



Parents' Guide

Help and advice as your son or daughter moves into higher education

If you work with students who will be leaving care to go to university, please visit

www.askus.salford.ac.uk/page/care_leaver

to find out about the extra support we provide.



Although the term 'parent' has been used throughout, this guide is not just aimed at mums and dads – it's for foster parents, guardians and carers – in fact anyone who is helping a young person to make decisions about higher education.

Bright Futures

If your son or daughter is thinking about moving into higher education then one of the most important and exciting phases of their life is about to begin.

The University of Salford is committed to supporting students during the application process, throughout their studies, and beyond graduation into the world of work.

We recognise the important role that parents and supporters play in helping young people make informed choices about what and where to study, and we also understand that these can be difficult decisions to make.

We've put together this guide to walk you through the journey into higher education, and help you to support your son or daughter during this crucial time.

We are always delighted to welcome parents and supporters to our Open Days, where academic and support staff will be happy to answer any questions you may have – and you can experience everything the University of Salford has to offer for yourself.

If you have further questions, we've included links to our website and other sources where you can get additional information.



We understand your concerns

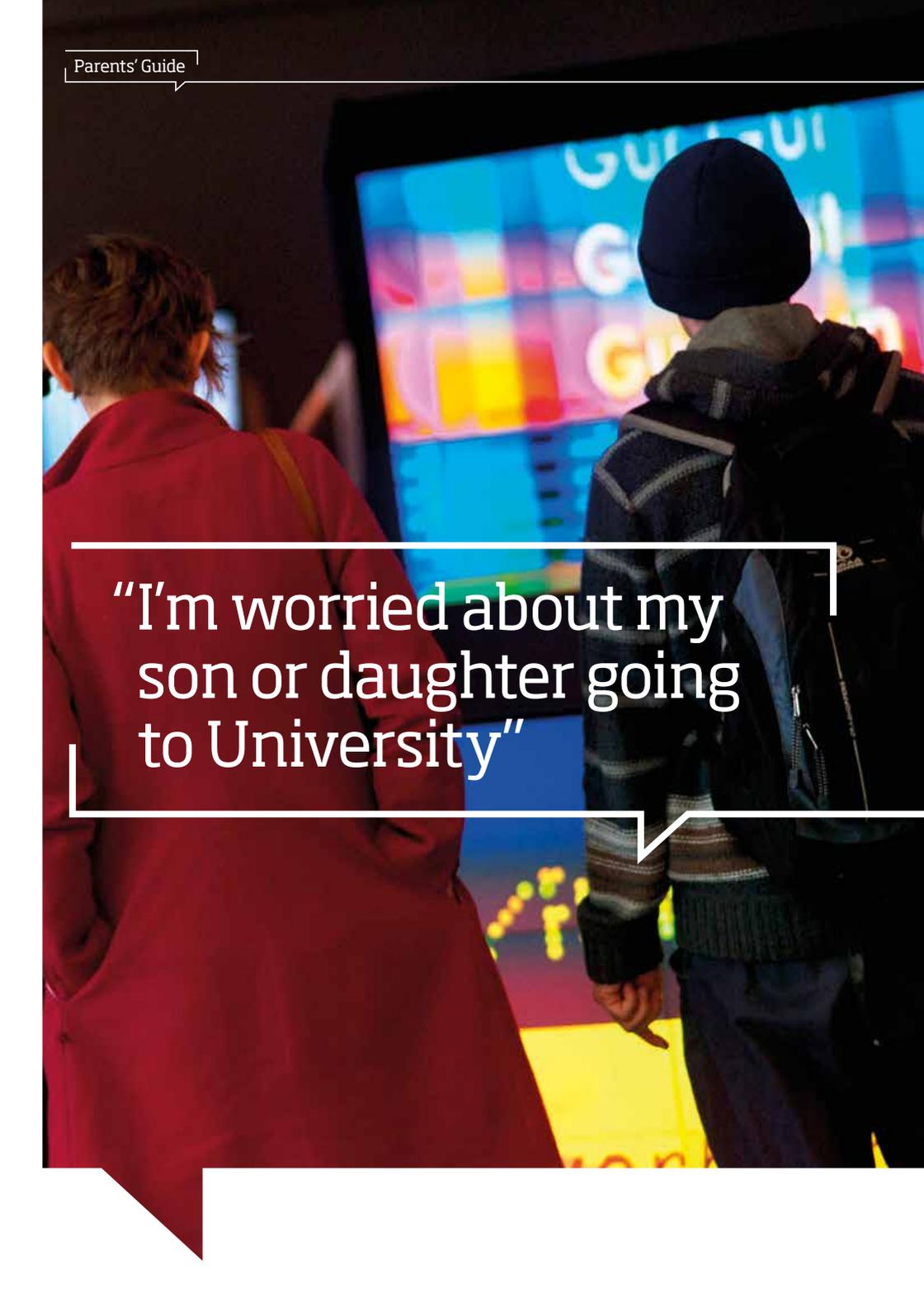
We commissioned research into the mind-set and experiences of students and their parents when applying to university. We surveyed over 1000 parents and students online, and ran focus groups with sixth form students and final year undergraduates.

These are our key findings:

- Parents were clear on one thing – gaining a degree is an essential part of growing up
- Eight in ten parents state 'career' as the top reason for their child to apply to university
- Students' views are very similar to their parents' – their primary reason to go to university is to improve their career prospects
- Students expect to change significantly while at university, and realise that their relationship with their parents will also change
- Parents of graduates said their children became more mature, confident, knowledgeable and worldly, with a significant proportion saying their child had "come out of their shell"
- Parents have a looming sense of dread about waving their child off to university – but students understand this and worry about their parents being lonely, particularly those without siblings or in single parent families
- Parents are extremely proud and excited as their child leaves, but also lonely, tearful and uncertain. Students share these mixed emotions though – they are excited, but also anxious or even scared
- Both parents and students worry about fitting in, making friends and coping academically, but parents also worry about student finance
- Parents place huge importance on contact hours – they worry that if the contact time is low, students won't motivate themselves for private study, and also see low contact hours as a poor return on investment
- Parents play a supportive role – and students regard their parents' views as very influential
- Parents and students are very demanding about what they expect from a university. Parents place quality teaching, employability and external business links as their top priorities, while students prioritise the right course, location, reputation and employability
- Parents would like more useful information to help them guide their child through the process of selecting a university, as they are playing a more active role in this process than ever before
- Open days are one of the most influential sources of information – but many parents have questions they would like to ask separately from their children, particularly around student welfare and finance.

We've designed this guide to answer these questions and concerns.



A parent and a child are seen from behind, looking at a large, brightly lit screen. The screen displays colorful, abstract graphics with the letters 'G' and 'U' visible. The parent is wearing a red coat, and the child is wearing a dark jacket and a beanie. The scene is set in a dark environment, possibly a museum or a digital art installation.

“I’m worried about my son or daughter going to University”

Your concerns are entirely understandable and shared by the majority of parents in your position. Going to university marks the end of childhood in many ways, and will be a big step for everyone. Bear in mind that your son or daughter will be feeling excited – but they will also have anxieties – and they are likely to worry about you too.

If you can, try to work out the specific concerns you have. Is it that your child won’t cope academically, won’t make friends, or won’t be able to live on a student loan? Or maybe you are worried about how to help them choose the right university or course, or whether they’ll get a job when they graduate. Once you have broken your fears down, it will be easier to take practical steps to deal with them.



The benefits of university education go much further than getting a great job and increased earning potential.

The chance to undertake in-depth study in a single subject area brings its own rewards – not just greater knowledge, but the ongoing possibilities of a much wider choice of career paths for life.

Your son or daughter will also gain additional skills which are useful in any career – time management, working effectively both alone and in groups, research skills, communication skills – all of these and more will be developed as they progress through higher education.

University also helps with personal development – whether its living independently for the first time, making new friends, gaining new interests, living on a budget, joining clubs and societies, volunteering, working in industry or travelling abroad on field or study trips – the options for self-development are far reaching and will last a lifetime.

"I'm worried about my child coping academically"

University study is very different to school or college.

All universities are aware that new students will be experiencing different types of learning to what they have been used to. Your son or daughter will be used to structured learning, with regular homework and feedback to monitor their progress. When they go to university, they will find they are expected to be much more in control of their own learning.

Teaching is done through lectures, seminars and tutorials, but there is also great emphasis on independent study, together with group and experiential learning. At Salford, we mirror real working environments, by setting tasks that encourage students to organise, plan and communicate between themselves, coming up with shared solutions to problems provided by industry.

All this is likely to seem rather strange to students in the first few weeks; we therefore ensure there is plenty of support available, from tutors to study skills sessions. Every student will be allocated a personal tutor who is the first point of call for any academic worries, from missing lectures to changing modules or even courses. We also run sessions to help our students be better organised, better prepared for exams, and more effective at planning and coursework, as well as providing study support in Maths and English.

Remember, universities have strict entry requirements to ensure that we only offer places to students who we are sure can cope with the level and amount of work a degree in their chosen subject entails.

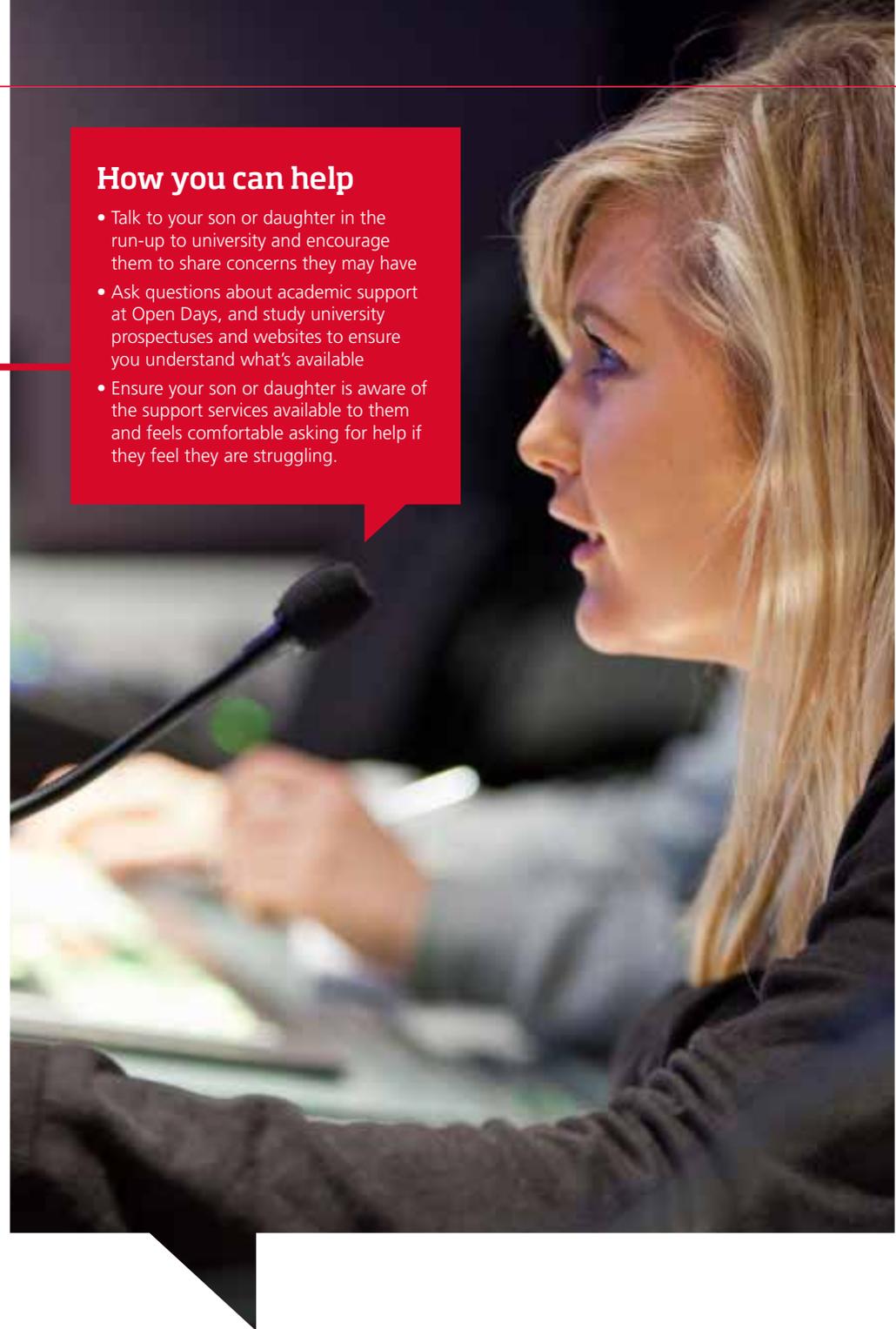
You can find out about the support that Salford offers by visiting

www.askus.salford.ac.uk



How you can help

- Talk to your son or daughter in the run-up to university and encourage them to share concerns they may have
- Ask questions about academic support at Open Days, and study university prospectuses and websites to ensure you understand what's available
- Ensure your son or daughter is aware of the support services available to them and feels comfortable asking for help if they feel they are struggling.



"I'm worried that my son or daughter won't make friends"

Even if your son or daughter has many friends at home, going to university will present new challenges. They will meet new people throughout their first semester, including staff within the school, fellow students in lectures or seminars, and a sea of new faces during Welcome activities. If they choose to live away from home, they will also be living with people that are not family members – perhaps for the first time in their lives.



Our research showed that 58% of students were worried about making friends, and 46% of parents worry that their child will be homesick.

At the University of Salford, we pride ourselves on being a friendly and welcoming university – and we want to ensure all our students have a productive yet enjoyable time with us. Our Welcome programme is packed with social activities specifically designed to help new students make friends.

These include campus tours, trips into Manchester and beyond, sports sessions and workshops about student jobs and volunteering. There are also opportunities to meet the Students' Union, join clubs and societies including sports groups, and learn about our local community, and making the most out of their time here.

How you can help

- Remind them that everyone else will be in exactly the same boat!
- Tell them to smile, be outwardly confident and take opportunities to meet people and join in activities
- Suggest they get involved before they start – they can 'like' us on Facebook to make contact with other students, and follow us on Twitter so they are up-to-date with our news
- Encourage your son or daughter to be realistic. You can't be best friends with everyone overnight. Instead, they could focus on getting to know one or two people who share their interests or their accommodation, then build from there.



"I'm worried that my son or daughter won't manage financially"

This is not a new concern, but it is growing. From our survey, 64% of parents of those preparing to go to university were worried about how their son or daughter would cope financially, compared with 54% of parents of graduates. There is a lot of confusion about how student finance works, and parents worry about students leaving university with large amounts of debt.

No one should be put off studying for a degree because of the costs. There is funding available for all students and no need to pay any money upfront.

The main outgoings for students are tuition fees and living costs. Depending on your child's circumstances, their course and where they study, they could get a range of financial support to help with both. All first time undergraduate students are eligible for a Tuition Fee Loan of up to £9,000 per year, which is paid directly to their university by Student Finance England.

Students can also apply for a Maintenance Loan, to help with their living costs. Most of the Maintenance Loan is non-means tested, but part of it does depend on household income.

For students starting university in September 2016, the maximum amounts that they will get to help with living costs are:

Living with parent	Up to £6,904
Studying outside London and not living with parents	Up to £8,200
Living and studying abroad for at least one academic term	Up to £9,391

A calculator to estimate what your son or daughter may be eligible for is available at: gov.uk/student-finance-calculator

There's also extra support for those with specific circumstances, for example, students with a disability, including a mental-health condition or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia.

At Salford, we also offer a range of scholarships and bursaries, to help towards the cost of studying. Our Excellence Scholarship rewards high achievers; the Salford Student Bursary is awarded to Greater Manchester residents from households with a declared household income of £25,000 or less; and our Salford Advantage Bursaries are specifically for UK students who have been in the care system and/or those estranged from their parents.

More information on our offering is available at: www.salford.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/money-matters

If your child is only applying for the Tuition Fee Loan and the basic Maintenance Loan, you won't have to do anything; they can just fill in the application with their own details. If your child is applying for student finance that depends on your household income, they'll be asked to enter your email address when completing their application so that Student Finance England can send you detailed instructions on what you need to do.

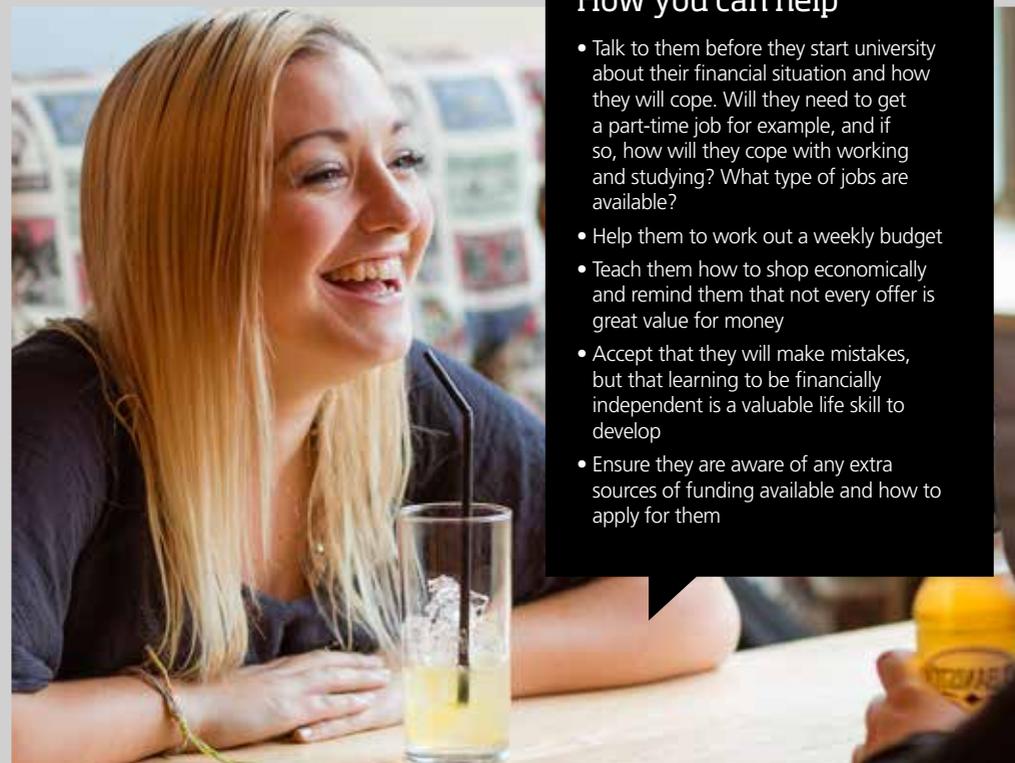
Your child won't have to repay their loan until they've left university or college and their income is over £21,000 a year (that's £404 a week or £1,750 a month). They'll then repay 9% of their income over these amounts, through the income

tax system. If their income drops below these thresholds, repayments will stop and any debt remaining after 30 years is automatically written off.

Remember, if your son or daughter chooses to study at Salford, the cost of living is much more affordable than in many other parts of the UK.

How you can help

- Talk to them before they start university about their financial situation and how they will cope. Will they need to get a part-time job for example, and if so, how will they cope with working and studying? What type of jobs are available?
- Help them to work out a weekly budget
- Teach them how to shop economically and remind them that not every offer is great value for money
- Accept that they will make mistakes, but that learning to be financially independent is a valuable life skill to develop
- Ensure they are aware of any extra sources of funding available and how to apply for them



www.askus.salford.ac.uk/money

"I'm worried about my child getting a job when they graduate"

Of course no university can guarantee jobs for its graduates in the current economic climate. But at the University of Salford we provide a distinctive student experience with opportunities to enhance your son or daughter's academic and personal development whilst maximising their employability in a competitive world.

At Salford we offer a range of opportunities and support to provide our students with real advantages when entering the world of employment.

These initiatives include:

- Work experience opportunities
- Volunteering
- Careers information, advice and guidance
- Study Skills support
- Enterprise and self-employment advice
- CV writing support

In addition, students have the opportunity to engage with graduate employers through opportunities in or outside of their course, including live projects, employability and work-based learning modules, and work shadowing. Many of our courses are developed in partnership with industry and we work closely with business leaders in the development of our curriculum to ensure that our graduates possess the skills that employers want.

There are also a number of funded opportunities that students can apply for, including 'Start Up Awards' which provide funding up to £1,000, for individuals to try out their business idea, and the 'Santander Universities Travel Award', to support students wishing to undertake an international visit or project to support their study, research or career ambitions.

For more information on how we can help your son or daughter can stand out from the crowd when entering the world of employment, please visit:

www.careers.salford.ac.uk

How you can help

- Encourage your son or daughter to get involved with all activities that we provide to boost their employability, both inside the classroom and in their free time
- Ask questions at Open Days to see how the above is demonstrated within your son or daughter's course.

Visit www.salford.ac.uk to find out our Open Day dates.



“I’m worried about the lack of contact hours in their chosen course”



‘Contact time’ is the amount of time a student is in direct contact with an academic from their course (for example, in lectures, seminars and tutorials). All universities are now obliged to list the contact time for their undergraduate programmes to enable comparisons of courses to be made. Parents are understandably worried that this time stated can seem rather low, particularly when compared to a full-time working week, and taken in the context of the tuition fees being charged.

However, much university study is intended to be individual learning, or group projects, which are often set outside of the traditional classroom environment. There is much less emphasis on telling students what to study or how to think; this has wide ranging benefits such as encouraging reading around a subject, rather than just accepting a single point of view, and therefore encouraging debate and developing independent thought.

In addition, students are obliged to set their own working patterns, possibly organised around part-time work, and to discipline themselves to produce assignments on time and meet deadlines. These are the type of life skills that employers require from graduates, and learning them is a vital part of the university experience.

How you can help

- Ensure your son or daughter is aware of the different learning styles they will encounter
- Find out more about the structure of all our courses on Course Finder, the University's online resource, which lists all contact hours, and describes the teaching and assessment methods used: www.salford.ac.uk/study
- Ensure they know where to seek help if required, and encourage them to ask questions when they need to.

"How do I help my child choose the right course?"

There are thousands of undergraduate courses to choose from, and hundreds of universities and colleges offering them. So how do you start to narrow the field?

It's important your son or daughter studies a subject they enjoy, but you'll also want to see value for money in terms of good employability prospects and opportunities for personal development. With the right support, your son or daughter should be able to find exactly the right course for them.

They may already have very strong ideas about the types of career they are interested in, the course they would like to study or the university they want to attend. Alternatively, they may be interested in a wide range of options – or just looking for inspiration.

Doing plenty of research is critical. 85% of both students and parents view university Open Days as the most important information source when researching universities, with websites and advice from tutors providing the next most valuable sources of advice.

However, our research also showed the majority of students want their parents to take a hands-off approach, leaving them to do their own research, but being there to provide support where needed. The students see this decision making process as a key stage in their development – the first step towards independence.

Prospective students in Year 12 usually visit higher education conventions organised by UCAS. These are national events where students have the opportunity to speak to university representatives, collect prospectuses and attend seminars about university life. Whilst parents don't usually attend these events, you can discuss the information that your child has gathered afterwards.

How you can help

- Suggest different options but try not to enforce your own views too much – students are likely to be gathering advice from a huge range of different sources including friends, school teachers and careers advisers, and even current students via social media
- Do be available to attend Open Days – students are likely to want support at these events, even if it's just in the form of a transport provider!

www.salford.ac.uk/visit



"How do I help them choose the right university?"

Our research showed parents have varying criteria when helping children select a university, with the top four being: reputation, course content, facilities and employability. Students, on the other hand, look for course content, location, reputation and then employability.

Assessing a university's reputation goes much further than league tables, which are useful in certain circumstances, but are produced in different ways and assign weighting to a variety of factors. You should also look at wider ranging criteria such as: research and teaching quality, facilities, average UCAS tariff points, graduate employment prospects and staff profiles. Many parents also gauge a university's reputation on word of mouth, and will talk to friends, family and colleagues for advice.

Students, on the other hand, recognise that course content is their most important factor. If a university doesn't offer a particular course, they will dismiss it immediately, and conversely the right course can often persuade a student to apply to a university they hadn't previously considered. Second on the list for students is location – the decision whether to commute from home or live in student or other private rented accommodation is critical to the student experience – and the atmosphere on campus is vital too.

Visit us on an Open Day

Open Days are the best way to get an in-depth understanding of what a university feels like. Alongside academic talks, we hold dedicated information sessions for parents and carers at our undergraduate Open Days to help you become more informed about issues surrounding university education, including guidance on student finance, accommodation and student life.

Our Open Days also give you the opportunity to meet academic staff and current students from across the University, visit subject facilities and see our accommodation. It's common for parents to accompany students to open days - you'll be most welcome – and we would encourage you to ask as many questions to get all the information you need to help your son or daughter make an informed decision on where to study.

Our 2016 Undergraduate Open Days will be held on:

- Friday 8th July
- Saturday 8th October
- Saturday 9th July
- Saturday 29th October

How you can help

- Early in the process, discuss the options of living at home or moving away. Finances could be an important factor in this decision
- If you child will commute to university there are still many different options, and they should attend open days and research universities within a commutable distance
- Use our online Course Finder to get a detailed overview of all our courses, including teaching quality, student satisfaction, employability rates and staff profiles
www.salford.ac.uk/study



"I'm worried about what this change will mean for me"

Many parents in our survey had some very strong concerns about how a child going to university would affect their own lives. Parents worried about what they would do with their time, whether their life would still have purpose – and even whether their marriage would survive! The parents of recent graduates were also able to vividly recall the real sense of loss they experienced.

Remember that although you are bound to have worries, you will also regain lots of time previously spent as taxi driver, cleaner and cook – which can be a very liberating experience.



Thinking about returning to education yourself?

If you have been considering studying at college or university yourself and this guide has prompted you to think about your own future, there are many routes into education. Why not make the most of Open Days and do some research for yourself?

At Salford many of our courses will take your life skills and work experience into consideration as entry requirements. We also offer the Salford Alternative Entry Scheme, which is specifically designed for people who would welcome the chance to study for an undergraduate degree (and all the opportunities associated with it) but who have not gained the traditional entry qualifications

What you can do

- Remind yourself of the reasons you wanted your son or daughter to go to university, and all the life experiences and personal development opportunities they will be enjoying
- You may decide to find a hobby to fill your extra time; perhaps you've always wanted to learn a new language, join a gym or take up a sport. Where possible try to involve your partner too – or take up a new hobby together
- If you've been inspired by the opportunities a degree can offer, you may even decide to return to education yourself.



Find out more at www.salford.ac.uk/saes

Why choose the University of Salford?

From career opportunities to live projects and overseas placements, here are some of the best reasons to study at Salford:

- We are committed to ensuring your son or daughter gets a measurable edge in the job market, by gaining the professional and personal skills they will need to succeed in every walk of life
 - Many of our courses are accredited by professional bodies providing the opportunity to gain professional membership and qualifications
 - Our academics have been carefully selected for the strength of their research, their links with industry and the passion they have for their subject
 - We are the only university with a campus at MediaCityUK, alongside the BBC, ITV and more than 80 independents from the creative and digital sectors
 - Our facilities at MediaCityUK have all been developed in partnership with industry, to ensure they meet the current and future needs of employers
 - We're investing in our main campus too – The New Adelphi Building is our £55 million, state-of-the-art centre for creativity and artistic expression. Opening in early 2016, it will have 500m² of exhibition space, 14 instrumental and practice rooms, 5 industry-standard recording studios and a 350 capacity theatre
 - We have a dedicated student life team, AskUS, who provide advice and support to all students on a range of issues such as finance, health and wellbeing, disability and learner support and careers and employability
- We are in a great location, it's just 2km from our main campus in Manchester city centre
 - There are great transport links too – buses run every few minutes and we have a train station in the centre of our campus
 - We guarantee a place in accommodation to all our first year students
 - Our new residences, Peel Park Quarter, opened in September 2015 housing a total of 1,367 bedrooms all with en-suite facilities. Situated in the heart of our campus, residents benefit from communal areas including a cinema room, gym, TV and games room and group study lounges.
 - Our other accommodation sites are within easy walking distance of the university and we run a free bus service during term time to link them with the main campus



Understanding UCAS



The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service processes applications to almost all full-time undergraduate courses at institutions in the UK, acting as a 'middle-man' between institutions and applicants.

If your son or daughter is in education, they will most likely make their UCAS application through their school or college. They will have to write a personal statement to support their application, and a teacher/tutor will write a reference for them. Applications can't be sent to UCAS without these two elements.

Students can apply for up to 5 choices; this could be a similar course at 5 institutions, 5 courses at 1 institution, or any mixture in-between.

University admissions staff will assess whether each applicant is capable of completing a course, based on their achieved and predicted grades, personal statement and academic reference. Certain courses ask students to attend an interview or audition, or submit a portfolio – if this applies to your son or daughter, further guidance will be given about the process and they'll need to prepare accordingly.

The application process can take a matter of weeks, but can also take much longer. When a decision has been made, students will receive the response in UCAS Track. It may be:

- An unconditional offer; their place is guaranteed
- A conditional offer; their place will depend on obtaining certain grades, or successful interview
- An unsuccessful decision; your son or daughter has not been offered a place on the course (but they may have been made an alternative offer)

When your son or daughter has had responses from every institution they have applied to, they will have to choose:

- **A firm choice;** their preferred course and institution
- **An insurance choice;** a back-up with lower entry requirements, a course and institution they would also be happy with

UCAS Extra

If your son or daughter receives no offers, they can still apply to university through a process called **UCAS Extra**, which runs from February until early July. In Extra, they can search for universities with available places and make one additional choice at a time.

Clearing

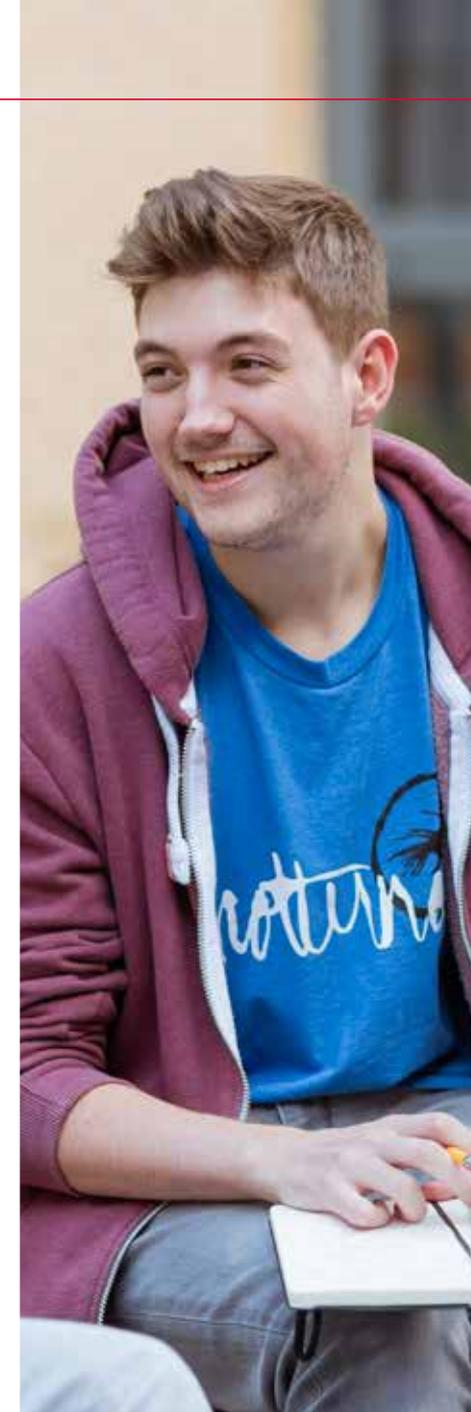
Students that don't use Extra, or are unsuccessful, can wait until they receive their exam results and then apply to universities through the UCAS **Clearing** process in August. This service matches students with institutions that still have places to fill. Students who have not met the conditions of their firm or insurance choices will also use this process to find a course.

Vacancies are published online and students need to do their research into courses that may be suitable for them. They will then need to phone the institution they are interested in and speak to a course tutor directly. They should carefully consider any offers they have been made, and ensure they pick the right option rather than rushing in to a decision.

Universities publish lots of Clearing information on their websites in the summer months.

Points to Remember

- Remind your son or daughter to keep their contact details up to date on UCAS, particularly email address and mobile phone – most institutions send electronic communications to applicants.
- Universities will not discuss your son or daughter's application with you without prior consent. We recommend applicants contact us directly whenever possible.
- Discuss the importance of meeting UCAS deadlines with your son/daughter; they could miss out their preferred course if they are late.
- Universities receive the grades of most national qualifications (A-Level, BTEC etc) through UCAS, but if your son or daughter has taken an alternative qualification, or has re-sat a GCSE, they will need to send these results directly to the institutions they are holding offers with.



For more information on applying to university, visit www.ucas.com

Step by Step Guide



to applying to university

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UCAS DEADLINE

15 January

This is the deadline that guarantees that your son or daughter's UCAS application will be considered by the institutions they have applied to. Many courses will accept late applications after this date, providing they have not met their quota of offers for the year.



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BEGIN TO RECEIVE OFFERS

November - March

Your son or daughter may begin to receive offers from the universities to which they have applied to within a matter of weeks. Do not be alarmed if offers take longer – each institution will have different admissions processes.



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CHOOSE UNIVERSITY AND COURSE

March - September

Your son or daughter should visit UCAS fairs, talk to teachers, careers advisers, friends and you

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ATTEND UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

May - October

Most universities will hold Open Days across this period.

You can find out our dates and book your place here – www.salford.ac.uk/visit



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APPLY FOR FINANCE

From January onwards

Begin the student finance application sooner rather than later.

Visit www.gov.uk/student-finance for more information and opening dates/deadlines.



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BOOK ACCOMMODATION

May - September

If your son or daughter has received and accepted an offer from Salford, we start taking applications for accommodation from May.

Find out more at:

www.salford.ac.uk/study/life-at-salford/accommodation



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DEADLINE FOR ACCEPTING PLACE

Early May

By the end of April, your son or daughter should have received their offers.

If they applied by the January deadline, they must make their firm and insurance choices by the date set in early May (normally on or around the 5th), otherwise UCAS will reject all offers by default.



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APPLICANT VISIT DAYS

February - April

If your son or daughter has been made an offer from Salford, you will be invited to attend an Applicant Visit Day to learn more about the course they have applied for.



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DEADLINE FOR STUDENT FINANCE

End of May

To guarantee payment at the start of term, Student Finance applications should be submitted by the end of May.



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RESULTS DAY

Mid-August

Your son or daughter will receive their results in mid-August (students on some courses may get them before this date).

If they have achieved the required grades, we'll automatically send confirmation of their place at Salford to UCAS.

If not, there may still be a chance that we'll accept them through Clearing. For more information on this process, please visit www.ucas.com



11 ↓

GET READY

August - September

Once your son or daughter's place has been confirmed, we'll start to send communications detailing everything they'll need to know and do before joining us.

It's now time for them to start their exciting new life as a university student!



University of Salford

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www.salford.ac.uk

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t: +44 (0) 161 295 4545
e: enquiries@salford.ac.uk
www.salford.ac.uk/study

UCAS

sfe
student finance england
the student finance experts