



Truths and myths about university

Decide if the following statements are true or false...

- 1 It's not just A-levels, there are lots of different qualifications that will get you in to university.
- 2 You can't do a degree if you have dyslexia.
- 3 A full-time course doesn't mean you'll be at university from 9am until 5pm every day.
- 4 You can live at home and still go to university.
- 5 You have big exams at the end of each year but only the ones in the final year count.
- 6 A personal tutor will check that you are doing your homework every week.
- 7 If you find you have chosen the wrong course you can automatically change to another subject.
- 8 An undergraduate is someone currently studying at university.
- 9 There is no one to turn to if you are finding it difficult to cope.
- 10 You don't have to be rich to go to university.
- 11 Only practical courses such as business studies or law help you get a job.
- 12 Unis only take students from a certain background. They wouldn't consider anyone else.

Truths and myths about going to university - revealed!

- 1 It's not just A-levels, there are lots of different qualifications that will get you in to university.**
True There are many qualifications that are accepted by universities, e.g. AS and A2, EPQ, BTEC, Cambridge pre-U, Access courses, International Baccalaureate (IB), Scottish Highers and Welsh Baccalaureate. Some courses ask for GCSE qualifications at Grade C or above, usually in Maths and English Language and sometimes in Science and Languages. If you're not sure whether your qualifications will be suitable, it is worth contacting the university to ask.
- 2 You can't do a degree if you have dyslexia.**
False Dyslexia is not a reflection on a person's intelligence: Alan Sugar, Albert Einstein and Eddie Izzard all have or had dyslexia. Many universities have a dyslexia service to provide diagnosis, support, advice and practical help. If you have dyslexia it is worth looking into what support is available. For example, explore whether you can get help with extra costs for provision of materials in a suitable format and extra time for assessments and exams.
- 3 A full-time course doesn't mean you'll be at university from 9am until 5pm every day.**
True Some courses do have very full timetables. Practical subjects that feature lots of lab work or hands-on learning courses like teacher training tend to have higher amounts of contact (direct teaching) time. However, other courses will expect students to do most of the work in their own time. As a guide, you might expect to be in university three or four days a week, and completing additional work through independent study. Typically, your holidays will follow the same pattern as those you had at school - but will be slightly longer.
- 4 You can live at home and still go to university.**
True Some students choose a course at a university away from their home. It may be that a particular course is only available at that university or that they want to get to know a new part of the country. Living in halls of residence can provide an opportunity to become immersed in student life and live independently away from home. An increasing number of students attend universities and colleges that are close enough to allow them to remain at home. This means they can stay in an area they know, keeping in touch with friends who are staying locally. They might want to stay at home to help to look after younger or older members of the family. It is usually cheaper to live at home and they might have an existing part-time job. Some students start off living at home and move into shared houses later in the course. Others spend the first year in halls and then move back home.
- 5 You have big exams at the end of each year but only the ones in the final year count.**
False Most courses spread marks that contribute to your final grade across two or more years. Very few degrees are awarded on 'Finals' alone.
- 6 A personal tutor will check that you are doing your homework every week.**
False Some universities and colleges allocate a personal tutor to each student, but others offer a range of people - the lecturers for each subject, the senior tutor responsible for the degree programme and post-graduate students who run tutorials. These people will all provide support but will not check to see you are doing your 'homework' every week.

7 If you find you have chosen the wrong course you can automatically change to another subject.

False While at most universities it is possible to change courses early in the first year, you have to fulfil the entry requirements of the new course, and there has to be space available. If the course is a modular one (built up in sections worth a certain number of credits) it may be possible to change to a different university, but there are no guarantees. Many degrees offer some flexibility to tailor your options to reflect the way your interests develop during your degree.

8 An undergraduate is someone currently studying at university.

True Undergraduate is the term used to describe a student who is studying for their first degree. When you finish the course you graduate, and if you then go on to take a higher degree, you become a postgraduate student.

9 There is no one to turn to if you are finding it difficult to cope.

False There are a whole range of support networks. The Student Union/Guild has dedicated welfare teams with expertise in finance, academic support and accommodation. There are counselling services that offer confidential advice and support. Often there is a chaplaincy service which will provide pastoral as well as religious support to all students, regardless of faith. Each academic department will have tutors responsible for the progress of students and they can often help with both academic and non-academic difficulties.

10 You don't have to be rich to go to university.

True A huge range of people go to university - single parents, retired grandmothers, 18-year-olds straight from school from very diverse backgrounds, long-term unemployed people, people who have taken a year out, people who have worked and are returning to education, people who have worked and want to change their careers. Most will work at some time to help finance their studies, along with student loans they repay after graduation. There are lots of bursaries available for students - check with individual universities to see what's available.

11 Only practical courses such as business studies or law help you get a job.

False For some careers there are obvious degree choices, such as becoming a doctor or engineer. In other professional sectors, there are several routes, such as taking a one-year conversion course after your first degree as a stepping stone towards becoming a lawyer. Graduate job adverts will specify that you need a degree but not necessarily the subject as a degree can demonstrate lots of transferable skills. If you have a career path in mind, do some research - you may find the requirements are more flexible than you think..

12 Unis only take students from a certain background. They would not consider anyone else.

False Universities take students from all sorts of backgrounds and are keen to attract students from diverse ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. Since the introduction of tuition fees, universities have to ensure that they do not discriminate against those from lower income backgrounds. Many universities have access programmes to support applications from students with different or unconventional educational backgrounds. Foundation year courses are another way you can progress to degree-level studies if you don't quite make the grades required. Every university has to accommodate students with disabilities and the government also offers disability allowances.