

Thinking about higher education?



If you're in Y11 and aiming at higher education, there are several routes open to you. The best one for you normally depends on how you learn best and on what and where you hope to study.

A Levels

A Levels involve studying the knowledge and ideas behind a subject. Courses last for 2 years and you take exams at the end. If this type of learning and assessment suits you, they can leave plenty of higher education and career choices open.

If you're choosing A Levels, think about the subjects you enjoy, your strongest subjects and any career ideas. Many higher education courses accept a range of A Levels if the grades are right but take special care if you're interested in sectors such as medicine, health care or STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) as these courses often want specific subjects (although some offer an additional foundation year instead).

The website: www.informedchoices.ac.uk can help explore where subjects might lead.

There are a small number of **AS Levels** on offer in Sheffield. An AS Level lasts for one year and is worth 40% of an A Level. If you go on to take an A Level in the same subject then the AS grade will not count.

Vocational qualifications

Vocational qualifications at Level 3, such as BTEC or T Levels are also a route into higher education, although they are more likely to lead a course related to your studies. They come in a range of subjects such as Health and Social Care or Engineering. Many higher education courses also accept a mix of A Levels plus a vocational qualification.

Apprenticeships

A Level 3 (advanced) apprenticeship can also be a route into higher education, e.g. if it leads to qualifications that are included in the UCAS Tariff (see below) . There are also higher and degree apprenticeships which are jobs that study for higher education qualifications with your tuition fees paid by your employer.

Entry requirements

Entry requirements for higher education can vary so you should check on www.ucas.com and with individual universities. But as a rule you need:

- 3 (sometimes 2) A Levels, or equivalent vocational qualifications, for a degree.
- 1-2 A Levels, or equivalent vocational qualifications, for a HND or Foundation Degree.

Some courses require specific subjects, grades or modules while others use a points system (**UCAS Tariff**). Certain courses, e.g. in medicine and law, also set tests. Requirements might be more flexible if you're older and have work experience. Visit www.ucas.com for more details.



 **GCSEs**

You GCSE grades matter too. You're likely to need at least some grades 9-4, including English and sometimes Maths and sciences. Selective universities often expect some grades 9-7. If your qualifications are equivalent to GCSE, check that they are accepted.

Work experience

Certain courses, such as teaching, nursing and medicine, expect work experience. Plan this well in advance as you will need to discuss it in your application.

What will it cost?

This information is based on changes that are expected from September 2023.

There are two types of cost

1. Tuition fees which can be up to £9,250 a year (higher for accelerated 2-year degrees). You don't pay any fees in advance as your student loan will cover them entirely.
2. Living costs which have to be paid during your course, such as rent, bills and travel. There is a maintenance loan to help (which depends partly on household income) plus extra support in certain circumstances. Your maintenance loan may not cover all your costs, especially if you pay rent. There are also scholarships, grants and bursaries.

Many students have part time jobs. Provided this don't interfere with your studies, they can help the money go a bit further and, also be useful when you finish university as many graduate employers expect work experience.

Repaying your student loan

You only start repaying student loans when you've finished your course and your work pay reaches a certain level. This will be at £25,000 a year from 2023. Unlike most loans, repayments are based on how much you earn and not on how much you owe. You will be charged interest and, from 2023-24 this will be set at the Retail Price Index. Students who start university from September 2023 will have any unpaid loan cancelled after 40 years.

Scholarships, grants, and bursaries don't have to be repaid.

Find out more:

University websites and admissions staff

www.ucas.com

www.gov.uk/student-finance

www.informedchoices.ac.uk

www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship

www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.shu.ac.uk

www.sheffield.ac.uk

