Visaroute: Map your journey to Higher Education
Information & Advice
LANCASHIRE VISAROUTE

Lancashire Visaroute is a new on-line programme produced by the Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network. Visaroute enables you to:

- Access information on availability of degree level courses across Lancashire
- Allows you to find out which courses match your qualifications and needs
- Show what vocational routes your current studies can take you along
- Helps you to find out more information on how to apply for courses

Do you want to study full-time or part-time? UCAS only deals with full-time courses only but you can use the Visaroute programme [http://www.visaroute.org.uk/](http://www.visaroute.org.uk/) to look for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

This Careers Advice Brochure provides you with supplementary information in addition to Visaroute.
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Not chosen your A levels or other post-16 course yet?
If you are looking at this site before you have decided what to do after your GCSEs:

For information about what subjects you will need for certain courses and career go to http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/uploads/Informed-Choices-final_1.pdf.

Visit www.prospects.ac.uk. You will find study advice, careers advice, application and interview tips, options with your chosen subject and much more. You can also find out what jobs would suit you and the qualifications you need for them.

The UCAS website www.ucas.co.uk will also give you the information about which qualifications you will need for all the different degree courses.

Not sure what career you want?
If you are unsure about your future career, there are a number of resources you can use to give you ideas. Try the following:

To find out where a degree could take you go to www.prospects.ac.uk. You will find study advice, careers advice, application and interview tips, options with your chosen subject and much more. You can also find out what jobs would suit you.

Details of 750 jobs can be found at https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/planningyourcareer/jobprofiles/Pages/default.aspx

Note: these details were last updated in June 2010.

Sector Skills Councils are independent UK-wide organisations which have information about jobs and careers in a range of different occupational areas. Visit http://www.ukces.org.uk/sector-skills-councils/about-sscs/the-list-of-sscs/ for links to the individual Skill Sector Council websites and follow the links for careers.

Kudos is suitable for 13-19 year olds and matches you to careers and helps you explore your career ideas. This is not a free site and you will need a login code – ask at your school or college if they subscribe to this site or other careers sites. Go to http://www.cascaid.co.uk/site/mainb253.html

When asked about qualifications choose the highest level you hope to complete before seeking work.

Adult Directions is similar to Kudos but is suitable for people from 18 onwards. This is not a free site and you will need a login code – ask at your place of study if they subscribe to this site or other careers sites. Go to http://www.cascaid.co.uk/site/main501b.html. As with Kudos, when asked about qualifications choose the highest level you hope to complete before seeking work. You will need a login code - ask at your place of study.

Aimhigher Lancashire has developed an interactive webpage with lots of interactive information about accessing higher education in Lancashire www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire
Are you not sure which course to take?
Do you want to study full-time or part-time? UCAS only deals with full-time courses only but you can use the Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ to look for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information. Aimhigher Lancashire has developed an interactive webpage with lots of interactive information about accessing higher education in Lancashire www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire

A large number of courses on the UCAS website have entry profiles which can help you decide which universities or colleges and which courses to apply to. Many courses with the same title are actually very different in terms of content and study methods, so entry profiles help you to decide which will suit you best. They provide details about courses, entry qualifications, selection criteria and the admissions policy. They are compiled by staff at the university or college, who understand what you need to know about their courses, and what kind of personal qualities, interests and experiences it will be helpful for you to have, so you can be successful on the course you choose. Go to http://www.ucas.com/students/choosingcourses/entryrequirements.

For more information on entry profiles.

The ‘best’ course for one student might not necessarily be the ‘best’ for another: people have different priorities. You can use the Unistats website to compare facts and figures on institutions and courses. Go to http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/ You’ll find information on:

- Course completion rates
- Student achievement
- Graduate employment
- Student population (including the percentage of mature, part-time and overseas students)
- Students’ qualifications on entry

Always check the specific entry requirements for your preferred course(s) to make sure you have/will have the appropriate qualifications. You can do this through http://www.ucas.co.uk/

For help on:
- Choosing a subject
- Choosing a course to suit you
- Mode of study (full-time, part-time, distance learning etc.)
- Type of course (joint honours, modular, sandwich, foundation degrees etc.)

Go to http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DecidingWhereToStudy/DG_4017740

UKCourseFinder helps you locate your ideal university degree course. You can complete a study interests questionnaire to pin-point your interests in 150+ degree disciplines. You can choose the location, study style, type of university or college and CourseFinder will search through over 50,000 Higher Education courses from 500 UK Institutions. Go to http://www.ukcoursefinder.com/default.aspx
If you are still deciding which course and institution might suit you, take the Stamford Test. It is a short questionnaire which can help to match your interests and abilities to possible higher education subjects. Many students find this helpful when trying to make up their mind.

http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/choosingcourses/choosingcourse/stamfordtest

All universities hold Open Days throughout the year. A full list of events can be found at www.opendays.com. Try to visit all the ones which interest you – you can often visit the departments which interest you to find out more about their courses.

You can generally apply for a maximum of five courses, but there are restrictions on the amount of choices for some courses.

You can apply to a maximum of:
- four courses in any one of medicine/dentistry/veterinary medicine/veterinary science
- one course at either the University of Oxford or the University of Cambridge (unless you already have a degree or will have gained a degree before September of this cycle in which case you can apply to both)

You can use your remaining choice(s) for any other subject. For example, if you have made four choices for medicine, you could still make one choice for veterinary medicine. Visit http://www.ucas.com/students/applying/howtoapply/choices for more information.

If you receive offers you can accept one as a “firm” offer and another as your “insurance” offer. It is wise to have an insurance offer with lower entry requirements than your first choice. This is not a requirement as the conditions for your insurance choice can be higher than your firm choice, but be aware that if you’re not accepted by your firm choice, it’s unlikely that you will be accepted for an insurance choice that requests higher grades. Visit http://www.ucas.co.uk/students/choosingcourses/ for general information and guidance on how to make your choices.

What are the different types of courses – what do they mean?
The variety of higher education courses can be confusing, for example, Foundation Degrees, HND, sandwich courses, single/combined courses, modular courses. For an explanation of the different types of course go to http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/wheretostart/heexplained/coursetypes

You can also study part-time. Use the Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ to look for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

What are the different levels of courses – what do they mean?
You will probably have seen courses described as being Level 1, 2, 3 etc. Examples of courses at each level are:
- Level 1 – GCSEs Grades D-G, NVQ Level 1
- Level 2 – GCSEs Grades A*-C, Intermediate
Apprenticeships, NVQ Level 2

**Level 3** – A levels, Advanced Apprenticeships, BTEC National Diplomas, NVQ Level 3

**Level 4** – Certificate of Higher Education, NVQ Level 4, Higher National Certificate

**Level 5** – Foundation Degree, Higher National Diploma, NVQ Level 5

**Level 6** – Degrees

**Level 7** – Masters Degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas

Where should you study?

This is just as important a decision as what you study. You will be at university or college for between two and five years depending upon the course you study and you need to choose a place where you will feel comfortable and happy. All universities and colleges hold Open Days throughout the year. A full list of events can be found at [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com). Try to visit all the ones which interest you – it will help you get a feel of the place and whether it’s right for you.

You should think about what is important to you besides the subject. Go to [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DecidingWhereToStudy/DG_4017763](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DecidingWhereToStudy/DG_4017763)

for help on:

- Deciding where to study
- Deciding whether to live at home or move away
- Facilities at different universities
- Accommodation and costs
- Support during your course
- Facts and figures on universities and colleges

If you want to live at home/keep your job you may want to consider part-time study. Use the Visaroute programme [http://www.visaroute.org.uk/](http://www.visaroute.org.uk/) to look for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

Look also at the “Things to consider” section of this website.

PUSH is an independent guide to universities covering not just courses but all things related to student life including:

- male/female ratio
- number of students
- number of applications per place (this is an average across the university, you may be able to get information on specific courses by contacting the course leader – see the relevant university website for contact details)
- cost of housing
- cost of beer

plus much more. Go to [http://www.push.co.uk/Uni-profiles/s.htm](http://www.push.co.uk/Uni-profiles/s.htm) for the university profiles. The home page is at [http://www.push.co.uk/](http://www.push.co.uk/)

Visit [http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/choosing-the-right-university](http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/choosing-the-right-university) for help in choosing by location, type of university, facilities, cost, reputation and more.

Universities and look at the student guides to find out what students at each university have to say about it. You can also find information about careers, courses, employment rates, salaries and much more at http://www.bestcourse4me.com/

Aimhigher Lancashire has developed an interactive webpage with lots of interactive information about accessing higher education in Lancashire www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire

There aren’t any official UK league tables for universities and colleges, though many newspapers produce their own, unofficial tables.

Who offers higher education courses?
Higher education courses can be studied at a variety of institutions, not just universities. Many colleges of further education now offer higher education courses and some have a dedicated university centre. Full-time and part-time courses are available. Apply for all full-time courses through www.ucas.co.uk. Apply for part-time courses direct to the college or university offering them.

The Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ will allow you to search for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

Part-time study
Things to consider about part-time study:
• It is likely to be cheaper per year
• You may already have a job which you could keep.
• You could get a job whilst studying (although many full-time students also do this)
• It can be difficult to juggle work and study, but nowadays many full-time students work as well.
• Any job you get will count towards your work experience which will support future applications
Use the Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ to look for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

Aimhigher Lancashire has developed the Aimhigher wall with lots of information about higher education and careers in Lancashire. Go to www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire

Distance learning, where you study at home in your own time from materials (books, DVDs and TV programmes provided); blended learning has some attendance at the college or university and core distance learning. The Open University http://www.open.ac.uk/ offers a wide range of distance learning courses; other colleges and universities offer an increasing range of distance or blended learning courses.

Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to earn and study part-time. See the Apprenticeships section under the ‘Employed and Apprenticeship route to higher education’ heading.

See also the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Finance’ heading.

**What if you decide not to go to college or university?**

If you decide not to go to University the following website can help you make informed decisions about the future. It provides a range of information on routes including apprenticeships, foundation degrees, diplomas, gap years, distance learning, jobs etc.

http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/
Types of colleges and universities
There are two main types of university – campus universities where all the buildings are together on one site including accommodation, entertainment and sports facilities – and universities where the buildings are scattered, usually but not always, city centre universities.

Do you want to be in a place where everything is close by without ever having to leave the university if you don’t wish to? Then choose a campus university. Most campus universities will have transport into the nearest town so it is also quite possible to explore the wider area if you wish. Some campus universities work on a “College” system whereby students are allocated to one of a number of colleges, each of which has its own accommodation and social and recreational facilities.

Or, if you want easy access to a wider range of facilities or to be in the hustle and bustle of a large town or city then think about one of the universities which are based within the town or city.

How big is the university? How many students does it have? Do you prefer large or small?

To take a look around universities and colleges in Lancashire, Aimhigher Lancashire can take you on a 360 degree campus tour of many institutions in the region [www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire](http://www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire)

College and University facilities
What do you want from the university besides your degree? For example:

- Are you keen on sport? What types? Does the university have facilities for these? How far away from the university are they?
- What type of accommodation do you prefer? Shared bathrooms? Ensuite? (See “Costs” in this section of the website.)
- What are the social facilities like – pubs, clubs, music venues, theatre, cinema?
Do you want to live at home/away from home?
There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these options:

- If you live at home, your accommodation will be cheaper and you can keep in closer touch with your friends at home, but you may miss out on using university facilities and much of the social life and that is part of going to university.

- How much will your travel cost you? If you live at home you will need to travel to university. You may also need to do this if you live away from home depending on the type of university you go to. Universities will generally offer you accommodation to rent during your first year and if this is on campus you would have no travel costs. Students often move into private rented accommodation during their second and third years and there can then be some travel costs involved.

- If you move away from home, how often will you want to come back? How long will it take you? How much will it cost you? A student railcard would help with the cost of train fares.

- Are you likely to be homesick? This may be the first time you have been away from home and you may miss your family and friends. Most people are for a while, but it often passes as you get involved in the course and social life. Things you can do to help include:
  - Remember that everyone is feeling the same. You are all surrounded by strangers and don’t want to be rejected. It is perfectly normal to feel anxious and you definitely shouldn’t see yourself as a failure.
  - Improve your chances of finding like-minded friends by joining university clubs and societies which interest you.
  - Put up photos and ring home or even pop home for a visit. You may want your family to visit and see your new base too. Daily phone calls or returning home every weekend, however, may just keep the wound open and deter you from adjusting to university life. Try to reduce phone calls and visits over a few weeks and provide yourself with as many enjoyable distractions as possible.

What does it cost?
Your main costs apart from your fees will be for accommodation, food and entertainment. Things to consider include:

- Ensuite accommodation is more expensive than that with shared facilities
- Accommodation costs vary greatly between universities, although the north is generally cheaper than the south
- Some universities offer accommodation and food packages or the option to cook for yourself
- You can spend a lot of money on entertainment and socialising. Work out a weekly budget for yourself and stick to it!
- Some courses may require one or more periods of practical placement. These may be in a different part of the country or even abroad incurring additional travel and accommodation costs. Check with the university for more information
Visit http://www.push.co.uk/Uni-profiles/s.htm for an overview of costs. Individual universities will be able to give you their accommodation costs.

You could reduce your costs through studying part-time. Use the Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ will allow you to search for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

Do you want to take a year out?
You may be thinking about taking a year out between college and university. You can do this either by applying when you are in Year 13 but deferring your entry, i.e. applying for the following year, or by not applying at all in Year 13 and waiting until the following year to do so. If you are considering taking a year out there a few things you need to think about:

• What will you do during your year out?
Universities view applications more favourably if you have a plan for the year and can demonstrate what you will gain from it. Working to gain relevant experience or saving towards the cost of university can be beneficial. Travelling can also be good provided you can demonstrate what you have gained from it such as increased independence, an understanding of other cultures, planning and organisation skills etc. It is not a good idea to basically do nothing during a year out as admissions tutors will consider the reasons and benefits of a year out for applicants to their courses. A year out might not always be appropriate for certain courses, check with the university before considering this option.

• Will there be any changes to the fee system which will affect the amount you will need to pay if you go a year later? If you are eligible to apply for 2011 entry but decide to defer until 2012 you will have to pay up to £9,000 per year in course fees (those starting in 2011 will pay up to £3375 per year). You will not have to pay any fees up front whenever you start – see the ‘Fees’ section under the ‘Finance’ heading for more information on this.
Seeking information and guidance

Connexions Direct offers information to 13-19 year olds on a wide range of topics including careers, learning, money health etc. as well as confidential advice and practical help. Connexions Direct advisers are there to listen and won’t judge you and are available to talk to from 8am to 2am, 7 days a week. Go to http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/index.htm

Aimhigher Lancashire has developed an interactive webpage with lots of interactive information about accessing higher education in Lancashire www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire

You can also visit the Lancashire Young People’s Service website for help on a similar range of issues to Connexions Direct. Go to http://yps.lancashire.gov.uk and for links to their interactive services go to http://yps.lancashire.gov.uk/node/55567

People over 18 can visit https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx to find information and advice.

Talk to as many people as you can about your plans and ideas. The more information you have the better, but remember, most people’s opinion will be coloured by their own experience or circumstances for example, universities need to sell themselves to you, your family’s ideas about university may relate to different requirements and expectations than yours.

Once in higher education – are you sure you’re on the right course?

If you feel you aren’t on the course which is right for you, don’t delay. Talk to the Student Services/Student Support Department or the Careers Service at your university as well as family and friends. The sooner you discuss this the more likely it is that you may be able to change course.
Finance

Fees
From September 2012, universities/colleges can charge up to £9,000 a year for higher education courses. This may increase in subsequent years. Those that charge between £6,000 and £9,000 will have to meet strict criteria to make sure that all students, regardless of background, can access those courses, if they meet the admissions criteria set by the university or college. Information about fees for each course should be available from mid-July 2011.

IT’S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT YOU DON’T HAVE TO PAY FOR THE COST OF YOUR TUITION UP FRONT. Read the section on “Can I afford to go to university?” for more information. The Government will provide the money up front for any eligible student in England who secures a place in higher education. You then take out a tuition loan which you start to repay when you are working and earning more than £21,000 a year. The tuition loan is available to all eligible students who live in England and are studying for their first degree or other higher education course.

The main site for finding about what student finance is available and how to apply is www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance. MAKE SURE YOU LOOK AT THE INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR IN WHICH YOU ARE GOING TO START UNIVERSITY.

This is the easiest way for new full-time students to apply for all funding for the course. (See also the ‘Loans and Grants’ section) The information provided on the site includes videos to take you through the different stages.

For UK and European Union students wishing to enter English universities and colleges from 1 September 2012 you can search for courses at www.ucas.co.uk from May 2011. Fees information will be available in mid-July 2011. It is likely that similarly titled courses at different institutions will charge different fees, so therefore it is important that prior to submitting your application, you are clear on exactly what the course fees are for the specific courses that interest you.

Visit http://www.ucas.com/students/studentfinance/ for a table showing how much you could expect to pay in fees depending on where you live and which country the university is in (England Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland).


If your circumstances change after you’ve applied for student finance, you’ll need to tell Student Finance England.

Fees for part-time study are cheaper than those for full-time. Check fees with the individual institutions. Use the Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ will allow you to search for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in
Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

**Loans and grants**

As well as loans to cover your fees, you can also get loans for living costs and possibly a non-repayable grant depending on the income of your household. These can go towards covering your costs such as accommodation, food, travel and course materials. You can find out more about financing your studies at [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm)

A National Scholarship programme will be available from 2012 to help students from households with lower incomes. Information is available from Summer 2011 at [www.ucas.co.uk](http://www.ucas.co.uk) and from individual universities.

If you have children or adult dependants, you can apply for non-repayable grants.

**Other financial support**

Your chosen university or college may have an “access” or “student support” fund. Enquire through their Student Services/Student Support department.

Student Cash Point [http://www.studentcashpoint.com](http://www.studentcashpoint.com) is a free website designed to help students like you find the funding you need to cover the costs of going to college and university. It is a comprehensive source of information on student grants, loans, bursaries, scholarships and awards.

You may be entitled to extra financial support from your university or college. This could be a bursary or a scholarship if you meet certain conditions set by your university or college. Bursaries and scholarships offer extra funding that you don’t have to pay back. Find out what bursaries or scholarships are available by contacting your university or college or by using the Student Finance Calculator on [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance). Student Finance England manages many of these the bursaries or scholarships. If this is the case, you won’t need to make a separate application for a bursary or scholarship to your university or college. Instead, Student Finance England will assess you for bursaries and scholarships when you apply for student finance.

Trusts and charities provide financial grants or awards to students. You can get advice on what’s available through your university or college through the Educational Grants Advisory Service (EGAS). Applicants must be studying at a college or university that is affiliated to EGAS. Grants are primarily targeted at families and individuals with low incomes, particularly those living on benefits. Preference will be give to those studying courses likely to lead to improved employment prospects.

To find out whether you are eligible to apply for a Family Action Educational Grant or another grant making trust visit [http://www.family-action.org.uk/section.aspx?id=1037](http://www.family-action.org.uk/section.aspx?id=1037).

Your public library should also have directories of charitable trusts that provide grants and awards:

- The Educational Grants Directory

Sponsorship information can also be found at [http://www.brightknowledge.org/knowledge-bank/money/get-sponsored-to-study](http://www.brightknowledge.org/knowledge-bank/money/get-sponsored-to-study).

**Can you afford to go to college or university?**

You don’t have to pay for your course up front. You can get a loan to cover the cost of your fees and also towards the cost of your living expenses. You don’t have to start paying back your student loan until you are working and earning over £21,000 (for those starting university in 2012, but this threshold will increase in line with inflation).

- You repay 9% of your income above £21,000. So, for example, if your salary was £25,000, the 9% would only apply to £4,000, meaning you would repay £30 per month.
- If your salary falls below £21,000, your repayments stop – for example if you take a career break or are unemployed repayments only start again when you earn over £21,000.
- Loan repayments will be deducted from your salary, normally through the tax system.
- If you have not repaid your loan after 30 years it will be written off.

Use the student finance calculator to get a personalised quote that allows you to see how much you could get while you’re studying [www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinancecalculator](http://www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinancecalculator).

A student budget calculator can be found at [http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/student-budget-calculator](http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/student-budget-calculator). It helps you to work out how much you will need a month but remember you can get grants and loans depending on your circumstances as well as fee loans so you don’t need to find it all up front.

You could consider part-time study. Fees for part-time study are cheaper than those for full-time. Check fees with the individual institutions. Use the Visaroute programme [http://www.visaroute.org.uk/](http://www.visaroute.org.uk/) will allow you to search for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information.

**Funding for part-time study**

You may be eligible for a student grant to help with the cost of tuition fees or other study costs and you can apply for a loan or a bursary.

Part-time students can apply for financial support using a paper application. To find out how much you could get, visit [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/Applyingforthefirsttime/DG_171530](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/Applyingforthefirsttime/DG_171530).
and to find out how to apply, visit

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/Gettingstarted/DG_171577

Start preparing your application in advance so that you can collect the evidence that you will need to send in with the paper forms.

If you are leaving local authority care
If you are leaving local authority care and you’re going into higher education, you may be able to get a one-off bursary from your local authority or a grant from your university or college for students who’ve been in care.

For more information, speak to the student support office at your university or college or your personal adviser from the leaving care service at your local authority.

If you have a disability
Universities and colleges are increasingly aware of the needs of disabled students and students with specific learning difficulties. They can provide support in a number of ways – and you may be able to get extra financial help. Go to http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/DG_4000917 for more information and links relating to support for students with disability including practical support with your studies and financial help.

The university or college will not always pay for everything itself. Instead, you may be able to get funding through Disabled Students’ Allowances.

Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)
DSA is designed to help with the costs that you incur in attending your course, as a direct result of your disability or specific learning difficulty. They are available to full-time and part-time students with disabilities, although part-time students with disabilities must be studying at least 50% of a full-time course.

How much you get does not depend on your income or that of your household. Unlike student loans, this assistance does not have to be repaid.

Go to http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/DG_10034898 for more information on DSA and how to apply. Most universities and colleges have a disability coordinator or adviser and will put you in touch with them if you contact the university or college.

Deadlines for applying for loans and grants
Be aware of closing dates which are likely to be the end of May and make sure that you apply before the closing date so that you receive all the student finance you are entitled to before the start of the autumn term. Closing dates can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance. You don’t need to have accepted a place at university or college to apply for student finance, you can use your first choice of course and change it easily online at a later date. Remember your application isn’t complete, and cannot be assessed, until all the information required is provided. In most cases, the evidence can be provided easily by filling in the appropriate details on the online application.
The application process

Choosing courses
Always check the specific entry requirements for your preferred course(s) to make sure you have/will have the appropriate qualifications. You can do this through http://www.ucas.co.uk/

For help on:
• Choosing a subject
• Choosing a course to suit you
• Mode of study (full-time, part-time, distance learning etc.)
• Type of course (joint honours, modular, sandwich, foundation degrees etc.)

Go to http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/DecidingWhereToStudy/DG_4017740

When to apply
There are three different application and closing dates for courses through UCAS, you need to consider which course you are applying for and the relevant deadlines. These are

• 15 October - application deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for all medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science courses
• 15 January - application deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for all courses except those listed above with a 15 October deadline, and art and design courses with a 24 March deadline.
• 24 March - application deadline for the receipt at UCAS of applications for all art and design courses except those listed above with a 15 January deadline.

To apply for university or college, you can use the UCAS system Apply. This is a secure, web-based application system which is available 24 hours a day. Go to http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/apply/

How to apply – for full-time courses
The following details need to be completed on the UCAS application system (known as Apply). These are: Registration, Personal details, Additional information, Choices, Education, Employment, Personal statement, Reference, Declaration, Pay and send. For more information on how to complete each of these categories you can go to: http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/applying/howtoapply/

Some subjects have slightly different application processes (medicine, dentistry, veterinary courses,
nursing, music and art & design). For information relating to these subjects visit http://www.ucas.co.uk/students/choosingcourses/specificsubjects/

**How to apply – for part-time courses**
You should apply direct to the institution. The Visaroute programme http://www.visaroute.org.uk/ will allow you to search for full-time and part-time courses at participating colleges, universities and work based learning providers in Lancashire. There are also links to the colleges and universities individual websites. See also the ‘Part-time study’ heading in this section and the ‘Funding for part-time study’ under the ‘Fees’ heading for more information. You may also want to refer to the Personal statement section for help with your application.

Aimhigher Lancashire has developed an interactive webpage with lots of interactive information about accessing higher education in Lancashire www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire

**Personal statement**
Personal statements are used by universities to help them to decide who will be made offers. For some universities the personal statement could be used as the factor to make a final decision after things such as GCSEs, AS results, A Level, vocational qualifications, other qualifications or experience currently being undertaken.

An excellent personal statement will not make up for an academic profile that falls below the level an admissions tutor is expecting but it can help a tutor decide which candidates to interview. It can also be used for information when questioning prospective students and can help to test whether a student understands the nature of the course for which they are applying.

A personal statement can be up to 4,000 characters and is an opportunity to influence an admissions tutor in your favour. They don’t want to see repeated information that might be in other parts of the application. It is your chance to do your best to impress.

http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/applying/howtoapply/personalstatement/

You will find examples of personal statements on web sites. University Admissions Tutors are quite adept at recognising these. IT IS NOT A GOOD IDEA TO COPY THEM AND USE THEM AS YOUR OWN. Your personal statement should be what it says – personal.

**References**
When requesting a reference a referee should know you well enough to write about you and your suitability in applying for a higher education course. If you have recently been in education then a reference from the school or college where you have studied will be expected. If you left school several years ago then you could ask your current or previous employer or any tutors on training courses you may have studied on. A full written reference is required from your referee and references completed by family, friends and partners are not permitted.

For more information on how a reference should be written go to: http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/applying/howtoapply/reference
Offers
Once UCAS have sent your application to your chosen universities and colleges, you wait to hear from them. It can take time for decisions to be made even if you have applied early. Universities and colleges have until early May to decide who they will offer their places to.

If you want to track the progress of your application it is possible to do this by going to: http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/offers(trackprogress)

Results
When you have got your results you need to check whether your chosen universities have received your results from UCAS. UCAS send some results through to universities and display a list of the exam qualifications they send on their website. If they have not received your information you need to send this on to them. Once a university or college has your results they will confirm whether or not they are offering you a place.

You will find yourself in one of the following positions
- You are accepted by your firm choice
- You are accepted by your firm choice and you meet and exceed the conditions of the offer
- You receive a ‘changed course’ offer
- Your results don’t meet the conditions of your firm choice but you are accepted by your insurance choice
- Your results don’t meet the conditions of any of your choices
- You are not holding any offers.

For more information go to http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/results/whatnext

Clearing
Clearing is a service which is available to students in the summer of their year of entry or deferment to higher education.

It is a service to support those students who do not have an offer of a place to find a suitable place through the clearing system.

More information and to access clearing is available at: http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/nextsteps/clearing/todo

If you haven’t quite got the results you need to meet your offer(s), contact the college or university as soon as possible to see whether they can still offer you a place. You may be in shock if you don’t get a place but it is important that you get into the clearing system as soon as you possibly can.

What if you change your mind once you have applied?
If you’ve changed your mind about going to college or university at all this year then you need to reject all offers and submit a new application for next year. If you have accepted an offer for this year, but would like to start it next year instead, you should ring the university or college and ask them if you can defer the place until next year. If they agree, your place will be held for you.

If you’d like to attend the same university or college but for a different course, discuss your options with them. They may be able to change the course, or they might ask you to reapply.
Additional needs

How to contact the college or university
Are you thinking of applying to college or university? Do you have questions about access and support while studying?

It’s a good idea to contact universities and colleges to discuss your requirements before applying. Most universities and colleges have disability coordinators or advisers and will put you in touch with them if you contact the university or college. The disability coordinator can tell you what support is available and help set up an information visit. This is an opportunity to talk to staff about any adaptations that may be needed. You might also want to talk to the head of department or other academic staff for specific course information.

What questions should you ask?
If you visit a college or university, it might be helpful to take with you a checklist of questions to ask members of staff and students. What you ask will obviously depend upon the nature of your disability, but the following are examples of questions you might include.

- Are all the buildings I need to use physically accessible?
- Are there any particular facilities for disabled students?
- Are there any current students with a similar impairment?
- What support do they receive?
- Who will help organise my support?
- Can you help me apply for additional funding if needed?
- Are the methods of teaching and assessment appropriate to my needs?
- What would happen if I started the course and experienced a problem?

Telling the institution about your disability
Telling the institution about your disability in advance can also help them to prepare and arrange support in time for the start of your course. If you are unsure what to tell your potential universities and colleges, you may find it helpful to read the Telling people about your disability booklet on the Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities website. Skill has now closed down but information leaflets are still available from
http://www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=10&p=106#he
http://www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=14&p=147

Finance
For information about financial support for students with additional needs/disabilities see the “Do you have a disability?” heading under “Finance”.

Employed and apprenticeship route to higher education

Apprenticeships
You can apply for an Apprenticeship from age 16. There are different levels depending on your starting qualifications: Intermediate Apprenticeships, Advanced Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships. Your employer may then sponsor you to continue your studies to degree level or beyond. This could be via a part-time route at a local college or support to attend a full-time course.

For information about apprenticeships visit: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/14To19/OptionsAt16/DG_4001327

http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Aimhigher Lancashire has developed an interactive webpage with lots of interactive information about accessing higher education in Lancashire: www.u-xplore.com/aimhigher/lancashire

Sponsorship from an employer
Some large companies and the armed forces sponsor students through college or university by paying their fees. You are generally expected to work for the employer during your vacations and to commit to working for the company for an agreed period of time once you complete your degree. Visit http://www.brightknowledge.org/knowledge-bank/money/get-sponsored-to-study for information about how and where to find employers who offer sponsorships.

Some colleges or universities publish a list of companies which offer sponsorships. Check with the individual colleges or universities direct or through their website.

Some companies also take trainees once they have completed their A levels and train them towards professional qualifications and/or a degree. Do a web search for “A level trainees” to find out which companies offer this training.

Also check out the “Other financial support” section.

Case studies
See how other people have used their apprenticeships to further their progression into higher education: http://lancashirelln.org.uk/
Graduate employment prospects (Labour Market Information)

Careers with a degree
Finding out about the employment labour market and the way that it operates can be useful when looking at your future degree choices. Labour Market Information (LMI) can be from a range of sources including job vacancies, wage rates, skills gaps, future demands, employment trends and information about different career areas.

The worldwide labour market is seeing a great deal of change through advances in technology and jobs are evolving and changing all the time. As a graduate you could be applying for jobs that don’t yet exist.

Finding out more about labour market information relating to your choice of degree course or career can help you with your career planning. It is useful to know more about the changing nature of careers and the relevance to your own situation.

You can find out more about the wide range of careers which require a degree at www.prospects.ac.uk

Employment Sector Areas, National and Regional Information
You can gain information about types of careers through sector skills councils. Sector skills councils often have useful information about different industries, including information on qualifications and training and this sometimes includes job vacancies and future events. If you go to the following website you can access a list of different sector skills councils and the types of careers they cover.

http://www.ukces.org.uk/sector-skills-councils/about-sscs/the-list-of-sscs
If you want to find out more information about the UK labour market in general and future trends by sector area the following website also has some useful information. This includes information on employment and future employment, skills gaps and shortages, education and training and an occupational profile of a particular industry.

This can be useful in helping you find out more about a particular industry area which might interest you: http://www.guidance-research.org/future-trends

**What do graduates do?**
Labour market information changes on a regular basis and if you are looking at information available you need to consider the changing trends and data that is available, making sure that is relevant, up to date and realistic for your needs.

For information on the labour market and graduate careers, including graduate trends, potential starting salaries and destinations visit: http://www.prospects.ac.uk

If you want to compare university statistics per subject or look at graduate job prospects you can find out more information on http://unistats.direct.gov.uk

By visiting university and college individual websites you can access a range of information about that particular institution including graduate destinations, statistics and general information that would be helpful in considering future career choices.

**Work experience**
With the competition for jobs increasing it is no longer sufficient to have “just” a degree. You will need to show that you have the skills and qualities that employers look for. These include:

- Honesty and integrity
- Basic literacy skills
- Team working and co-operation skills
- Basic oral communication skills (e.g. telephone skills)
- Numeracy skills
- The ability to meet deadlines
- Reliability
- Punctuality
- Being hardworking and having a good work ethic
- A positive ‘can do’ attitude

You can demonstrate these through work experience which could be gained through: taking a “sandwich degree” which is usually a four year course with the third year spent in a work placement; getting a part-time job whilst taking your degree (your college or university will often have a “job centre”); doing voluntary work – visit www.do-it.org.uk; or by taking an internship – try http://www.e4s.co.uk/docs/internships.htm or http://www.milkround.com/graduate-jobs-internships

**Case studies**
See how others have gained work experience through Apprenticeships and progressed to higher education http://lancashirelln.org.uk/.