

Choosing the right path for me

Which way should I go? Not sure which route is best for you? Use our step-by-step guide to find out what exactly you want from HE – spend some time thinking about your answers to the questions, and what you want to do in the long term. Or visit the Connexions Direct Jobs4u careers database at www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u

STEP 1

I want to do higher education because...

What's the career you picture yourself in? Do any of the jobs you're interested in require specific qualifications? Maybe you would like to carry on studying a certain subject before deciding what you want to do – is there anything you're really interested in studying further?

STEP 2

My finances mean that I will need to...

Do you know where to go for information about financial help? Directgov is a good starting point – try www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance. Will you want to get a part-time job to help support yourself? You might want to consider doing a part-time course.

STEP 3

My interests are...

Do you have a good idea of what you want to do? Or are you interested in studying a particular subject in more depth? Do you know what jobs your favourite subject or talent could lead to? If not, get in touch with your local Connexions service for advice on choosing and applying for a course or visit www.connexions-direct.com

STEP 4

The type of study I prefer is...

Would you prefer to work and study, so you can support yourself or others? Maybe you simply don't like the idea of continuing in full time education.

STEP 5

My living costs will be...

Perhaps you want to stay at home. Maybe it would save money, or you need to help look after someone in your family. If so, think about how you can still get the most out of your time at university or college and whether you can join any clubs or societies to make friends. If you plan to move away, think about the type of accommodation you would like to stay in: halls with hundreds of other students, or a private house with a handful of others? Don't forget to include the costs of all the different options.

STEP 6

Where do I want to study?

Do you want to study in a busy city, or study on a campus? Or experience a bit of both? Do you like to be near the sea? Will you need to be near enough to home to visit most weekends?

Sounds good – how do I apply?

Do your research. When it comes to applying for university or college, you'll need to do some research to make sure you pick the courses and places to study that are best for you. Leave yourself plenty of time to gather information and discuss options with your parents or guardian.

You can start your research by visiting websites like www.ucas.com to find out more about the application process. Use the checklist here to help you.

Step 1: Investigate the possibilities

Draw up a shortlist of colleges or universities that offer the course you're interested in. Start by applying for prospectuses and finding out whether you can attend any open days and see what the place and people are really like.

You can get prospectuses from the university or college itself (many have online application forms, so look on the internet) or by visiting your local Connexions service. There's often an alternative prospectus produced by the students themselves.

You can also get information on what and where to study from the Unistats website <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>, which brings together key sources of official information and statistical data.

Find out about:

The course

How will you be taught – lectures, seminars, tutorials or one-on-one sessions? How will you be assessed – coursework, regular tests and exams or lots of exams at the end of the course? What is the course content?

You can usually find this information on the university or college's website, or call them for more details.

The place

If you are looking at colleges and universities away from home, investigate what the place itself is like. Think about whether you would prefer to live in a bustling city, or in a small seaside town. You should also think about the facilities, activities and clubs on offer, what the nightlife is like, accommodation and what the student mix is like. Again, a lot of this information will be available on the university or college's website or in the prospectus.

