



Queen Mary  
University of London

# **Parent/Carer Guide to Higher Education**

## Preparing for university

[qmul.ac.uk/outreach/parents-and-carers](https://qmul.ac.uk/outreach/parents-and-carers)

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# Preparing for university

As a parent or guardian, you have an invaluable role to play in the university application process. There are many things you can do to ensure that your child feels confident in their choices and well-prepared for the future.

Whilst some of you will be familiar with the university cycle, many of you will be embarking on this journey for the first time. This booklet is designed to support you and to provide fresh insight into university progression. It offers advice on how to support your child or ward, whilst also addressing some of the most common concerns surrounding higher education.

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# Why go to university?

Your child going to university is a big step and you might find yourself wondering why they should attend university in the first place.

## Employability

Studying at university will provide your child with a qualification at the end of their degree programme. As a Queen Mary student, your child will be well placed to make the transition into their chosen career or further study. From their first day here, we'll work with them to give them the guidance, tools and opportunities they need to boost their skills and gain confidence.

Did you know, on average, UK graduates have higher earning potential and are more likely to secure high-skilled positions than non-graduates. According to a 2018 Department of Education survey, UK graduates earned on average £10,000 a year more than non-graduates.

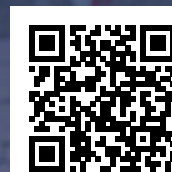
Queen Mary has a great employability track record. We take post degree progression seriously with 90% of our graduates in employment or further study (Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2021). An undergraduate degree is essential for a successful future career both in the UK and internationally.

## Personal growth

However, getting a qualification isn't all your child will gain from attending university. University is the perfect place to provide students with the opportunity to become independent and gain confidence in a positive environment. At Queen Mary, your child will get the chance to be part of a friendly and inclusive global community, make lifelong friends and try new activities. A degree will broaden their cultural horizons and they will probably make friends for life. They will get the chance to travel and get involved in exciting

projects through their course, clubs, societies and their Student Union which will enhance their personal and professional skills.

At Queen Mary, we have over 150 clubs and societies and countless events and programmes. We're proud of our international identity and offer study abroad placements in France, Boston, Toronto, Auckland, Nanyang, Miami, New York and more.



Scan or go to [qmul.ac.uk/study/student-life](https://qmul.ac.uk/study/student-life) to find out more about Student Life at Queen Mary



# Is university right for them? What are the alternatives?

## Traineeships

A traineeship is a great opportunity for a young person who is motivated to go straight into a job or an apprenticeship, but may be lacking the skills and experience employers are looking for. A traineeship would aim to prepare your child for the job market by supporting them to become work-ready. They are available for 16 — 23 year olds, and young people with learning difficulty assessments up to age 25. Traineeships tend to be unpaid, can last from six weeks to six months, and are offered in a range of different sectors

## Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship combines employment in a job role alongside studying for a formal qualification. Apprentices usually study one day a week at a college or training centre on an approved study programme, gaining a recognised qualification. The work element means that apprentices can apply the skills and knowledge needed to pursue a chosen career, or progress onto the next apprenticeship level. Employers will recruit to apprenticeships year-round and vacancies are advertised on the [gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk).

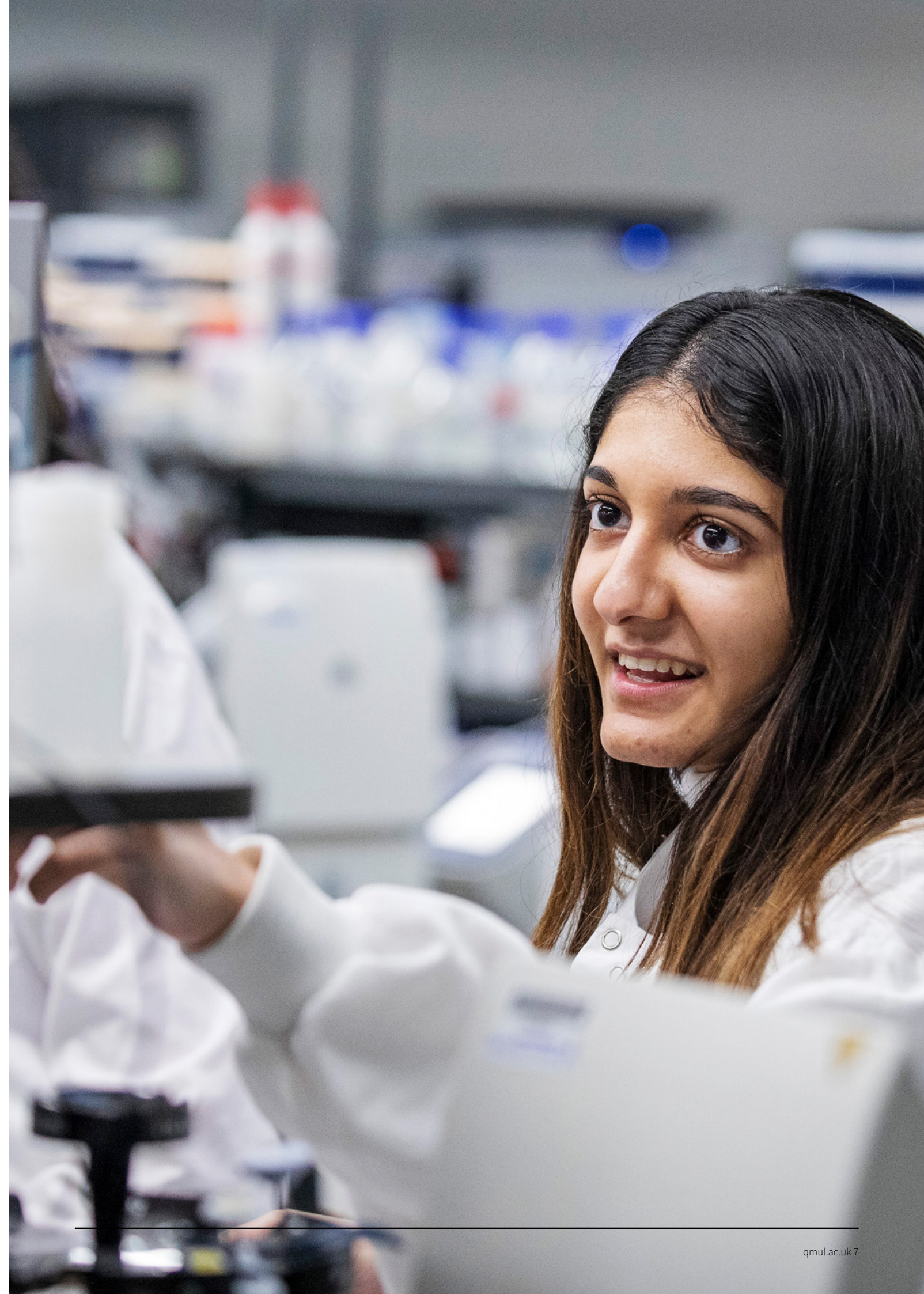
## Degree Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are available right up to degree level, although competition for places can be high! Degree Apprentices split their time between university study and the workplace, and are employed throughout – gaining a full bachelor's or master's degree while earning a wage and getting real on-the-job experience in their chosen profession. Degree Apprentices do not pay tuition fees as these are covered by their sponsoring employer. In return, employers are able to upskill/ employ new staff to address skills gaps within their organisation and utilise funds from their Apprenticeship Levy account. Queen Mary was one of the first universities to deliver degree apprenticeships, starting in 2015. Find out more about degree apprenticeships on our website: [qmul.ac.uk/degreeapprenticeships](https://qmul.ac.uk/degreeapprenticeships)

## Higher Education at a college

Further Education (FE) colleges also offer degree-level study. These are typically qualifications such as Higher National Diplomas or Foundation Degrees. Colleges are often partnered with universities and in some cases, it is possible to top up qualifications to full Honours degrees at a university.

This option might really suit students who want to stay closer to home, or those who are looking to save on some of the typical costs involved with more traditional university life. FE colleges offer the opportunity to study in a smaller, more familiar environment and tend to offer vocational courses related to a particular job or career path.





# How to apply?

Step

1

## Research courses

It is important to ensure that your child has the opportunity to explore all of the different courses and careers they may be interested in. It is never too early to start this discussion and there are a range of helpful websites, such as the UCAS course pages, to assist in the search. Why not check out some of the courses available at Queen Mary?

Your child's school or college might also arrange university visits which will give them the chance to talk to current university students and academics about specific courses. This will also give you and your child the opportunity to find out what grades they will need to achieve to gain entry into a specific degree programme.



Queen Mary  
Course Finder

Step

2

## Choosing universities

Once your child has got an idea of what course they want to study, the next step is choosing which university is the best option for them. Attending Open Days or HE Fairs can provide a valuable opportunity to engage with University staff and students. It is never too early to start this process and can really support with making an informed decision. There are a few key points you and your child may need to consider when choosing a university:

### Does the university offer the degree programme your child wishes to study?

Before applying to a university course, make sure your child has read the course programme and it's something they're interested in. They should check course content, module options and assessment methods. The same degree subject will be taught differently at each institution, so it's important they find what is right for them.

### Will you child be living away from home or commuting?

If your child wants to live out at university, they will need to check that there are accommodation options available. At Queen Mary, they can experience campus life while living in one of the most exciting cities in the world. If your child is commuting, what is the distance between home and campus, and how long with the journey be?



### What financial support is on offer?

Does your child's chosen university offer any additional financial support such as scholarships and bursaries they'll be eligible for? You can learn more about planning your finances at [qmul.ac.uk/welfare/money-and-practical-advice](https://qmul.ac.uk/welfare/money-and-practical-advice).

### Can I visit the university?

Your child's school or college might arrange university visits, which will give them the chance to ask current university students what student life is like and experience university first-hand. You can also accompany them to university open days as that's always the best way to explore a university and their courses. Virtual open days are another great opportunity to explore institutions online, and will often include a mixture of live webinars, workshops and even campus tours.

### Undergraduate Open Events

We offer a range of activities designed to help students find out more about what it is like to study at Queen Mary. Our Open Days provide an opportunity to discover our subjects, find out more about the courses we offer, chat with our students and staff, take a campus tour, discover London and learn all about becoming a student with us.

[qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/openday](https://qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/openday)



# Step 3

## Apply online via UCAS

Your child will apply to university online via UCAS using their personal UCAS student ID. They will have to submit a personal statement and UCAS application, which will include their personal details and academic reference. Their UCAS application must be submitted within the deadline given by UCAS for it to be considered equally.

Your child's school or college will usually support them with advice on writing a personal statement and completing the UCAS application form. The school/college will have their own internal deadlines and your child's teachers/tutors will support the application with a reference.

If your child is applying independently, they will need to contact their previous school/college in order to request a reference, and they may wish to double check their exam boards and qualification types.

To help you support your child plan their applications with confidence, we have prepared a short, interactive course to guide them through making a successful application and writing a strong personal statement on our website:  
[qmul.ac.uk/outreach/digital-content-hub/](https://qmul.ac.uk/outreach/digital-content-hub/)

# Step 4

## Await responses

The next step after your child sends off their UCAS application is waiting for a response from the chosen universities, which can be a nerve-wracking experience! During this time, not only will your child be waiting to hear back about their applications, but they will also be busy revising to make sure they achieve the grades needed to meet their course entry requirements.

Here are a few things you should know and can do to support your child during this time:

**UCAS Hub** - make sure your child knows about their UCAS Hub, the online system that allows your child to check the progress of their application after they've submitted it.

**Universities take time to make a decision** - don't worry if your child hasn't heard back from anyone yet. Reassure them that some universities can take months before they hear back, whilst others reply straight away.

**Research alternative pathways** - If your child is unhappy with the responses they've received or they want to make a last-minute change, the options are available for them to do so. We suggest researching alternative options such as Clearing, early on so you can support your child during the decision-making process.

**Chat to current students** - While you and your child await responses, you can spend the time finding out more about the university they've chosen. **Unibuddy** is a great platform to use to talk to current students. Your child can talk to current students on specific courses and find out more about the degree programme and university life.

# Step 5

## Respond to offers

Once your child has heard back from all of their university choices, they will need to decide on a 'firm' and 'insurance' choice.

• **Firm choice:** This should be the place that your child most wants to go to. If your young person meets the conditions of their offer, then they'll be awarded a place at this institution

• **Insurance choice:** This should be the choice that your child would be happy going to if they didn't meet the conditions of their firm choice. To secure a place at their insurance choice, they'd also have to meet the conditions of this offer.

To select a firm and insurance choice, your child will need to log in to their UCAS Hub and make their selection. It is really important that you and your child are aware of the UCAS deadlines for replying to offers. We do recommend that a young person's insurance choice requires one or two grades less than their firm choice. This means that if exam results are lower than expected, they're still likely to have an offer of a place on results day.

If it comes to results day and your child's results are not as expected, or they haven't met the conditions of their firm or insurance choice, then there are still options available to them. Universities often have spaces available in Clearing for certain courses which may be looking for different entry requirements.

View our online guide to Clearing on our website:  
[qmul.ac.uk/clearing/guide-to-clearing](https://qmul.ac.uk/clearing/guide-to-clearing)





# Finance and funding

The cost of university is understandably one of the biggest concerns for parents and guardians.

UK Government Student loans are designed specifically to facilitate university study and are available to all eligible undergraduates. Every young person who takes out a loan via student finance will be supported in their studies and will follow a repayment plan after graduation. This repayment plan ensures that your child can pay back their loans in a manageable, independent and affordable way.

Your child may be able to apply for student finance to pay for tuition fees and maintenance/living costs. The amount they will be eligible for is usually calculated using your household income. If eligible, your child may also be eligible for scholarships and/or bursaries, which will vary in amount depending on the university they have applied to.

Once your child finishes university and starts earning over a certain amount, they will begin repaying the student finance loans, plus interest. Currently, this is taken out every month from their payslip, but repayment terms are subject to change. Any outstanding debt is written off after 40 years and will not negatively affect credit ratings.

## How much does it cost?

The costs of higher education will vary from student to student, but universities can charge up to £9,535 per year for tuition fees (and most do). Your child will also need to fund their living costs, which will likely include rent and bills, food, travel, books, stationery, extracurricular and social activities. These costs will of course vary according to personal circumstances.

## Is my child eligible for Student Finance?

Student Finance eligibility is dependent on several factors, including nationality/immigration status and residency, course and institution. More information on this can be found on the government website. If your child has decided that they would like to apply, they can use the Student Finance calculator to find out what financial help they are eligible for.

## Do they have to pay upfront?

No, only a very small number of students pay for their fees and living costs upfront. The vast majority take out student loans and repay these gradually after completing their degree. The Student Loans Company pays the Tuition Fee Loan directly to the University in three instalments.

Below are maximum annual maintenance loan figures for 2023/24. For a more detailed breakdown of what your child may be eligible for, please visit [gov.uk/student-finance-calculator](https://gov.uk/student-finance-calculator)

## Tuition Fee Loans and Maintenance Loans

It's important to understand the difference between Maintenance Loans and Tuition Fee Loans, and how they support your child during their university journey.

The tuition fee loan, which is paid directly to the university, covers the cost of university tuition up to £9,535 per year. This is a fixed amount that doesn't vary based on circumstances.

The maintenance loan helps with living expenses such as accommodation, food, and travel. This is paid directly to your young person in three instalments throughout the year. Unlike the tuition fee loan, the maintenance loan amount varies based on your household income, location of study, and their living arrangements.

Both loans incur interest and are repayable upon graduating, with 9% of wages deducted once your young person is earning above the repayment threshold. For a more detailed breakdown of what the prospective student may be eligible for, please visit [gov.uk/student-finance-calculator](https://gov.uk/student-finance-calculator)



## What are scholarships and bursaries?

Scholarships and bursaries are both non-repayable, so we highly recommend that your child research both aspects of funding to find out whether they are eligible for these forms of financial support.

Scholarships usually require an application and are awarded based on achievement. This might be achieving particular grades in school or college, or in some cases to reward outstanding sporting or musical ability.

Bursaries are allocated on the basis of financial need and are usually awarded to students based on their household income.

In both cases, it is important that you support your child to submit an income-assessed finance application, and that consent is given to Student Finance to share your information with the university, as this is how we automatically assess eligibility for the majority of financial support.

## Where can I find out more?

We have developed a short, interactive course to guide you and the young people you support through the process of funding their studies.



Scan or go to [qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesandfunding](https://qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesandfunding) for more information on Queen Mary financial support updates



# Our tips for results day

## Before results day

1. Make sure that your child's UCAS Hub details are up to date and that their log in details are readily available.
2. If your child is concerned about their results or fears they will be unsuccessful, encourage them to think about alternative courses that appeal to them.

## On the day

1. Make sure your child is in the country and is able to contact universities directly on results day. UCAS and universities can only speak to the applicant themselves, or their nominated contact, about an application.
2. Encourage your child to collect their results from school, rather than just checking UCAS Hub. If they did not secure a place on their first or insurance university choices, or if they want to change their course choice or explore an alternative university, they may want to use the Clearing process. To enter Clearing they will need to know their exact results.
3. Have a phone and computer/tablet ready – Clearing can be stressful and operates on a first come, first served basis. If your child decides to go through this process then they will need to make direct contact with universities as soon as possible.



## After results day

1. Keep an eye on emails – universities will be in touch regarding next steps such as applying for accommodation and financial support.
2. If your child has secured a place, their confirmation letter will appear in UCAS Hub shortly after their place has been confirmed.

3. If they secured a place via Clearing, UCAS Hub should also update to reflect this. The university they are placed with will confirm any next steps and deadlines.
4. If your child has been unable to secure a place, support them to think about alternative routes – could they take a gap year and add to their CV? Would they be interested in applying for an apprenticeship or an internship? Or would they prefer to re-sit some of their examinations and reapply the following year? Remember – many students revisit higher education in later life; it's never too late!





# Supporting your child during their studies

Life isn't always straightforward, and your child may encounter personal or academic difficulties during their time at university. Workload pressures, financial worries, social anxiety and personal stress – all can take their toll and have an impact on health and wellbeing.

We understand that students may feel nervous about discussing their experiences with senior or academic staff. Universities offer a range of bespoke support services to meet students' needs and it's important that your child considers what will be important to them, and factors this into their research.

At Queen Mary, our approach is both reactive and proactive: In addition to monitoring your child's attendance and performance, we will also maintain regular contact through personal tutor meetings and encourage them to share any concerns they may have about anything that may be impacting on their studies. Below are some examples of the range of specialist services available to support our students:



### Student Support Officers

Every school at Queen Mary has a dedicated Student Support contact who can advise your child on any challenges they may be facing in their study.

### PASS mentors and Buddy Scheme

The Peer Assisted Study Support (PASS) mentoring scheme provides first year undergraduates with opportunities to gain academic support from second and third-year students in their subject area.

The Buddy Scheme provides an opportunity for new students to learn about undergraduate life in general, including the social side of being a student. Our buddies and mentors have tons of experience and are committed to ensuring that your child makes the most of their time at university.

### Advice and Counselling

The Advice and Counselling Service provide a range of specialist, professional and confidential services to support students with financial, welfare, legal, emotional and psychological issues.

Students with experience of local authority care, or those who are estranged from their parents, are offered the support of a dedicated Welfare Adviser throughout their time with us.

More details about the service can be found at [welfare.qmul.ac.uk](https://welfare.qmul.ac.uk)

### Careers and Enterprise

The Careers and Enterprise Service at Queen Mary supports students in all aspects of career development - from finding work experience and graduate jobs to starting their own business or pursuing further study.

Students and graduates can access the service up to three years after graduation.

Read more about the department at [careers.qmul.ac.uk](https://careers.qmul.ac.uk)

### Disability and Dyslexia Service

The Disability and Dyslexia Service (DDS) offers support for all students with disabilities, specific learning needs and mental health issues.

The team co-ordinate needs assessments, specialist learning support and equipment, and can help eligible students to complete Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) applications.

Visit [dds.qmul.ac.uk](https://dds.qmul.ac.uk) for more information.

### Academic Skills

Academic Skills Enhancement (ASE) supports students in developing the skills they need to excel at university. Queen Mary does this by delivering one-to-one tutorials, workshops and online resources for students at all levels. They also work with peer mentors and collaborate with academic staff to embed support into the curriculum.

Visit [www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills](https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills) for more information.

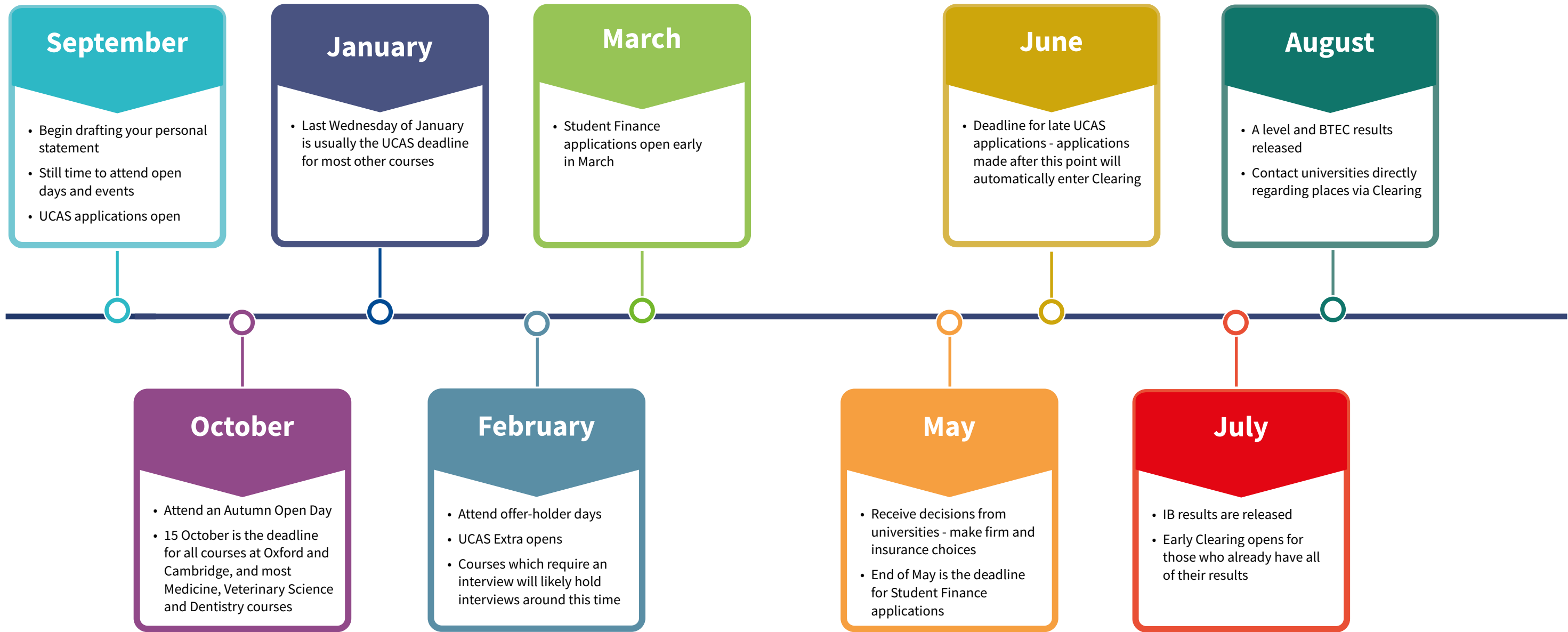
### Care Leavers and Estranged Students

We understand the challenges independent students may face and are here to make their journey to university as smooth as possible and ensure that they have access to all the **support, funding, housing and welfare services that we offer.**

If you are supporting young people who are care-experienced or without family contact, we are here to support them and our offer of support begins as soon as they consider making an application to us. Our dedicated contact will support them through their application and transition to university – contact us now on [care-experienced@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:care-experienced@qmul.ac.uk)



# Calendar of key dates and deadlines



## Join our support network

Parents, carers, and guardians are integral to the Queen Mary community. It's crucial to provide you with the necessary information to guide students in selecting the right course and maximising their university experience. You can keep updated on tips and reminders about key milestones such as application deadlines and preparing for results day by signing up for our parent newsletter/alerts on our website [qmul.ac.uk/outreach/parents-and-carers/](https://qmul.ac.uk/outreach/parents-and-carers/)






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