

# PARENTS' *place*

*Your guide to learning  
more about the essentials  
of going to university*

**Parents  
& CARERS**

*Supporting their choices*



# Welcome to Parents' Place

At Teesside University we recognise that, as parents and carers, you play a pivotal role in the decision-making process of your son or daughter's journey into higher education. We want to help equip you with the tools and knowledge you need to support your son or daughter to make informed decisions about their future.

There has been much in the press about graduate employment and the benefits of university. Is it worth it? How will it improve career prospects? What skills can university provide? We hope to answer some of these questions whilst providing information and advice on helping you to support your son or daughter in their course, career and progression choices.

**Professor Paul Croney**  
Vice-Chancellor and  
Chief Executive

## Find out more

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[tees.ac.uk/parents](http://tees.ac.uk/parents)



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# What's it worth?

## The real value of a university qualification

Going to university isn't just about gaining a formal qualification – the experience of university can lead to many other benefits. University is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and your son/daughter may leave university as a very different person from the person they were when they started. Read on to discover some of the benefits that university can offer.



## The number of jobs in the UK requiring a degree has overtaken the total number of posts not needing any qualification. (BBC 2013)

### Earning potential

Graduates tend to earn substantially more than people with A levels who didn't go to university – between £168,000 and £252,000 over the course of a lifetime (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills 2013).

### Meet new people

Getting to know lots of new people from a range of backgrounds and often from

different countries is all part of the student experience. Many people make friends for life during their time at university.

### Become more confident

University is different from school and college and offers lots of opportunities including extra-curricular activities, volunteering, sports or even the chance to study abroad. University students have to do lots of new things on their own or with new people –

this often means that they grow in confidence as they progress through their studies.

### Career prospects

There are many professions or career paths that need a specific degree. And simply having a degree will mean that your son/daughter is able to move up the ladder much faster than colleagues without a higher education qualification.

# Transferable skills



## What are they and why are they important?

Transferable skills are the skills that employers look for when recruiting. Your son/daughter will learn and develop a range of new skills at university that will make them more appealing to potential employers and give them lots to include on their CV. Here are a few of the key transferable skills that students should acquire whilst studying at university.

### Communication skills

Effective communication is about conveying thoughts and ideas in a clear and concise manner, being a good listener and understanding others. At university your son/daughter is likely to be involved in group projects so building rapport with team members and, at times, being able to negotiate and persuade others within the group will become essential skills.

### Leadership and management skills

Leadership and management involve directing and motivating others to achieve goals as an individual, team or organisation. As part of your son/daughter's studies they will be involved with assignments and projects that require planning, co-ordination and delegation. This will help them with their future employment opportunities as they gain experience of motivating others and solving problems.



### Research skills

Students at university are required to undertake a range of independent study and research projects. These involve gathering relevant data and information, then analysing and interpreting it as appropriate. These skills are useful once your son/daughter enters the workplace – they will be equipped to deal with a variety of research and data analysis.

### Teamwork and interpersonal skills

Your son/daughter will be involved in group projects and presentations – a key part of the university experience. They will have to use their interpersonal skills to help develop and encourage the ideas of others in the group.

### Organisational skills

Organisational skills are essential when studying a degree. Your son/daughter will have multiple projects and assignments to work on simultaneously throughout the academic year. They will have to prioritise workloads according to deadlines whilst making sure they maintain a good work-social life balance.

# Supporting their choices

## How you can help

**Encourage your son/daughter to get involved in clubs, societies and extra-curricular activities. Employers look for people with other skills and interests outside of education and these give your son/daughter something to put on their CV.**

Work experience is a great way of gaining transferable skills whilst finding out what a career in a particular area actually involves. This experience can also help demonstrate commitment to a specific pathway. Alternatively look at what volunteering opportunities are available. It can be difficult to find work experience in areas such as health and social care but voluntary experience in care homes and youth centres can be just as impressive on a personal statement or CV. Charitable organisations often

provide details of volunteering opportunities on their website. A university open day is great way to find out more about what a particular university has to offer. Encourage your son/daughter to think about questions they could ask to make the most of their visit.

- > What are the backgrounds of the staff who will teach them?
- > How much has the university invested in its facilities?
- > What extracurricular opportunities are offered by the students' union?

- > What type of support is available from the careers service?
- > Are placement years available on the course? Is support offered in sourcing placement opportunities?

Your son/daughter's college or sixth form should also hold a careers event, providing information about the university application process, finance and funding, career options.



There are many different things for your son/daughter to consider when finding the right university for them. Whilst some factors may be more essential to them than others, it's important to consider everything.

### Course modules

After choosing a course subject, it's important to look at the specific modules offered on the course. Look at which modules are core and which are optional. Compare modules at different universities – modules with the same title can focus on very different areas.

### Course facilities

Look at what facilities and equipment your son/daughter will use on their course. It's important that they develop the relevant practical skills ready for moving into the world of work.

### Library

The library is a vital resource for all students – the books, journals, online resources and study spaces available can play a large part in their decision.

### Students' Union

The Students' Union is an important part of each university offering a range of social activities. Unions offer regular club nights, special events and a variety of spaces for students to eat, drink, relax, have fun with their friends and meet new ones.

### Clubs and societies

The Students' Union offers opportunities to join clubs and societies covering range of interests. This is a great chance for your son/daughter to carry on with their hobbies, try out new activities and meet new people.



### Sport facilities

If your son/daughter is into sport, check out the facilities that each university offers. Students often get affordable gym entry and access to other facilities such as climbing walls, squash courts and football pitches. Universities offer a number of different sports teams that your son/daughter can join either playing competitively against other universities or just for fun with friends.

### Local area

As well as the university itself, find out about the local area. Whether the university is in a city centre or a more rural location, it's important for your son/daughter to consider what they want from their surroundings. Consider the local amenities – shops, bars, restaurants, cinemas – as well as facilities for hobbies, travel options around the area, and the distance from home.

### Accommodation

Look at the types of accommodation offered. Is your son/daughter looking for en-suite or shared facilities, a student flat or private housing? And consider the distance from the accommodation to the campus as well as the cost of living.

### Professional opportunities

Many students look for opportunities to develop themselves during their time at university – by doing a professional work placement or through voluntary experiences to develop skills. Look at what the university offers. Do the tutors have good links to industry? Does the university have a volunteering network?

### Student support

This is not something at the forefront of most students' minds but, as a parent, it will be important to you. Universities recognise that students may need some support throughout their time there – whether it's help with their studies, disability support, accommodation issues or help adjusting to being away from home – student services can offer support. You can find out more on universities' websites.

# Choosing the right university

# Up close and personal with Lukasz Kupczak

**Lukasz is a Teesside University sport and exercise science graduate. He worked as a student ambassador during his time at university.**

**What skills have you gained throughout your degree and which are the most valuable?**

I developed so many skills during my time at university it's hard to narrow down which are the most valuable. As part of my degree I had to work with elite athletes, running fitness tests and evaluations. This work required me to work well as part of a team, communicate effectively with my fellow students to get the most accurate results and ensure the athlete had a positive experience.

As my workload increased so did my time management skills. I had to prioritise my assignments to hand them in on time whilst also making sure I spent time with friends and family. It's important to have a good work-social life balance. One of the most important attributes I gained during my time at university was confidence. I'm originally from Derby so moving away from home and living independently for the first time was really daunting. However, within the first few weeks I had met so many new people – all were in the same position as me. I soon settled into university life.

**Can you tell me about your work as a student ambassador?**

While studying I worked as a student ambassador for two years and really enjoyed the variety of the job. One week I could be helping out at the University's open day, talking to prospective students and delivering campus tours. The next week I would be in London representing the University at a national event. I found my communication skills developed immensely during this time. I had to speak to lots of people of different ages and nationalities – amending my approach to these audiences was important to make sure I got the right message across.

**Do you think working as an ambassador has helped increase your job prospects?**

Definitely. I had lots of opportunities to network and build up relationships with a variety of professionals both regionally and nationally. I have now secured an internship with the University's student recruitment team. I think this is a result of my hard work throughout my degree, and the

experience and skills I gained as a student ambassador.

**Are you enjoying your internship?**

I am really enjoying it and have been given a lot of responsibility. One of my first projects was to plan and deliver a summer school for over 150 pupils in their final year of primary school. The event was a huge success, receiving excellent feedback. I felt really pleased, and relieved, when it was all over. As part of the Mission X programme I developed for Year 6 students I had the chance to visit the space centre in Farnborough – I got the chance to ride in a centrifuge which was amazing!

**And your future goals?**

I would love to complete a physiotherapy master's degree at Teesside University with the aim of moving to America to work there. The course is very intense and requires a lot of patient contact so hopefully the skills I've acquired at university and as an ambassador and intern will help me secure a place on the course. I am very excited about the future.



# Your journey

## YEAR 12 UCAS TIMELINE

### September

Research the career paths you are interested in – research on university websites and request a prospectus. Check the events and activities offered by universities.

### January

You may need to do specific work experience to be accepted on to some courses – look out for local organisations offering volunteering or placements. Experience can be a real benefit, even if it's not a requirement.

### February

Research UCAS fair dates – check what's on near you. Research university open day dates.

### March

UCAS fairs start. Start preparing questions for university staff when you attend a UCAS fair.

### May

It will soon be time to apply so start preparing your application.

### September

Applications can be submitted to UCAS from September onwards. Your son/daughter needs to write a strong personal statement as this is their chance to impress.

## YEAR 13 UCAS TIMELINE

### July

Narrow down your options to five courses and university choices. Start drafting your personal statement.

### October

This is the application deadline for all professional medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science courses, and all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Your son/daughter needs to send a draft of their personal statement to their tutor or careers advisor.

### January

This is the deadline to submit applications to UCAS for all other courses. Once your son/daughter has submitted their UCAS application they will be contacted directly by the relevant universities with a decision. Your son/daughter can track their progress and view any offers online using UCAS Track. They will then need to select the university they wish to go to (firm choice) and a back-up option (insurance choice). Together you can begin to look at the financial support available at their shortlisted universities. Start drafting your personal statement.

### November

Your son/daughter submits their completed UCAS form to their sixth form or college ready for their reference to be written.

### September

Your son/daughter is ready to go to university, possibly moving away from home. They are likely to have one of the best experiences of their life.

### August

Results are published on UCAS Track – this will also update the status of your son/daughter's application, whether they've been accepted or rejected. If they've met the entry requirements your son/daughter needs to decide whether to accept their firm or insurance offer.

If your son/daughter hasn't obtained a place at a university they can use the Clearing process. Clearing helps students without a university place to find a suitable vacancy at a university of their choice, depending on spaces and entry requirements.

### July

UCAS Extra closes.

### June

Now is the deadline for applications with up to five choices. Applications received later are automatically entered into Clearing and your son/daughter needs to contact the universities directly to be considered for a course.

### February

Your son/daughter starts to receive course place offers. UCAS Extra opens. This is for students who have applied through UCAS and aren't holding any offers. It's a second chance for students who were unsuccessful with their initial applications but they can only apply to courses that still have vacancies.

# Industry work placements

## Why it's never too early to start thinking about a placement

Siobhan Fenton, head of digital enterprise in the University's School of Computing, leads on business engagement. Here she considers the benefits of an industry placement and why it's never too soon to start thinking about a placement at university.



It is crucial for all university students to establish contacts within the industry they are interested in and secure some sort of industry placement or work experience to enhance their job prospects when they graduate. Depending on the course, a work placement is offered as part of the course or encouraged as an option.

### What are the benefits of an industry placement?

An industry placement is invaluable because it enables your son/daughter to apply their skills in a real working environment, test out their chosen career path and develop important industry contacts. The experience of working before they graduate will also improve son/daughter's confidence, interpersonal skills and teamwork abilities – essential skills that companies are always looking for. Time and time again we have found that students who have been on placement return to Teesside University with improved confidence and are much more likely to get a graduate job when they leave.

### When do students complete an industry placement?

Placements come in all shapes and sizes. It depends on the industry your son/daughter is trying to get in to, their personal circumstances and the course they are studying. Here in our School of Computing placements tend to be for a year but we support shorter work experience opportunities over the Easter or summer break. We also offer opportunities on campus which see students working with staff on enterprise projects over the summer or focusing on their own commercial projects.

### How do students find and secure placements?

We support and encourage our students to find their own placement. Most academic schools have a placement officer who advertises industry placement opportunities and supports students to prepare for applications and interviews. Our placement officer offers one-to-one support – help with writing CVs, covering letters and advice on interview techniques. We also run an annual ExpoTalent event for all second-year students to showcase their work to visiting employers.

If your son/daughter is lucky enough to secure a placement, they are allocated an academic supervisor with expertise in the relevant subject area to visit and support them while they are working. To further support students, our careers service runs events such as career fairs, company talks, mock interviews led by different companies, advice on writing activities such as CVs, and guidance for developing a website.

### When do students need to start thinking about a placement?

It is never too soon for your son/daughter to start establishing industry contacts and thinking about how they can secure a short or long-term industry placement. In the School of Computing our placement officer speaks to first-year students about the placement process, encouraging them all to attend career or industry-speaker events to kick start the process and help them establish industry contacts.

### What other ways can students engage with business and develop industry contacts while at university?

Throughout their degree, your son/daughter will have many opportunities to engage with industry and develop those all-important industry contacts. Many courses include regular visiting speakers, giving your son/daughter the opportunity to find out more about the industry and establish a contact in the area they want to work. Some courses include a live project where groups of students can work on an actual industry project for one of their modules.

### What advice can you give to parents?

It can be daunting for a student to contact an organisation or speak to a visiting speaker for the first time, so encouraging your son/daughter to source their own work experience or voluntary opportunities whilst still at college could be very beneficial. This will help them to develop the skills and confidence they will need when arranging and starting placements at university. If you are attending university open days with your son/daughter, suggest they visit the university careers service or talk to their academic school's placement officer to find out what support is on offer, and what placement opportunities or career events are going on in the university.

# 10 great reasons to build a career in the North East

According to Ross Smith, director of policy at the North East Chamber of Commerce.

**1** The North East is home to the largest integrated chemicals plant in the UK at Wilton in Teesside.

Over 1,400 companies operate in the sector exporting £12bn of goods a year.



**4** Hitachi's investment in the region is creating 730 jobs

and huge opportunities for companies in the supply chain.

**2** More than 65,000 people work in the oil and gas sector.

And more than 70% of the oil and gas platforms operating in the North Sea were built here.

**3** We're the number one car producing region in the UK

with 1 in 3 cars coming from Nissan, Sunderland.

**5** The North East is the only region in the UK with a trade surplus

which stands at around £3bn.

**6** More than 30,000 people now work in the digital and ICT industries in the North East.

**8** Our location gives the shortest access to two of the UK's biggest planned offshore wind farms.



**7** £38m National Biologics Manufacturing Centre is based in Darlington,

bringing cutting-edge research to the North East.



**9** The region has a £4bn visitor economy

with attractions such as World Heritage sites – Hadrian's Wall and Durham Cathedral.

**10** Average house prices are 30% lower than the UK average

money goes further in the North East than almost anywhere else in England.

# More information



## **UCAS**

Information on all aspects of applying to university and a comprehensive parents' section  
[ucas.com](http://ucas.com)

## **The Guardian**

Careers advice and discussion on all career sectors  
[theguardian.com/careers](http://theguardian.com/careers)

## **Prospects**

Comprehensive graduate careers site with information on job roles and graduate opportunities  
[prospects.ac.uk](http://prospects.ac.uk)

## **Which?**

University advice on choosing a university and course  
[university.which.co.uk](http://university.which.co.uk)

## **Unistats**

The official website for comparing UK higher education course data  
[unistats.com](http://unistats.com)

## **Working towards your future: Making the most of your time in higher education**

A guide produced jointly by the CBI and National Union of Students  
[cbi.org.uk/media-centre/news-articles/2011/03/working-towards-your-future](http://cbi.org.uk/media-centre/news-articles/2011/03/working-towards-your-future)

## **Careers Tagged**

A search engine that specialises in careers information  
[careerstagged.co.uk](http://careerstagged.co.uk)

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