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# A school and college guide to working in partnership with universities to support your Gatsby priorities

By Grace Sheldon and Jamie Bytheway,  
Operations Managers, Greater Manchester  
Higher, part of the Uni Connect programme

Since the Gatsby Benchmarks came to prominence in the government's statutory careers guidance, they've become increasingly important in shaping school and college relationships with universities.

Many universities and collaborative partnerships (such as the Uni Connect programme) map their outreach provision to the Gatsby Benchmarks so schools/colleges can easily see how activities support their CEIAG priorities.

Benchmark 7 is our 'bread and butter' and yes, we can organise campus visits (with restrictions) but we can support with so much more!

Below is a very brief summary of how universities can provide support across ALL 8 of the benchmarks:

## 1. A stable careers programme

University outreach is most effective when delivered as part of a progressive programme. Careers Leaders should work closely with local outreach staff to plan a package of activity that helps deliver their strategic careers plan.

## 2. Learning from career and labour market information

Whilst university outreach teams are not labour market specialists, many will be working with local organisations such as the Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver activities that reflect the local high-level skills need. An example would be a



## YOUR STUDENTS

- We can arrange bespoke workshops and presentations at your school. Past subjects have included: personal statement workshops, what is a two-year degree?, options post-Sixth Form, and student fees and financing
- Book online or in-person school visits to explore our campus, which can include subject taster sessions, talks with students, and tours of campus life
- Join our range of online workshops
- Join our virtual subject taster sessions

# A school and college guide to how universities can support you with subject specific events

By Fiona Curry, Student Recruitment & Widening Participation Schools & Colleges Manager at the University of Gloucestershire

Whether your students are considering their GCSE or Level 3 options - or deciding which university course or higher/degree apprenticeship they might want to consider, universities offer a wide range of subject experiences and events. They may even support you to meet Gatsby Benchmark 4, linking curriculum to careers in the process.

## Flexible to suit you and delivered by experts

Subject experiences are often available to be tailored to timings and topics to suit your needs - and can be delivered in school/college or on a university campus. These could be delivered by **outreach and stu**







# A school and college guide to international university study opportunities

By David Hawkins, Director,  
The University Guys

In an increasingly global world, with students connected to friends, celebrities, news and opportunities all over the world at the click of a button - and Zoom allowing us to all keep in touch, today's students have never been more globally connected, tied into a digital economy that knows no borders.

Yet, when it comes to university, so many focus only on options in the UK. As a result, students are **missing out on a huge array of opportunities to find their 'best fit' university around the world, or study at the best university in the world for their subject, not just the best in the UK.**

Here, I will guide you through some of the key differences, so you can provide initial support to students considering study opportunities overseas.

## Assessments

Students are attracted to the fact that university in other countries doesn't work in the same way as it does in the UK: on a global spectrum, the typical **single-subject, final assessment model that most UK universities offer is quite unusual.**

In the USA students will study a broader range of subjects and their 'major' will only be about a third of what they study while at university. In the Netherlands (which has over 300 degrees taught entirely in English), the Universities of Applied Science system offer a hands-on style education connected to employers.

Universities across Europe are now offering many international degrees, with options such as the world-class Bachelor of Business Administration at IE Madrid or PPE at the Central European University in Vienna offering life-changing opportunities to students who don't want to follow the crowd.

## Applications

Application procedures vary widely from UCAS and from country-to-country. When applying to other countries students need to learn new processes, timelines and terminology. Students should start the process at least six months earlier than for UCAS (and, for the US, at least a year earlier due to the probable need to take either the SAT or the ACT).

## So, where's popular?

The USA dominates, with universities from the world-class names such as Harvard to lesser-known institutions that compare with the best of the UK. Even in these challenging times, students are working hard preparing university applications to hopefully study at world-leading institutions in California, Florida or New England.

Canada has risen in popularity, with the perception of a more European political and social system, and a favourable immigration regime for post-study work drawing applications to universities such as McGill and Toronto.

Europe is increasingly popular, from studying in English-speaking locations such as Ireland, to courses taught in English across the continent.

A particular trend is for students to look at well-regarded private universities in Europe, who offer modern education in a global context, drawing in international students from all over the world to study in cities such as Milan (for Bocconi University) or Dublin (for Trinity College).

## Today's students are very globally minded

With changes due to Brexit, students will know that being internationally-connected gives them a wealth of job opportunities after graduation.

Students we worked with last year gained offers from 111 universities in 9 countries, from Stanford in the USA to Leiden in the Netherlands, McGill in Canada to ESADE in Spain. These ambitious and global students will have job opportunities on graduation that their peers at provincial UK universities can only dream of. The time is now ripe for more students to seriously consider international universities: the world is out there!

# A school and college guide to supporting students with their personal statements

By Michelle Tang, Widening Participation Manager (Post-16) at the University of Cambridge

In my experience, students often think of the personal statement as the most important part of their application because it's the part they have the most creative freedom over. But with freedom comes a lot of potential pitfalls! Here are my top tips to steer students in the right direction.

## Tip 1: Engage in supercurriculars early.

Early on, when students are narrowing down their choices and considering what courses are out there, it shouldn't just be about reading prospectuses. Instead, encourage them to engage in some supercurricular activity. These are academic activities which go beyond the curriculum in the courses they are considering. This could take the form of reading an article, watching a documentary, listening to a podcast, developing their academic skills and much more!

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# A school and college guide to university widening participation and fair access

By Sophia Mousoulides, Partnership Manager at the University of East London

More young people from all backgrounds are going to university – however there is still inequality in higher education and beyond. Students with certain characteristics are less likely to enter higher education, less likely to stay on, and/or less likely to gain highly skilled employment after completing their degree.

White students on Free School Meals are the least likely group to enter higher education, followed by those from Gipsy/Roma backgrounds (Working Class Heroes – Understanding access to higher education for white students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. NEON, 2019). There is **also a significant difference in the proportion of Black, Asian and minority students awarded a good (First or 2:1) undergraduate degree when compared to White students (Office for Students, July 2020).**

Access to university, drop-out rates, attainment and post degree outcomes for underrepresented groups will vary by institution, but there are **significant gaps in comparison to the general student population.** To resolve these gaps, each higher education institution charging the higher level tuition fees has an Access and Participation Plan (APP). The APP takes into account the

# 5 things EVERYONE should know about student finance

By Martin Lewis, MoneySavingExpert.com

Ignore everything you've read in the papers. Ignore what your parents tell you too. There are more myths and misunderstandings about student finance than there are polite ways of saying there's a lot of bull spoken.

This is a political hot potato. People spin explanations to suit their own arguments. Yet that's about the big picture. When you come to decide whether you can afford to go to university, you should focus only on how it'll practically affect your pocket. And that is radically different to what you usually hear.

Now please don't confuse the fact I want to explain the system, with unblinkered support of it. I do have issues, but frankly that's not relevant here. What counts is that I tool you up to make the appropriate decision.

And a quick warning before I start. There was a **radical change to student finance in England in 2012**, anyone who started uni before that is on a **different system, so beware their student finance** war stories, which may not apply to you. This information only applies to English students in England – in the other UK nations things work differently.

## 1. The student loan price tag can be £50,000, but that's not what you pay.

Students don't pay universities or other higher education institutions directly. Tuition fees, typically up to £9,250 a year at the time of writing, are paid for you by the Student Loans Company. Over a typical three-year course the combined loan for tuition and maintenance can be over £50,000. But what counts is what you repay...

- You should only start repaying in the April after you leave uni.
- Then you only need to repay if you earn £26,575 a year (and that threshold is set to rise each year - from 6 April 2021, it'll be £27,295). Earn less and you don't pay anything back.
- You repay 9% of everything earned above that amount, so earn more and you repay more each month.
- The loan is wiped after 30 years – whether

you've paid a penny or not.  
• It's repaid via the payroll, just like tax and doesn't go on your credit file.

It's also a hidden contribution, but it's hidden.

You are also eligible for a loan to help with living costs – known as the maintenance loan. Yet for most under 25s, even though you are old enough to vote, get married and fight for our country, your living loan is dependent on household (in other words, parents') residual income. For a 30% part loan is worth 1.81060e reatiaftf.718898y 96 Aa famineeome. FTJ T\*(mose)6t lik£250. B tow84.102(5ds, par,

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# A school and college guide to the Uni Connect Programme

By Ant Sutcliffe, Head of Higher Horizons +.  
One of 29 Uni Connect networks in England

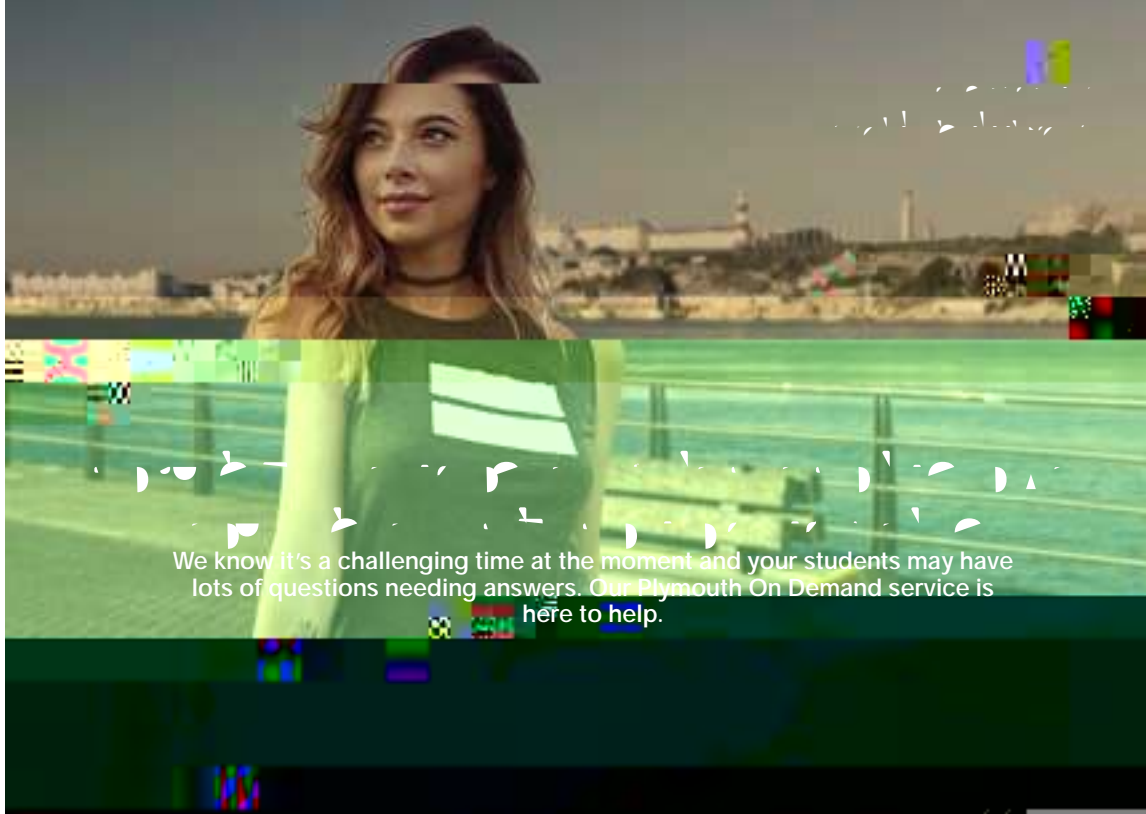
In 2017 I wrote in these very pages about the launch of the (then) government's latest effort to "improve social mobility" via the creation of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). The aim was simple: double the amount of the most economically disadvantaged young people entering Higher Education by 2020. It seems like a lifetime ago now, given the political changes through two general elections, and a global pandemic.

I'd like to think, though, that all avid readers to this



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH





We know it's a challenging time at the moment and your students may have lots of questions needing answers. Our Plymouth On Demand service is here to help.



# A school and college guide to supporting care experienced and estranged students into higher education

By Wendy Price, Head of Widening Access and Participation at the University of Sunderland, and North East Regional Representative for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers

Care experienced and estranged students are currently under-represented in higher education and we need your help to change this. As a teacher, you can play an important part in inspiring and supporting these young people to achieve their potential.

**Here are my five top tips to ensure the transition to higher education can be as smooth as possible for your students.**

## 1. Find the right higher education provider

Look for providers who have made a public commitment to supporting care experienced and estranged students. Have they signed the Stand Alone Pledge and the Care Leaver Covenant? Are they members of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)? Engagement with these organisations is a clear message that support is available and these institutions have committed to developing their offer for these students.

## 2. Consider alternative routes into higher education

**Not all students feel confident about their ability to progress directly to higher education. Would they prefer to study an Integrated Foundation Year to prepare them for undergraduate study? Or perhaps an apprenticeship or foundation degree would help to build confidence? There are a range of options available to suit all students.**

## 3. Encourage students to inform universities about their circumstances

When universities know that a student is care experienced or estranged, we can support them through the entire application process and work with you to guide and reassure them through their journey.

**Also, encourage your students to find out what support is available to them. At the University of Sunderland, we provide bespoke support for all care experienced and estranged students. This includes a named contact, guaranteed accommodation, a bursary of £2,000 each year, regular check-in meetings, help finding part-time work and so much more.**

The Propel website, developed by national charity Become, provides access to full information about the support offered at each institution and is a useful starting point.

## 4. Help with planning ahead

Work with each student to create a to-do list which clearly shows key actions in the lead up to starting university. Applying for accommodation, bursaries and student finance may have deadlines so these need to be included too. Care experienced and estranged students may be **eligible to receive additional financial support, guaranteed accommodation, personalised support and priority places to attend summer schools** so it is important to plan ahead.

## 5. Be the difference!

So many students tell us that they never considered higher education until a teacher encouraged them to do so and actually believed that they could! Ask students how they're feeling about university and reassure them that you're there to offer support.

“ Encouragement, support and belief can change lives so never underestimate the difference your words can make. ”

# A school and college guide to how universities support students in need of additional support

By Rebecca Breen, Student Recruitment Officer at the University of South Wales

A main priority for universities is to ensure students who require additional support and **advice whilst studying know where to find, and how to access the support that is available to them.**

University student support teams exist to help those students to realise their potential, get the most out of their studies and thrive at university, **and are the first point of contact for students** requesting additional support.

## Encourage students to let universities know if additional support will be required

It is important that universities are aware of the specialist support students require, early on in the application process, so that the appropriate **support can be put in place for them in sufficient time, before arriving at university.** Students can let their selected universities know what additional support they require through the UCAS application process, at open days, or by contacting student support departments at universities directly.

## An outline of the available support

Here are some of the services available at the University of South Wales as an example. Every university will have similar services:

### The disability service

Provides information, advice and guidance to and co-ordinates support for disabled students. This includes students with physical, sensory, mental **health or unseen disabilities, specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) and autism.**

The team offers help and advice, ranging from organising note taking to support for students with mental health issues. For more information, contact the team on 01493 212121 or visit the website at [www.southwales.ac.uk/studentsupport](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/studentsupport)

# A school and college guide to online and blended learning university courses

By Amy Knott, Outreach and Recruitment Officer at Arden University

Higher education looks very different this year than it has done before due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Universities have adopted new approaches for their courses; including delivering courses fully online and also through a 'blended' learning method. However, these types of courses did already exist pre-COVID, and there are universities that specialise in this type of delivery. So what do they look like?

Online and blended learning courses offer something a bit different to what university can look like by enabling increased study flexibility – vital for many who need to fit university around other commitments.

Here, I will introduce what we mean by online and blended courses.

## What are online university courses?

Fully online courses prevent the need for a student to physically travel to and attend lectures at a university campus – all they need is a device and an internet connection to study.

This means that students can study anywhere, at any time, providing unmatched flexibility for their studies. All lecture content, books and journals, discussion forums, student support, careers services and more, can be found via online learning portals which students access as and when they can and need to.

It is key that a student is able to self-motivate and be self-disciplined as an online learner; they must take more responsibility for their learning when studying this way.

## What are blended learning university courses?

Blended learning may offer a best of both worlds – students don't have to be at university all the time but can still get that experience of physically attending lectures.

Reduced contact hours mean that blended students can juggle other responsibilities alongside university study, but they can still do things such as ask a question to their lecturer in person, or grab a coffee with a classmate after their lecture finishes. This learning mode offers more structure which some students prefer.

## Who may online and blended learning suit?





# A school and college guide to why students should consider university

By Melissa Grindon, Creative Projects Officer at Liverpool Hope University

**In the final years of school or sixth form college,** a question students may ask is should I go to university?

# A school and college guide to the education system in Scotland: qualifications and university opportunities

By Mari Higginbotham, Scottish and RUK  
Manager at Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh

## The secondary school education system

In Scotland, we have always done things a little bit differently when it comes to education. In the final years of secondary school, students can sit a range of qualifications suited to their ability. These start with National 4 and National 5 qualifications (similar to GCSE level) in S4 and, sometimes, S5 - and go on to Highers which are our typical



