for most people).
 - For the **start date** you can choose 2021 entry or defer your place until 2022.
 - If you pay the full amount you **DO NOT** have to make five choices straight away. You can make one or more choices initially, and then 'top up' later in the year as your applications are processed and considered by universities. However, be aware that **if you add courses after the 15th January they will be considered as late applications**.
 - When you make your choices they appear in the list alphabetically and do not reflect an order of preference.
 - Each institution will not know where else you have applied to (unless you apply to several courses at the same university).
 - If you don't use all 5 choices initially, it is possible to add extra course choices through UCAS Track after your application has been submitted.
-

Step 5 Education

Top Tip: This is the section of the application where most mistakes are made and can delay your application being sent to UCAS. When completing this section **make sure you refer to your previous exam and course certificates** and check with your tutor the



details of the course you are currently studying **including modules/unit titles, credits etc.**

Add previous secondary school/s and dates attended

- Click on 'Add Qualifications' and choose from the drop down of listed subjects **including GCSEs** and any other qualifications such as AS levels and add one at a time. GCSE passes in English, Maths and Science can form part of the university's entry criteria – so check you have what's required.
- For GCSEs, the qualification date to enter is usually August when you received your results.
- You will need to enter the exam board for each subject which is on your exam slips/certificates.
- You need to enter all qualifications **even if they were ungraded.**

Add current school or college and dates attending

- Enter the date you started (usually September) and the anticipated finish date (usually June) for your total time at college.
- Click on Add Qualifications and enter all qualifications you have taken and are currently taking **including GCSE resits**. Make sure you know exactly what qualifications you are doing by asking your teacher/course leader.
- Check the finish date of each qualification is **BEFORE** the date you put down to leave college.

BTEC Qualifications

- Enter any BTEC qualifications achieved in the first year, usually the BTEC 90 Credit Diploma or Subsidiary Diploma with completion date – usually July and enter the overall grades achieved (only if certificated).
- If you are continuing onto the BTEC Extended Diploma list that as a separate qualification with the end date July and the overall **grades as pending.**
- UCAS recommend that you **list all modules** under each qualification so that universities and colleges can make an informed decision. You will need to include the grades achieved for each module completed in your first year and the module grades for the Extended Diploma will be left blank as they are pending.
- Include the **BTEC registration number** – this is one of the most common reasons for returning forms. Please ask your course leader if you don't know what it is.
- Students studying Health and Social Care, Uniformed and Public Services or Sport and Outdoor Activities courses should be extra careful to ensure they have checked with their tutors about the **EXACT** qualification title as some of these are changing to new RQF BTecs and may be regarded differently by universities.



CACHE Diploma (Early Years Educator)

- Enter the CACHE Diploma and completion date (usually July). It is recommended that you enter the titles of all modules and if you received a grade for any of them after the first year of study you should enter them. For the remaining modules you are taking during the second year of studies, enter them and list as a pending grade.

English and Maths

- Make sure you enter any English and maths GCSE retakes or equivalents and enter the grade as pending.

Entering AS and A levels – for answers to frequently asked questions go to:

<https://www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/entering-levels-and-levels-your-ucas-application>

- You need to enter any completed AS levels with the date achieved (usually August) and choose 'GCE Advanced Subsidiary'
- If you are retaking any AS levels you need to enter them again separately as a pending grade and it is advisable to add the unit titles.
- For A levels you need to add these separately as pending grades – from the list of qualifications you choose 'GCE Advanced Level'.

Top Tip: If you cannot see the name of your qualification you can type in the search box 'other' and you will see a longer list and if you still can't see it you can select 'other UK qualification' which will enable you to type in the name yourself. This search facility is also useful for students who have moved to the UK from another country.

Entering International Qualifications

Select Add Qualifications then type in the search box the name of the country and choose from the list. If none appear on the list for your country type in 'other' into the search box and select either European Qualifications or Non-European Qualifications and then manually type in the details.

Step 6 Employment

In this section, fill in the details of any work history and names of employers. This does not include brief work experience, but could include substantial course-relevant placements.



Step 7 Personal statement

Your personal statement tells your universities/colleges why you are applying for the course(s) and why they should make you an offer to study with them. This statement helps universities/colleges to know more about you as a person. You are limited to 47 lines or 4000 characters including spaces. You are strongly advised to draft this in a separate document and then cut and paste it into your UCAS application at a later stage.

Top Tip: You only do one personal statement so it needs to be relevant for all courses you are applying for.

Click here for guidance on writing your personal statement:

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/how-write-personal-statement>

Step 8 Pay and send

- This is the final stage of your application and once you click 'pay and send' you will be asked to agree to the **declaration**. Please read the information carefully and once you have agreed to its terms you will be asked to make your payment.
- **NOTE: YOUR APPLICATION DOES NOT GO STRAIGHT TO UCAS.** When you have "sent" the form it **does not go to UCAS straightaway**, it goes into a queue waiting for the reference to be added by the College and for your application to be checked by the Head of Department or UCAS coordinator. Once this has happened your applications will be approved and sent electronically by the college to UCAS.

Make sure you LEAVE PLENTY OF TIME and tell your Course Leader that you have completed everything and it is waiting for the reference to be added.

- You can pay either by credit or debit card online. The cost is **£20** for one course choice and **£26** for between 2 and 5 choices.

Top Tip: Before you tick 'pay and send' make sure you have thoroughly checked all aspects of your application including the Personal Statement and education section. It can delay your application by as much as 2 or 3 weeks if it has to be sent back to you to make corrections/improvements.

The college cannot guarantee your application will be sent to UCAS by the 15th January deadline if your application is submitted less than two weeks before the end of the Winter term

You can only submit one application in each year's application cycle. If you send a second application, it may be cancelled with no refund.



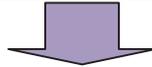
7. Writing the Personal Statement

This is a very important aspect of your application and can make all the difference, so plan carefully to create a good first impression.

Why do you want to study your chosen course?

A strong introductory paragraph to show:

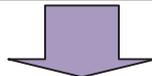
- What sparked your interest? (avoid saying 'I have always been interested in...')
- Your enthusiasm
- Reflect on your experiences that have influenced your decision
- Your career ideas



Provide evidence to demonstrate your interest in and knowledge about the course

(this should be focused on academic aspects)

- Show you've researched the course and what it involves
- Talk about wider reading/college trips/talks/events related to the course
- Relate what you've already enjoyed studying to the course you are applying for
- Have you attended any open days, taster sessions, a summer school?



What relevant experience do you have?

Include experience that is relevant to the course

- Show your suitability and determination to succeed in Higher Education.
- Why do you think you're suitable for the course?
- Do you have any particular skills that will help you to succeed on the course?
- Reflect on your work experience, voluntary work, positions of responsibility – show how it is relevant and how you've developed as an individual.



Outside interests and ending your personal statement

- Include other interests and achievements outside college to give an impression of your personality and qualities – this should be quite a brief paragraph so include them if you have space.
- Finish your personal statement convincingly with a strong final sentence as to why they should consider you.



8. What's Next?

- **Offers**

You can check if you have been offered a place by logging into **UCAS Track** which shows your choices and any decisions made by the universities and colleges. You are allowed to accept one course as your **Firm Choice** which is your first choice and one course as your **Insurance Choice** which should be a backup option requiring lower entry requirements. **If you change your mind or aren't accepted, there are other options to help you find a course through UCAS Extra or Clearing.**

- **Decisions**

You will need to make your decisions about your Firm and Insurance choices and reply through UCAS track. The deadline for this will depend on when you have heard from all universities and colleges you have applied to. **Keep an eye on UCAS Track to see when your reply date is.**

- **Apply for Student Finance**

For eligible students, there are **no upfront course fees**. Loans are available to cover the cost of your course fees and also to help with the cost of living such as accommodation and course materials. You apply on line usually from the end of February and it is advised to get your application in by the end of May.

For further information about the financial support available and how to apply:

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

Repayment

- You repay 9% of your income which is deducted through the tax system but only when you earn above £26,575 a year (£511 a week). If your salary falls below £26,575, the repayments stop.
- Outstanding repayments are written off after 30 years.



- **Results**

Universities and colleges will confirm your place depending on your results.

Check UCAS Track to see if you have been accepted. UCAS receives some exam results and sends them to the universities and colleges so they can make their decisions. For others, you send them yourself.

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/sending-exam-results>

If you are accepted, you will receive a letter from UCAS by email that explains what happens next. If you receive different grades than expected or change your mind, there are other options available including **Clearing and Adjustment**.

- **Starting university or college**

Make sure you have everything ready, such as accommodation, finances, travel arrangements, books and equipment required for the course. Find out what support is available while you're studying by looking on the university's website.



9. Useful Resources and sources of help:

General

www.ucas.com (course listings, on-line UCAS application, personal statement advice)

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/> (Guide to university choice and life)

<https://discoveruni.gov.uk/> (compare courses & universities using rankings)

www.whatuni.com (student reviews of courses and universities)

www.opendays.com (find and register for open days)

www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide (The Guardian newspaper university rankings)

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/

Personal Statements

www.studential.com (advice on how to write your statement and examples)

www.applytouni.com (example personal statements by subject and advice)

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/> (tailored advice by subject)

Student Finance

www.gov.uk/student-finance

Gap Years

www.gapyear.com

www.realgap.co.uk

www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk

Alternatives to university

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/alternatives-to-university>

Graduate careers

www.prospects.ac.uk