

Further and Higher Education Guide for young people in and leaving care in Wales

Information for 2014/2015

Introduction

Page 3

What is Further Education and Higher Education?

Did you know that?

Reaching Wider

Pathway Plan and Personal Education Plan

Course Levels

Page 4

Choices after age 16

Page 5

What can you study?

Qualifications explained

Work-based learning

Where can you study?

How to choose the right place for you

Further information about Further Education

FE Finance

Page 9

Information on finance whilst in FE

Options after FE

Page 11

Employment, a year out or Higher Education?

Why enter Higher Education?

Which course? What subject?

Types of HE qualifications

Typical offers

Where to study - factors to consider Buttle UK

Support from Higher and Further Education Institutions in Wales

Page 18

Applying for HE courses

Page 33

What is UCAS?

(UCAS tariff, Apply, Accepting Offers, Clearing)

Preparing for interviews

What do admissions tutors look for?

HE Finance

Page 42

Money matters (tuition fees, loans and grants, additional support)

Applying for financial assistance

Where does the money go?

Saving money top tips

Glossary

Page 52

Frequently Asked Questions

Page 53

Useful websites and contacts

Page 54

We would like to thank Aimhigher Kent and Medway for allowing us to share some of the information in this publication



What is Further Education (FE)?

Further Education is post-compulsory education for people over the age of 16. You can study qualifications that can be either academic or vocational depending on your goal. To study a Level 3 qualification, you usually need to have a Level 2 qualification – GCSEs, BTEC First Diploma/Certificate, Apprenticeship or NVQ 2 (see pages 4 – 8). An FE College provides Further Education and some also provide HE qualifications and qualifications for pre 16 school pupils.

What is Higher Education (HE)?

The term Higher Education (HE) generally refers to the next stage after A levels, National Diploma or another level 3 course undertaken at school or college. Most people start a Higher Education course at 18 years of age, and after 3 or 4 years gain a degree. However you can study HE at any age over 18. It's also possible to study part time, have a paid job and complete your degree over a longer period. You can study at a university, a further education college or by distance learning - there is plenty of choice and this booklet should help you decide what is best for you. Look out for the Buttle UK Quality Mark which indicates that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges (FEs) have thought about the needs of Care Leavers and actively want to support Care Leavers to and through FE and HE.

The Who Cares Trust has a downloadable HE Handbook for Care Leavers for detailing what support is available for Care leavers in English and Scottish Universities - www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

Did you know that?

- You can study GCSEs at college whatever your age, even if you didn't finish school or achieve the grades you wanted
- You can work towards other qualifications that will help you get a job if you don't fancy the idea of doing GCSEs
- There is a huge variety of courses and qualifications to consider, it's not all about GCSEs, AS and A Levels
- You can still consider studying at Higher Education level – such as going to university, even if you don't have A Levels
- If you want to study for a degree or other Higher Education qualifications, you don't have to go away to university (you can study them at a college or as distance learning) or move away from where you live now
- Most colleges and universities in Wales have a designated member of staff to provide advice and support to care leavers. Look out for the Buttle UK Quality Mark which indicates that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have thought about the needs of Care Leavers and actively want to support Care Leavers to and through HE

Whatever your age, you have many choices to make regarding your future – do you stay in education to gain more qualifications, or do you enter the working world? For many, this decision will be based on following a career ambition, and for others it may be about studying subjects that interest you.

In general, the more qualifications you have, the higher your earning potential over the course of your working life. This will give you greater options in your job choices, and where you work.

Further and Higher Education will give you the opportunity to try out new things, study new subjects, meet new people and develop your self confidence. This booklet aims to give you the information you need to make the right choice for you to study at FE and HE level. In addition to the information given, the booklet also contains the specific support you can receive from the Higher Education Institutions across Wales.

Reaching Wider

The Reaching Wider initiative, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), was established in 2002 to widen access to learning and to help more people enter college or university. Being in care should not prevent you from going to university if you want to go.

First Campus is the South East Wales Reaching Wider partnership; the aim of the First Campus partnership is to raise aspirations and inspire learners in South East Wales who are traditionally under-represented in Higher Education, providing information, advice and guidance to University. Funded by HEFCW's Reaching Wider programme part of their remit is to work with 'Looked After Children'. First Campus has Coordinators based at HEIs.

First Campus has three key 'Looked after Children' programmes to allow continuity and progression to support retention within education: the 'Letterbox' project; 'Aim further Reach higher'; Confident Futures Summer School. Through Cardiff Metropolitan University the First Campus partnership also works with Cardiff Youth Service to provide Mentoring to Looked After Children from Undergraduate students who have chosen the Accredited Level 6, mentoring option as part of the Volunteering module.

The North & Mid Wales Reaching Wider Partnership has developed a range of activities and training sessions including: Educational Mentoring Training for Foster Carers, Social Workers, Staff in FE and HE and contributes to Early Years and Teacher training at Postgraduate and Undergraduate level. The Partnership also organises University visits, conferences and taster sessions for Care Leavers and Professionals. For further information contact: **Ann L Bied, Training & Project Development Officer, North & Mid Wales Reaching Wider Partnership - a.bierd@bangor.ac.uk 01248 382284**

The South West Wales Partnership offer a range of activities for Looked After Children, Care Leavers, Foster Carers and Social Workers. These include University Taster days and Campus visits, one to one academic support, Summer Schools, study support sessions and information sessions/conferences for foster carers and professionals. Contact the Reaching Wider Partnership in your area for more information.

Reaching Wider Partnership Contact Details

North and Mid Wales sharon.owen@bangor.ac.uk
www.reachingwider.ac.uk Tel: 01248 383883

First Campus (South East Wales) fc@firstcampus.org
www.firstcampus.org Tel: 01443 482550

South West Wales reachingwider@swansea.ac.uk
www.swansea.ac.uk/reaching-wider Tel: 01792 602128

Course Levels

Page 4

Courses are put into Levels by which you can identify equivalents. If you complete qualifications at one level you can usually move on to the next.

Entry Level

- Qualifications at this level include CSE, DOVE and other entry level certificates

Level 1

- Also known as Foundation Level
- Qualifications at this level include NVQ level 1, GNVQ Foundation, GCSEs grades D – G, GCSEs in vocational subjects grades DD-GG, CACHE C

Level 2

- Also known as Intermediate Level
- Qualifications at this level include NVQ level 2, GNVQ Intermediate, GCSEs grades A* – C, GCSEs in vocational subjects grades A*A* – CC, BTEC First Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate (Intermediate), CACHE Certificate

Level 3

- Also known as Advanced Level
- Qualifications at this level include NVQ level 3, AS level and A level, BTEC National Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate (Advanced), International Baccalaureate, CACHE Diploma

Level 4 and Level 5

- Also known as Higher Level
- Qualifications at this level include NVQ level 4/5, HNC, HND, Degree, Professional qualifications

What you can study?

There is a huge variety of options open to you at 16, or whatever age you are studying – ranging from A Levels to Key Skills. Each qualification is taught and structured slightly differently, so it is important to choose the qualification that suits your learning style and interests. It is a good idea to consider all options carefully and think about how they will affect your future. Think about what subjects you have studied previously and enjoyed, and think about subjects that you have always wanted to study but haven't had the opportunity to do so. If you want to go on to Higher Education (university), then it is worth finding out if they require particular subjects within their entry requirements.

Qualifications Explained

GCSEs

General Certificate of Secondary Education

GCSE subjects are usually chosen in year nine. They are studied over two years in school, but can be completed in one year at Further Education (FE) colleges. They range from academic subjects, such as English or History, through to GCSEs in vocational (work related) subjects. To progress to an Advanced course (AS, A levels or equivalent qualifications) you should aim for five subjects at grades C or above. Some institutions may require certain grades in particular subjects for you to study them at A level.

Assessment is through course work and exams.

A levels

To be accepted onto an A level course most schools and colleges expect grades A*-C in at least five subjects at GCSE level. Some colleges may accept lower grades.

At A level you have the opportunity to study subjects you studied at GCSE in more detail or new subjects. A levels usually require two years' full-time study either at school or Further Education college.

- AS – the 1st year of study and may also count as 50% of the final A level grade. You can study up to four or five AS subjects
- A2 – the 2nd year of study, you can continue your studies in two or three subjects to achieve a full A level
- AS levels are qualifications in their own right
- Passes are graded A to E

A Levels are the traditional route for entry to Higher Education and training for the professions.

Assessment is through coursework and exams.

BTEC Introductory, First and National

BTEC qualifications are available in a variety of work-related subjects, such as agriculture, construction or design. Some are in more specific job areas, such as 3D design or polymer processing and materials technology. All BTEC qualifications can lead to jobs, training or higher level courses. BTEC National courses can lead to Higher Education. BTEC qualifications are available as a:

- BTEC Introductory Diploma/Certificate (at foundation level) – no qualifications needed for entry

- BTEC First Diploma/Certificate (at intermediate level) – some GCSEs at grades D-E, or a pass at foundation level usually needed for entry
- BTEC National Diploma/Certificate (at advanced level) – 4-5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, or a pass at intermediate level needed for entry. The BTEC National is made up of:
 - 6–unit National Award, equivalent to one A level
 - 12–unit National Certificate, equivalent to two A levels
 - 18–unit National Diploma, equivalent to three A levels

Assessment is through coursework based on work-related situations or activities and on the job observation.

Welsh Baccalaureate

Students combine AS/A Levels or NVQ level 3 units with a core programme which includes:

- Key skills
- Wales, Europe and the World
- Work-related Education
- Personal and Social Education

For more information visit www.wbq.org.uk

International Baccalaureate

- The Baccalaureate has been around for 40 years worldwide but is relatively new to Wales
- Available at a small number of schools and colleges in Wales
- Equal to A levels
- Involves studying six subjects (three at higher and three at lower level)
- Also includes cultural, sporting and community service activities

There are various types of assessment – extended essay (4,000 words), presentations, exams and community service activities.

For more information visit www.ibo.org

Access courses

Designed for adults (19+) who wish to enter Higher Education and do not have the necessary qualifications.

Assessment is through a mixture of exams and coursework depending on the subject.

www.ucas.com/students/choosingcourses

Work-based learning

Work-based learning gives you the opportunity to work and learn at the same time, gaining a qualification as you work. This will improve your skills and your earning potential. The most popular qualification routes are NVQs and Apprenticeships and are available to study at various levels, enabling you to progress through the levels. Training can last from 1 to 4 years depending on your ability, the job you are training for and how far you want to go.

NVQs National Vocational Qualifications

NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) are work-based qualifications that show you have the skills to do a certain job. They are available in a variety of occupations, such as construction trades, hairdressing, forestry, horticulture, office work, hospitality and catering. They may be awarded at five different levels, from basic to professional-level skills. You progress at your own pace, achieving units which build towards an NVQ as you gain more skills. Young people can gain NVQs at levels 2 and 3 through Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and Modern Apprenticeships or a full-time or part-time course at college.

Assessment is in the work place and portfolio based evidence.

Apprenticeships

Foundation Modern Apprenticeships

- Mainly open to those under 18
- Training on the job
- May involve day or block release to college or training centre
- Work towards NVQ Level 2/3
- Takes up to 2 years to complete
- Training allowance or wage – at least £50 per week
- Entry qualifications vary
- Offered in many career areas such as accountancy, engineering, construction, sport or catering
- Can lead to a Modern Apprenticeship or other employment

Modern Apprenticeships

- Training on the job
- May involve day or block release to a college or training centre
- Work towards NVQ Level 3/4
- Takes 3/4 years to complete
- Paid a wage
- Entry qualifications vary but can be competitive to enter – 4/5 GCSEs at Grade C or to include English and/or Maths or equivalent may be needed
- Offered in many career areas such as accountancy, engineering, retailing, sport
- Allows you to apply for a HND/HNC or Degree after you finish

SkillBuild (Wales)

Rathbone's SkillBuild programme supports young people in Wales who have left school at 16, but haven't gone into further education, training or employment.

As a learner on the full time SkillBuild programme you will get an allowance and Training Advisors will help motivate you through learning sessions in the centre and through work placements outside the centre.

On the SkillBuild programme you will work on your Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills and you will gain qualifications which employers look for such as Basic Food Hygiene and First Aid.

Armed Forces

If you are interested in a career in the armed forces, there are many routes to choose from. Each of the armed forces (Army, Navy, and the Airforce) offer support and training through FE and HE. The financial support is through wages and bursaries.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) also offers Apprenticeships. Following the training you would be required to serve in the forces for at least 4 years. www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/Jobseekers

For more information about your choices and options at 16, talk to a careers adviser or look on the Careers Wales website: www.careerswales.com

Where can you study?

Once you have thought about what you want to study, it is time to choose where to study. Each different option has its own structure and atmosphere and will offer you a different range of subjects and qualifications.

School Sixth Form

- Can vary in size, courses and facilities
- You are still part of a school and so will have a structured timetable
- You usually stay on at the same school so there are familiar staff and students

Further Education Colleges

- Are different from schools – having a more independent approach to learning
- Teach students who are mostly over the age of 16
- Can offer a wide range of courses, both academic and vocational
- Can offer full or part-time courses
- Gives you the opportunity to meet new people

Subject Specific Colleges

- They can specialise in particular subjects – such as art and design, agriculture and horticulture or dance and drama
- Courses are structured to support students with a particular disability or learning difficulty
- May involve a lot of travelling
- Some of the courses may be for students over the age of 18

How to choose the right place for you

You need to find the right place for you: the right environment, the right structure and the right course.

- If your school has a sixth form, then you might want to consider staying on if you are happy there. You can also transfer to another school to study in their sixth form
- If you feel that you have ‘out-grown’ your school and want a little more independence, then the college environment may be better suited to you
- If you are studying a subject that requires specific equipment, then look to see which institution has the better facilities
- There is nothing to stop you applying to several institutions, have interviews, visit places, meet the staff and then make your decision as to where you feel you would be happiest

Further information about Further Education

- Within the UK, there are over 90,000 different post-16 courses to choose from
- Full-time Further Education courses are free for anyone who is under the age of 19 at the start of their course
- If you are aged over 19, you can be charged for your course but if you are on benefits (or meet the institution’s eligibility criteria), then you may be able to study the course for free
- The fees can vary between the institutions, courses and levels of study
- Full-time education at FE level is defined as at least 12 hours of guided learning per week

Further Education Finance

Page 9

Whilst studying at FE level there are various funding support schemes available:

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

- This is a weekly allowance of £30 per week to help you whilst studying
- You have to be on a full-time Further Education course at either a college or a school to receive the EMA
- You may also receive bonuses for attendance and progress
- You need to be 16-18 when you start the academic year
- All young people in care should automatically qualify for the EMA

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Income Support

- If you are aged between 16-19 and are in full-time non-advanced (up to Level 3 study) education then you may be eligible to receive Income Support if:
 - You are the parent of a child who lives with you
 - You are not being looked after by someone acting as your parent
 - You have just left care and have to live independently – however, if you are being supported by your local authority then you will not be entitled to Income Support up to the age of 18

Welsh Government Grant for Further Education scheme

- WGLG (FE) is a payment of up to £1,500 if you are studying full-time and up to £750 if you are part-time
- It is dependent on your household income
- You have to be aged 19 or over
- Your course must be at least 275 hours for you to get WGLG (FE), be at a participating college, and lead to a nationally recognised qualification
- Your course must also be 'eligible' for you to get WGLG (FE). Your college can tell you if the course you want to do is eligible. There are lots of courses that you could do, and get WGLG (FE), such as:
 - GCSEs; 'A' or 'AS' levels; BTEC, NVQ courses; Basic Skills courses

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Financial Contingency Funds (FCF)

- This is for students aged 16+ on part-time or full-time courses
- This can cover things such as transport, equipment costs, books and/or childcare
- It is a discretionary fund administered by individual colleges

Charities and Educational Trusts

- There are a variety of charities and educational trusts that may provide financial support
- Talk to your social worker, career adviser and the welfare team at college

Dance and Drama Awards

- These are awards for students who want to work in performing arts
- There are national scholarships in dance, drama and stage management
- To apply for a dance course you have to be 16 or over
- To apply for acting or stage management you have to be 18 or over
- Around 500 awards are given every year – the award does not pay all of the fees but there is a Fees and Maintenance Fund to help with living costs

www.gov.uk/danceanddrama

Transport Support

- If you need transport to and from education, there is support towards the cost of this
- This support will vary so you need to discuss this with your Social Worker and institution where you are studying

Expenses while you study

- Whilst you are studying, there will be times when you need some additional financial support
- Your Local Authority (or Children's Services) may be able to help you
- Talk to your social worker or personal adviser to find out what further support you can receive



Options after Further Education

Page 11

Employment, a year out or Higher Education?

Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier financial rewards • Greater independence • Opportunity to learn a skill at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might limit future study chances • If study is involved, it may be after work hours • Level of work may be limited • Career opportunities may be limited
A year out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives time to decide what to do • Opportunity to travel • Provides a break from study • Opportunity to gain life experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going back to study might be difficult • May lose out on some qualifications • May be labelled as 'time wasting' • May be used to avoid decision making
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain further qualifications • Get really involved in a particular area of study which you may not have studied before • Chance to make lots of new friends • Plenty of recreational activities • Delay making final career decision • Obtain necessary qualifications for particular employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited finances • In-depth study may be tiring • Risk of failing • Living away from familiar setting

Why consider Higher Education?

Higher education will give you the opportunity to try out new things, study new subjects or study subjects you love in more depth, train for specific careers, meet new people and develop your self confidence.

Money, career and social life

- On average, graduates earn 55% more over their working lives than those who start work at 18
- 40% of jobs require a higher education qualification
- Graduates have more rapid career progression
- Employers like graduates because they have proven analytical skills, problem solving abilities and self motivation
- You will be encouraged to think for yourself, develop your own ideas and question things whilst studying - skills that will stay with you forever
- You will meet hundreds of people from all over the world - some will be friends you will keep for life
- There will be parties, clubs and societies to meet everyone's tastes

Money Facts

- You don't have to pay fees upfront
- Grants are not repayable and student loans are only repayable after you have left university and are earning £21,000 a year
- Loans are then repaid at 9% on the amount earned over £21,000 e.g. on an income of £25,000 the student loan repayment will be 9% of £4,000 = £360 per month
- If your debt isn't cleared 30 years after graduation it will be wiped out
- **Welsh students don't pay £9,000 fees even if they study in England.** The Welsh Government has provided additional support so that a Welsh student studying anywhere in the UK will only need to have a loan of £3,575 and the Welsh Government will then pay the remainder of the fees (up to a max of £5,425)
- **There are bursaries available for Care Leavers**

For more information see Money Matters on page 42.

Which course? What subject?

Once you have decided to apply for higher education, you need to decide on the course! There are thousands of options so choose carefully.

Making the right choice first time means you maximise your chances of a successful degree.

You should consider:

- What subjects you like doing and what you enjoy in your spare time
- What job you want in the future
- What are you good at and what other people say you're good at
- If you want to study full time or part time so you can work and study at the same time

You should try and:

- Take part in taster workshops, university visits and summer schools. Find out what your local Reaching Wider Partnership has to offer
- Test out career ideas by arranging work experience or talking to other students
- Talk to teachers, careers advisers and social workers
- Read prospectuses/websites which give details of courses and admission requirements
- Look at course content - is it mostly course work or will you have to sit exams?
- Go to Open Days and contact admissions tutors to find out what the course involves
- Try out the Stamford test on www.ucas.com to match your interests and abilities to higher education courses

Types of qualifications

HE can now be studied through a number of different types of courses and will vary in entry requirements, structure, length and assessment. Just like FE, it is important to find the right course and subject for you:

Degree Honours or Ordinary Level

- The most common HE option
- Usually takes 3-4 years to complete
- Longer courses may include practical experience
- These degrees focus on one subject

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| • BA – Bachelor of Arts | • BSc – Bachelor of Science | • BEng – Bachelor of Engineering |
| • BEd – Bachelor of Education | • BN – Bachelor of Nursing | |

Joint Honours Degree

- Two subjects studied equally
- Can have some bizarre combinations

Major/Minor Degree

- This combines two thirds of one subject with one third of another subject – not equally

Combined Degree

- Two or more subjects of equal or differing amounts
- Often related subjects e.g Spanish and French

Foundation Degree

Foundation Degrees are currently offered at around 70 institutions in England but are still under development in Wales

- Covers work related study that is in collaboration with employers
- Can be part-time or will take two years full-time
- After completing this degree, you can then top it up with approximately 15 months of further study to achieve an honours degree

The foundation degree should not be confused with:

Foundation Course/Programme/Diploma

You might study a foundation course/programme if you don't have qualifications in the appropriate subjects for your chosen degree or if your grades aren't high enough. Most students who wish to study for an art and design or architecture degree will complete a foundation year.

Certificate/Diploma in Higher Education

- Awarded as two thirds of a degree
- Becoming more scarce
- Used by professional bodies, such as Counselling or Nursing
- Can be taken at colleges
- Often available to part-time students

Higher National Certificate – HNC (Level 4)

Higher National Diploma – HND (Level 5)

- Usually takes 2 years of study, or 3 years with a year in industry
- Covers work-related/vocational subjects
- Usually studied at college
- You can use HND or HNC as a route to a degree
- The entry requirements for an HND tend to be lower than for a degree

Modular Courses

- Avoids over specialisation
- A series of short courses called modules
- Pick and mix options with some restrictions
- All subjects taught and examined separately

Sandwich Courses

- Involve work experience placement in industry
- Can be in the UK or abroad
- Paid or unpaid
- Funding does not always take the work placements into account

Typical 'offers' made to applicants by Universities

(This is what you will be required to achieve to get in)

Degree

- At least 3 GCSEs at grade A-C
- Universities may allow you to count your points from your AS Levels
- You **may** also be able to count 60 points from Key Skills Units
- 2-3 A2 Levels, an AVCE Double Award or a BTEC National Diploma
- Some degrees also require an interview and/or work experience in addition to qualifications e.g Social Work

Foundation Degree

- Normally around 80 UCAS points from either of the following – an A Level, an AVCE, a BTEC National Diploma or an Access course but check individual institutions as they will vary

Higher National Diploma (HND)

- 3-4 GCSEs at grade A-C
- Plus one of the following – an A Level, an AVCE, a BTEC National Diploma, or an Access course

Art and Design or HND

- Usually applicants are asked to complete a one year Art & Design Foundation course first
- Students may be accepted onto degree courses without having first completed a Foundation Year if they have at least 2 AS Levels and can produce a high quality portfolio of work

General advice

- For some degree courses, particular A Level subjects are required, others accept any
- Admissions tutors look for many other factors as well – interests, voluntary work, ambition, hobbies, achievements in sports
- Each university sets its own entry requirements – popular universities may set higher grades
- Look at the number of student applicants per place
- Just because a course/university wants higher grades, it does not mean that it is a better course/place
- All applicants are assessed on predicted grades – you must consult with your tutors for these
- Always check the individual university for their own entry requirements
- Vocational courses often ask for relevant work experience eg nursing, education, social work

Methods of study

- Some courses have a high proportion of 'contact hours' – time which you are obliged to work, either through tutorials, lectures, workshops, or laboratory time
- Some final grades include up to 50% of course work – check individual course content

Where to study

Factors to consider

All universities and colleges offering HE publish Key Information Sets on their websites. The KIS contain areas of information to help students select a course and institution. These areas are:

- Student satisfaction
- Course information
- Employment and salary data
- Accommodation costs
- Financial information, such as fees

This information is designed to help you choose the best course for you. Course Finder on www.ucas.com will allow you to look at the KIS data at the same time as viewing the courses you are interested in applying to.

Studying for a higher education qualification in a Further Education College

You don't have to go to university to study for a higher education qualification, more and more students are taking their degrees at Further Education colleges. Benefits can often include smaller class sizes and lower tuition fees.

Distance learning

- Distance learning enables you to learn at your own pace in your own environment, not on a university campus
- The Open University (OU) is the UK's only university dedicated to distance learning
- The OU offers part-time supported distance learning. This means people can study from home (or anywhere else) and fit their studies around their work and life commitments
- For most OU courses there are no previous qualifications required
- You have to be 16 when your course starts and there is no upper age limit
- All OU courses offer credits at Higher Education level and can count towards a degree or other qualification
- There are currently over 6,000 students studying with the Open University in Wales (OUiW)
- The OUiW Student Advisors team provide a range of support for students studying with the OU in Wales, from initial information and guidance, financial and disability support and ongoing careers guidance
- Studying with the OU is very flexible and allows people to take a break between courses or just take one course at a time depending on their interests
- Financial support might be available for those on low income and certain benefits

Campus or City Centre

City Centre

- Teaching block, classrooms and administration in centre of town
- Halls of residence can be a distance away

Advantage

- In a city with amenities/shops
- Stay there to do work in the library rather than sneak back to room during free time

Disadvantage

- May be long periods between lectures and you cannot easily go back to your room

Campus

- Self contained sites
- Can be a few miles from the nearest town
- Have own halls of residence, shops, banks, sports facilities, libraries etc

Advantage

- Handy – everything in one place

Disadvantage

- Campus living might be more expensive than living in town
- Less opportunity to mix with people who are not students

Other factors to consider

- Look for female/male ratio, also ages and numbers of mature students
- Large universities can be divided into colleges for ease
- Large universities can have their own transport systems around the campus
- Smaller universities can be friendlier
- Smaller universities have excellent facilities, but fewer of them

Geographical Area

If a university is near to home, there may be many advantages

- Regular visits from friends
- You are familiar with the area

Think about

- Public transport costs – easy rail or coach links
- Don't be prejudiced – Wales or England, north or south
- Check that there is free car parking on site if necessary
- What do you prefer – busy towns/cities or country life?
- You will not be working all the time, so what do you do in your spare time?
- If you enjoy hill walking, canoeing, rock climbing – don't choose London!
- Find out about the local night clubs, specialist music scenes, sporting facilities nearby, beer prices, cinemas, theatres, shopping etc

Tuition & Assessment

- Some tuition can involve lectures that may be given to 150 students with little student participation, others require listening and taking notes, or you may have seminars that are discussion groups
- Tutorials are regular meetings with your tutor, either in small groups or individually, to identify any areas of concern, or to help with specific subject areas
- Different assessment methods are used depending on the course – you may have exams every year, or you may have course work submission dates or a mixture of both
- Think about how you work best – how well did you do at school with exams and course work – which one works better for you?

Start researching now

With all of this to consider, it is never too early to start researching. The sooner the better!

- There are plenty of resources available, with the internet, books and prospectuses. Visit your school or college library and start gathering information
- If you know which career you are interested in then find out what HE qualification you need and then work backwards, this way you can make sure that you study the right subjects
- Careers staff are available to help you find the information you require, or ask your social worker
- In the information section, you will find plenty of useful contact details to get started

Buttle UK Quality Mark

Buttle UK has created a Quality Mark which recognises and acknowledges the Further and Higher Education Institutions that make special efforts to support students from care backgrounds.

Currently 76 Higher Education Institutions across the UK are Quality Mark holders.

Coleg Gwent, Coleg Menai, Coleg Sir Gar, Neath Port Talbot College Group and Yale College have achieved the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Further Education.

Buttle UK also provides financial support grants for young people with a care background.

Visit www.buttleuk.org for more information.

Support available for Looked After Children and Care Leavers from Welsh Further and Higher Education Institutions

Student Support Services

All universities and colleges in Wales have departments dedicated to supporting students and in those Student Support Services you will find a designated member of staff who can provide advice and support to you as a care leaver. Student Support Services can help with the finances and all the universities in Wales provide some form of grant for Care Leavers as well as help on other aspects such as finding work and accommodation. The details of the support available and who to contact at each institution can be found on pages 18 to 31.

Aberystwyth University

www.aber.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Dr Debra Croft, Manager, Widening Participation

Tel 01970 622681 or 07968 775523 **E-mail** dec@aber.ac.uk

Doug Kerr, Mentoring and Care leaver adviser, Student Support Services

Tel 01970 621529 **E-mail** dok@aber.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- Looked after children and Care Leavers are a priority group for all our in-house and outreach activities including the Aberystwyth Summer University programme
- We work closely with local foster carers and local authority groups, as well as school and college contacts for vulnerable children
- Please see the website or get in touch for more information, or if you would like us to meet with you

Assistance Provided

- Pre-application advice and guidance, correspondence and detailed individual advice during application process
- Travel costs for interviews and open days and where applicable overnight accommodation can be arranged
- Student peer mentor for open days
- Advice on finding financial support
- Advice on finding part-time work

365 day accommodation

Is available and all new applicants are written to at key points in the application year to advise on this.

Peer Mentoring

'Signpost' mentoring scheme (peer mentoring) available to all undergraduates; Looked After Children and Care Leavers are encouraged to use the service.

Additional financial support

Bursary available at two levels – full £1,800 per annum and part £1,000 per annum – dependent on circumstances and length of time in care (see website). This bursary is available to the extended age group of up to 25 years, and, in some circumstances, those in kin-care.

Other support

- Help to move in at start of university life and at end of year/term end if needed
- Provision of a 'Starter Pack' if needed – bedding, cutlery/crockery, etc
- On going e-mail support, plus social meetings – lunch, tea/coffee chats, etc!
- Mobile / phone / e-mail contact for access to Dr Croft – plus office drop in
- Help with graduation costs – gown hire, etc.

Bangor University

www.bangor.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Wendy Williams, Student Services. Wendy is also a Student Adviser.

Tel 01248 382024 **E-mail** wendy.williams@bangor.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- Outreach work with local schools and colleges
- Open Days at the University

Assistance Provided

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Students are contacted at the application stage to introduce adviser and services
- Travel costs for interviews and open days
- Finding financial support
- Finding part-time work
- Help and Support during the university application and admission process
- Assistance with filling in your student finance application forms
- Integrated Student Services offering easy access to study skills, money support, housing, disability, mental health and counselling services.

365 day accommodation

Guaranteed Halls accommodation in your first year. 365 day accommodation is also available in our Halls.

Peer Guiding

- Peer guide support for all students to help you settle in during Welcome Week and the first few weeks of term

Additional financial support

Targeted financial support for Care Leavers through the University's Bursary and Financial contingency Funds. This means that Bangor will provide you with bursary of £1,000 a year, on top of any other University or statutory funding you may be eligible for.

Support with childcare

Additional financial help is available through Financial Contingency Fund for childcare.

Cardiff Metropolitan University (Formerly UWIC)

www.cardiffmet.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Emma Cook, Student Finance and Welfare Adviser

Tel 02920 416170 **E-mail** welfareadvice@cardiffmet.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

The First Campus project at Cardiff Metropolitan University, works with LEAs and partner FE Colleges to design progressive programmes to raise aspirations, confidence and introduce Looked After Children to Further and Higher Education. Programmes are inspirational, challenging and exciting, enabling participants to progress through education with support to make an informed choice.

First Campus at Cardiff Metropolitan University, in partnership with Cardiff Council's Youth Mentoring Team and Cardiff and the Vale College, piloted a programme in 2012 and are continuing to develop this programme in 2014. The programme is aimed at young people in care or at risk of going into care and endeavours to help them realise their potential, build confidence and self-esteem and raise aspirations towards Further and Higher Education. The programme runs over a five-month period and includes a 30-hour Pacific Institute course as well as a College and University experience. The course is set in Cardiff Metropolitan University once a week for two hours and offers learners the opportunity to work towards achieving three Agored Cymru credits up to Level 2 in self-perception, self-confidence and target setting. The College and University Experience include visits to further and higher education institutions, where the students engage in a variety of course-related activities designed to give them a greater awareness of the choices available to them at FE and HE level and the pathways to get there.

Assistance provided to Care Leavers includes

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Students are contacted at the application stage to introduce adviser and services
- Travel costs for interviews and open days
- Pre-entry meeting
- Finding financial support
- Finding part-time work if needed (with support from Career Development services)
- On-going support once enrolled (if required)

365 day accommodation

Guaranteed accommodation in university owned halls for the duration of the course.

Additional financial support

Care leavers' bursary open to students under the age of 25 and full details of the students' care/case worker must be supplied (see www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/bursaries for full terms and conditions).

The care bursary is set at a maximum of £1,000 pa.

Care leavers are a priority group for the University's Financial Contingency Fund.

Support with childcare

Childcare grants are available. Additional help may be available through the University's Financial Contingency Fund.

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Einir Evans **Tel** 02920 874787 **E-mail** EvansE23@cardiff.ac.uk

Scott McKenzie **Tel** 02920 870324 **E-mail** McKenzieSD1@cardiff.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- Confident Futures Project is a mentoring scheme for Looked After Children and Care Leavers between the ages of 15 – 19 in South East Wales which includes social events, university taster days, one-to-one mentoring, and workshops to support studies and applications to university. Young people who join this project will have an opportunity to meet on a regular basis with current university students who act as mentors.
- Cardiff University also runs the Confident Futures Summer School for Looked After Children and Care Leavers between the ages 15 -19, from across Wales. This is a two-day residential summer school aimed at demystifying the university environment and helping young people aspire to study at university
- Young people in care are also invited to join our Step-Up to Uni scheme which offers a variety of subject-specific events where students can find out more about the subjects they are interested in and what it is like to study them
- We work closely with Local Authorities to ensure that support for Higher Education entry is built into the individual's Pathway Plan where appropriate

Contextual Admissions

- The University has implemented a contextual admissions model to better inform Admissions Tutors' understanding of applicants' social backgrounds, allowing Admissions Tutors to assess applicants' potential to succeed at Cardiff University in the context of barriers they may have encountered
- Applicants who have spent time in care and indicated this on their UCAS form (using the specified question) will be eligible for 'additional consideration,' this could include a guaranteed offer, guaranteed interview or additional consideration in the summer result period

Assistance Provided

- Pre-application advice and guidance, correspondence and detailed individual advice during application process
- Students are contacted at the application stage to introduce adviser and services
- Finding financial support
- Pre-entry meeting
- Regular meetings between the named contact, Einir Evans, and students from care to identify support requirements, and to liaise with university departments and external agencies where appropriate (and with the student's express permission)

365 day accommodation

- Yes, available on request
- Guaranteed accommodation in university owned halls for the duration of the course

Peer Mentoring

A mentoring scheme is available for students in South East Wales – see above

Additional financial support

Care leavers will receive £1,000 bursary in the first year, £750 in subsequent years and £500 in the final term of the final year (terms and condition apply).

Additional bursaries and scholarships are available subject to status, please see:

www.cardiff.ac.uk/scholarshipsandbursaries

Support with childcare

We can assist you in applying for the Childcare Grant. Additional financial help might also be available through Financial Contingency Fund for childcare.

Careers support

- The University Careers Service offers comprehensive support to students when thinking about their future career
- If you're looking for work as a student, Cardiff University Jobshop based in the Students' Union helps students to find part time work. The Disability service also recruits and trains students to work part time helping disabled students as part of the Support Worker Scheme

Glyndŵr University Wrexham

www.glyndwr.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Beryl Dixon, Senior Student Advisor

Tel 01978 293 547 **E-mail** b.dixon@glyndwr.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- Taster Visits to the university
- Pre-fresher activities

Assistance Provided includes

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Travel costs for interviews and open days
- Regular meetings with the named contact
- Funding application support
- Finding part-time work
- Academic study skills support

365 day accommodation

365 day accommodation is guaranteed for Looked After Children throughout their studies.

Peer Mentoring

Mentoring and a buddy system is available.

Additional financial support

£1,000 bursary per year available to looked after children. Additional bursaries and scholarships available subject to status.

Support with childcare

15% discount available to all qualifying students at our on-site nursery. Various other childcare options available locally.

Careers support

On-site job shop and careers service.

OUIW – Open University in Wales

www.open.ac.uk

Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers:

Student Services team on 02920 471170

www.wales@open.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

The OUIW are very happy to run outreach information sessions to brief Care Leaver teams about the possibilities and opportunities the Open University can offer students.

Assistance available to Care Leavers includes:

- Advice and Guidance information sessions for Care Leaver teams
- Pre-registration advice and guidance for prospective students
- Financial Fee waivers – many OU courses are free to people on certain benefits or a low income

www.openuniversity.co.uk/now

Peer Mentoring

OUIW Students are supported by tutors and the Student Services team in OU office in Cardiff. In addition course tutorials, online forums and conferences also promote peer support.

Additional financial support

In addition the following grants are available for students living in Wales, who are studying part time towards an undergraduate qualification worth at least 30 credit points, who do not already hold an existing degree qualification and whose household income is below £28,180.

Fee grant – to cover course fees. Up to £670/ £1,000 depending on how many points you study.

Course grant – to cover any costs associated with studying, e.g. a PC, Internet access, travel to and from tutorials. Up to £1,125.

Support with childcare

OUIW offers a Childcare Grant.

Swansea University

www.swansea.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Named contacts for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Asad Rahman **Tel** 01792 513225 **E-mail** a.rahman@swansea.ac.uk

Alison Maguire **Tel** 01792 513393 **E-mail** a.d.maguire@swansea.ac.uk

Rob Ellis **Tel** 01792 602979 **E-mail** r.j.ellis@swansea.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- ACE days: Swansea University students work closely with Year 9 pupils through a series of activities aimed at raising aspirations to a Higher Education through increased awareness of student life, the different routes into HE and the variety of courses available
- Student Mentors are recruited from the student body of Swansea University to work in local secondary schools

throughout Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Mentors support targeted pupils from Years 7-11

- Year 12 Summer University is a free three/four week residential course Monday – Friday (or on a non residential basis if appropriate) aimed at school pupils in Year 12 and First Year Level 3 students at Further Education studying in Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire
- Information sessions for carers and young people in care
- Specific ‘Taste of University’ days for young people in care

Assistance provided to Care Leavers includes

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Students are contacted at the application stage to introduce adviser and services
- Travel costs for interviews and open days
- Accessing financial support
- Finding part-time work

Care leavers compact scheme

Swansea University offers a Compact Deal for students who have been in care. This deal is designed to make sure that we can support you in applying, arriving and succeeding at Swansea University. It's for that reason we ask you to make sure you visit and keep in touch with Asad, Rob or Alison and in return we reduce what is required of you both academically to gain entry to the University and reduce the costs in every year that you are with us.

As a compact student you will receive:

- A reduction in your required A-level grade (or equivalent). This offer will reduce our requirements by one A-level grade (or equivalent). This means that if the programme requirements are grades ABB at A-level, this will be reduced by one grade (e.g. your offer would be reduced to BBB or ABC – depending on the exact requirements for the relevant degree programme)
- A £1,000 bursary in each year of study (in addition to other financial support you may get). This money is intended to assist with accommodation costs for the full 52 weeks

To obtain these benefits all you need to do is make contact with one of the named contacts above and provide them with a copy of your Pathway Plan. Asad, Rob and Alison are Swansea University's Care Leavers Mentors and are on hand to help and support you with all aspects of your University life.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. **You can only benefit from one Swansea University scheme offering a reduction in grade requirements. The scheme offering the highest reduction will be applied.**
2. **If you are applying to the School of Human and Health Sciences the grade reduction may not apply as the entry requirements for many of the professional degree programmes within this School are determined in consultation with external professional bodies. Instead, if you contact Asad Rahman Swansea University will offer you personal advice on how to make your application as strong as it can be.**

Guaranteed 365 days a year accommodation on campus for your first year at university. Help to find rental accommodation in the local area to suit your needs if preferred.

Additional financial support

£1,000 grant for accommodation costs under the Care Leavers Compact Deal.

Support with childcare

Childcare grants available. The university's Financial Contingency Fund may also be able to help.

University of South Wales

www.southwales.ac.uk/care-leavers

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

Named contacts for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Lena Smith **Tel** 01633 432657 **E-mail** lena.smith@southwales.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- Work with partners to ensure that Looked After Children are targeted for inclusion in aspiration raising activities offered through First Campus such as ACE days, carousel workshops and summer schools
- Work closely with the Local Authority to ensure that support for Higher Education entry is built into the individual's Pathway Plan where appropriate

Assistance provided includes

- Students are contacted at the application stage to introduce adviser and services
- Support with applying for student funding and other external financial support
- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Finding part-time work - Our Careers and Employability Service can help you find temporary and part-time work during term-time and holidays.
- 365 day accommodation - Care Leavers have priority in allocation of university accommodation with a commitment to provide all year round accommodation.
- Care Leaver Coordinator as a point of contact throughout the academic year

Additional financial support

The university's Financial Contingency Fund treats Care Leavers as a priority group and could give you an additional grant to help with the cost of your studies. However, please note that this Fund is limited and you must apply at the earliest opportunity.

To support students with childcare costs students can apply to the Financial Contingency Fund for additional support.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

www.tsd.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK QUALITY MARK

The University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Swansea Metropolitan University have now merged. The merged university is known as the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and its main campuses are based in Carmarthen, Lampeter and Swansea. The merged university is committed to providing a high standard of care and support for its students and provides a comprehensive package of support from pre-entry through to post-graduation.

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Carmarthen campus and Distance Learners

Delyth Lewis **Tel** 01267 676947 or **E-mail** d.lewis@tsd.ac.uk

Lampeter campus

Lynda Lloyd-Davies **Tel** 01570 424761 or **E-mail** l.lloyd-davies@tsd.ac.uk

Swansea Campus

Sharon Alexander **Tel:** 01792 481 206 or **Email** Sharon.alexander@sm.uwtsd.ac.uk

Outreach activities with looked after children

- Information Session for Carers and Young People in Care
- Specific 'Taste of University' Days for young people in care
- ACE days: UWTSD students work closely with Year 9 pupils through a series of activities aimed at raising aspirations to a Higher Education through increased awareness of student life, the different routes into HE and the variety of courses available
- Student Mentors are recruited from the student body of UWTSD to work in local secondary schools throughout South West Wales. Mentors support targeted pupils from Years 7-11
- Year 12 Summer University is a free three/four week residential course Monday – Friday (or on a non residential basis if appropriate) aimed at school pupils in Year 12 and First Year Level 3 students at Further Education studying in Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire

Assistance provided to Care Leavers includes:

- An integrated Student Services department, offering easy access to financial support, accommodation, additional needs, counselling, and specialist academic support services
- Targeted financial support for Care Leavers through the University's scholarships, bursaries and financial contingency funds
- Regular meetings between the named contacts, Delyth Lewis, Lynda Lloyd-Davies, Sharon Alexander and students from care to identify support requirements, and to liaise with university departments and external agencies where appropriate (and with the student's express permission).
- Help with planning and arranging your accommodation for both term and vacation time
- A high degree of confidentiality for students from a care background in respect of service provision and specific arrangements
- Pre-entry guidance from the Careers Advisers and help if required during the university application and admissions process
- Offer of a peer mentor to help you settle in during the first few weeks of term
- Support with childcare
- Support to find part-time/holiday work and with career planning

365 day accommodation

Support available for Looked After Children and Care Leavers from Welsh Further Education Institutions

Bridgend College

www.bridgend.ac.uk

BRIDGEND COLLEGE IS CURRENTLY WORKING TOWARDS THE BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY MARK

Named contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Nicky Johns Student Support Services Manager

Tel 01656 302488 **Email** njohns@bridgend.ac.uk

Outreach Activities

- Taster visits to all campuses by arrangement with named contact
- Wellbeing Officers (Designated Team) available to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers at induction and during their time at College
- Meetings arranged by the Local Authority's Looked after Children's Education Co-ordinator between year 11 pupils from partner schools and the Designated Team

- The Local Authority's LAC Education Co-ordinator sends lists to the Designated Team and arranges early meetings between year 11 pupils from partner schools, the Designated Team and the Student Support Services Manager who is the designated contact for LAC/CLs
- Links being developed with out of county leaving care teams to ensure advice, guidance and support is provided for all students
- Attendance at After School Club for Looked After Children to provide advice and guidance and information on the support, courses and options available at College
- Participation and attendance at the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Annual Award Ceremony, including provision of award and raffles prizes

Assistance Provided to Looked after Children and Care Leavers

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Support with application process
- Support through the enrolment process including dedicated days and times for enrolment where required
- Designated Person/Team to provide advice, guidance, support and advocacy throughout their time in College
- Designated Team will help in accessing other support including careers advice, counselling, health and wellbeing, safeguarding, housing and any other support mechanism required by the Looked After Child or Care Leaver

Coleg Cambria

www.colegcambria.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY MARK

Named Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Karen Senior Student Services Manager

Tel 01244 831531 **ext** 4106 **Email** Karen.senior@colegcambria.ac.uk

Outreach Activities

- Two main open evenings every year also taster visits to all campuses.
- Individual visits can be arranged if needed.
- Early links made with Local Authorities and Leaving Care teams to ensure advice, guidance and support is provided for all learners.
- Liaising with Local Authorities to offer transition days. Specific sessions can be set up to enable young people in care to drop in and obtain friendly informal advice.
- Support with application, interview and enrolment process.

Assistance Provided to Looked After Children and Care Leavers

- Prior to College start date individual students will meet designated person who supports LAC and Care Leavers.
- Priority access to Financial Contingency Fund for support with course related equipment, food vouchers and childcare.
- Regular review of support throughout each term with the LAC co-ordinator.
- Service level agreements have been developed between Coleg Cambria and Local Authorities to offer periodic reviews
- Access to College Counsellor /C Card scheme /sexual health nurse
- Support with applications for progression to HE or into employment.

Coleg Gwent

www.coleggwent.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY MARK

Named Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Julie Holt, Head of Learner Services at the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone

Tel 01495 333000 **Email:** julie.holt@coleggwent.ac.uk

Named Contact for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers (CLs) at each campus is the Head of Learner Services:

Pontypool and Usk Campuses: [Sian Hughes sian.hughes@coleggwent.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.Hughes@coleggwent.ac.uk)

Crosskeys Campus: [Bill Mason william.mason@coleggwent.ac.uk](mailto:Bill.Mason@coleggwent.ac.uk)

Newport Campus: ann.johns@coleggwent.ac.uk / june.bridgmann@coleggwent.ac.uk

Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone (BGLZ): julie.holt@coleggwent.ac.uk

Outreach Activities

- Taster visits to all campuses by arrangement with named contact, Head of Learner Services
- The Local Authority's LAC Education Co-ordinator/14+ networks sends lists to campuses and arranges early meetings between year 11 pupils from partner schools and the Head of Learner Services who is the designated contact for LAC/CLs
- Early links made with out of county leaving care teams to ensure advice, guidance and support is provided for all learners
- Participation in local leaving transitions days with young people to provide advice and guidance and information on the support available at College
- Protocol for the engagement of CL/LAC in place with five local authorities served by the college

Assistance Provided

- Pre-application advice and guidance, individual meetings with Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo), where necessary
- Support with enquiries and application process
- Support through the enrolment process including dedicated days and times for enrolment
- Starter packs provided for all LAC/CLs e.g. files, stationery, pens, highlighters etc
- Priority access to financial support for help with transport, meals, childcare, course related equipment and clothing costs , prior to commencement
- Head of Learner Services to provide advice, guidance, support and advocacy throughout time in College which includes taking part in progress meetings with learners and support teams/foster carers
- Head of Learner Services will help in accessing other support including careers advice, counselling, learning coach, peer mentor and personal mentor.
- Support with applications for progression to HE or into employment
- Regular review of support to ensure effectiveness and impact on achievements

Coleg y Cymoedd

www.cymoedd.ac.uk

COLEG Y CYMOEDD IS WORKING TOWARDS THE BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY MARK

Learning Services and Support Manager: Sue Shephard, 01443 810077

Named Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Jackie Harris: Lead Learning Coach

Tel 01443 810010 **Email** Jacqueline.Harris@cymoedd.ac.uk

Outreach Activities

- Taster visits to all campuses by arrangement with named contact
- Links with the Local Authority to identify 'Looked After Children' that are applying to the College as early as possible and ensure advice, guidance and support is provided.
- Links with local 'Leaving Care' teams to identify young people applying to the College as early as possible and ensure advice, guidance and support is provided
- Links being developed with out of county leaving care teams to ensure advice, guidance and support is provided for all students
- Participation in LAC Advice Days at College – including campus tours, financial advice, information on courses and college life and Information Pack given

Assistance Provided

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Support with Admissions process
- Individual meetings with
- Designated support person to provide advice, guidance, support and advocacy throughout their time in College
- Designated support person will signpost to other support including careers advice, additional learning support and welfare support.
- Support with applications for progression, to HE or into employment
- Regular review of support

Gower College Swansea

www.gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk

Named Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Cathy Thomas: Student Support Officer with Lead Responsibility for 'Looked After Children' and 'Care Leavers'

Tel 01792 890 772 **Email** Cathy.Thomas@gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk

Available Activities

- Cross College Taster Event
- Foster Carer/LAC Guardian Information day – an opportunity for people supporting 'Looked After Children' to come into the College and find out about available courses, funding, welfare support and additional support
- College Campus Tours – Group or 1-2-1 with a designated person
- Links with the Local Authority to identify 'Looked After Children' that are applying to the College as early as possible and ensure advice, guidance and support is provided.
- Visits made to the local 'Leaving Care' teams to identify young people applying to the College as early as possible and ensure advice, guidance and support is provided.

College support for 'Looked after Children' and 'Care Leavers'

- Pre-application advice and guidance on available courses and support with the application process
- Support through the enrolment process by a designated person (if requested)
- Priority access to the College's Financial Contingency Fund to help cover costs for a College bus pass, childcare, essential course specific equipment costs, clothing costs and essential trips as part of the course
- Designated support person to provide advice, guidance, support and advocacy throughout their time in College
- Designated support person will signpost to other support including careers advice, counselling and welfare support.
- Support when applying with applications for the Reaching Wider Summer University scheme

NPTC group (formerly Neath Port Talbot College and Coleg Powys)

www.nptcgroup.ac.uk

AWARDED BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY MARK

Named Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Heather Turner, Senior Officer Learner Services

Tel 01639 648376 **Email** Heather.Turner@nptcgroup.ac.uk

Outreach Activities

- Taster visits to the College
- The Local Authority's Looked after Children's Education Co-ordinator arranges early meetings between year 11 pupils from partner schools and Designated Person
- Early links made with out of county leaving care teams to ensure advice, guidance and support is provided for all students
- Participation in local leaving care team's consultation days with young people to provide advice and guidance and information on the support available at College
- Study skills club for years 10 and 11 at the college to aid transition to FE
- Events for current, past and perspective students to provide a voice for young people in and leaving care, and to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the support available and to help re-engage young people into FE

Assistance Provided

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Support with application process
- Support through the enrolment process including dedicated days and times for enrolment
- Priority access to financial contingency fund for help with transport, meals, childcare, course related equipment and clothing costs
- Designated Person to provide advice, guidance, support and advocacy throughout time in College
- Designated Person will help in accessing other support including careers advice, counselling, learning coach, peer mentor and personal mentor.
- Support with applications for the Reaching Wider Summer University scheme

Pembrokeshire College

www.pembrokeshire.ac.uk

PEMBROKESHIRE COLLEGE WORKING TOWARDS THE BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY KITE MARK

Named Contact for looked after children and Care Leavers

Maxine Thomas: Head of Safeguarding and Learner Services

Tel 01437 753245 **Mobile** 07989430703 (including out of hours)

Email ma.thomas@pembrokeshire.ac.uk

Outreach Activities

- Taster visits to the College
- Summer Engagement Programme
- Individual Visits
- Attendance at LAC reviews pre and post admission by the DSP
- Strong and effective links with the LADO
- Strong and effective links with the Corporate Parenting Teams / Children in Need and TAF teams
- College Nurse who liaises with LAC Nurse
- CAMHS links via the College Nurse
- Foster Carer Event prior to enrolment
- Supported attendance at Open Events

Assistance Provided to Looked After Children and Care Leavers

- Supported Pre-application advice and guidance
- Support with the application process and pre College Visits
- Strong and effective Multi Agency partnership arrangements
- Support by Designated Learner Coaches on enrolment days, during induction and throughout course of study
- Priority access to Financial Contingency Funds for assistance with transport, free College meals. Child care, course related equipment /clothing costs
- Regular meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Person (Head of Safeguarding and Learner Services)
- Access to College Nurse and Counsellor
- Support with HE applications
- Support with applications for the Reaching Wider Summer University Scheme
- Support with attendance at University Interviews
- More able and talented programme
- STEM scholarship(subject to eligibility)

The College, Merthyr Tydfil

www.merthyr.ac.uk

THE COLLEGE MERTHYR TYDFIL IS CURRENTLY WORKING TOWARDS THE BUTTLE UK FE QUALITY MARK.

Named Contact for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Jacqui Butler: Learning Coach Coordinator

Tel 01685 726029 **Email** j.butler@merthyr.ac.uk

Available Activities

- Taster visits to The College and the Redhouse campus, where the Creative Industries department are housed, can be arranged with our named contact
- Liaison between the Leaving Care Forum, LACES team, Barnardos and other agencies and named contact.
- Links developing with county and out of county teams to provide advice, guidance and support to new learners

Assistance Provided:

- Pre-application advice and guidance
- Support with application process
- Identification at application of Looked After Children and Care Leavers to ensure quick access to resources and any additional needs identified
- Learning Coach Team available to support Looked After Children and Care Leavers during induction and throughout their time at College where desired
- Priority access to financial support with transport, meals, childcare and course related equipment.
- Support with applications for progression to HE and employment including application for Disabled Students Allowance and bursaries where applicable
- Assistance with securing appropriate work placements when required
- Designated Learning Coach to provide advice, guidance, learning support and resources, sign-posting and advocacy throughout their time in college



Applying for HE courses

Page 33

What is UCAS?

Nearly all applications for HE courses go through the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). This means that you need to apply through UCAS for whatever university and course you would like to study.

UCAS Tariff – what is it and how does it work?

- UCAS Tariff is the points system used to help Higher Education Institutions to transfer qualifications and achievements into a numerical system
- It helps to compare different types of qualifications fairly, and then to compare applicants fairly
- Points can be totalled from the different qualifications that are included in the tariff
- There is no limit to the number of points which can be accumulated
- There is no double counting – applicants cannot count the same or similar qualifications twice
- Key skills also attract points

GCE/VCE Qualifications			BTEC Nationals			CACHE Diploma		Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art & Design)	Key Skills	Points
GCE AS / AS VCE	GCE A Level / AVCE	AVCE Double Award	Award	Certificate	Diploma	Theory	Practical			
					DDD					360
					DDM					320
								Distinction		285
					DMM					280
		AA		DD	MMM	A				240
								Merit		225
		AB								220
		BB		DM	MMP	B				200
		BC								180
								Pass		165
		CC		MM	MPP	C				160
		CD								140
	A	DD	D	MP	PPP	D	A			120
	B	DE					B			100
										90
	C	EE	M	PP		E	C			80
										77
										72
										71
										64
A	D									60
										58
										52
B										50
										48
										45
C	E		P				E			40
										39
										38
										35
										33
D									Level 4	30
										28
										26
E									Level 3	20
										17
										14
										13
									Level 2	10

UCAS Apply

The application form is now an on-line form, the paper-based form is no longer in use. The on-line form is a secure form that requires no downloading or installation. You don't have to complete the form all in one go. Once you have registered, you are able to log on from home or wherever to alter the form before you send the finished version.

- Your school or college may hold specific lessons/workshops to assist you with your UCAS application – it is suggested that you attend these
- There will always be a social worker or careers adviser available to help you with your UCAS application

The on-line application form

- The application fee for 2014/15 is £23.00 for multiple courses or £12.00 for 1 course. Many local authorities will pay this for you. Ask your social worker
- You only have to complete one UCAS application form – you put all of your choices onto the one form
- The on-line application identifies any elements you may have missed before it can be sent
- The completed form has to reach UCAS between **1st September and 15th January** when a guarantee of equal consideration will apply. Some courses including art & design and medicine have different deadlines so check www.ucas.com/students/applying/when to apply
- The reference must ONLY be completed by your school or college
- Applicants can use **ucastrack** to check the progress of their application once it has been sent to see what universities or colleges have made decisions

Your welcome letter from UCAS will give you your unique password to access ucastrack and ucasextra.

Completing the on-line form (Apply)

- Have a piece of paper and a pen ready
- When you have completed each page, always press 'next' where it appears
- On the form, pressing the 'enter/return' button can delete the information you have just entered

To register:

- Log on to www.ucas.com and click on Apply
- Click on student login and click on register
- Read the terms and conditions and then tick agree
- Select where you are registering from
- If you are not at a school or college, then you can apply as an 'individual' by selecting the 'student login' link. You will be asked a series of questions and will need to provide a reference from someone that knows your suitability to HE
- Type in the buzzword (ask your school or college for this if registering through them)
- Follow the instructions to register your personal details (name etc.)
- Choose a password and enter a security question
- Click send, this gives you your username
- Make a note of your username and password
- You will then be asked to login. This will take you in to your individual application where you will have to complete 5 sections. You can complete the sections in any order and can make changes at any time before the form is sent
- Once you have completed all sections, you will have to make payment for your application – check with your school/college how this is to be paid, and then send it to your referee to check it. When they have added your reference, they will send your application to UCAS

About you

In the additional information section on your UCAS form they will ask if you have been in care. This will make the universities you wish to attend **aware** that you have applied and will ensure that your needs are taken into consideration and that appropriate support is in place when you start.

Support can include;

- Assistance with your application to university
- Financial assistance to attend open days
- Specific schemes for Care Leavers
- Assistance with applying for financial support from the student loans company via your local authority
- Priority access to additional bursaries and grants
- All year round accommodation
- Named contact to support you with all aspects of university life
- Support with childcare while you study
- Support to find part-time work and career planning

Declaring that you have been in care on your UCAS form does not mean that other students or your tutors or lecturers will know. It will however, ensure that all the support that you are entitled to is offered to you whether you choose to accept all, some or none of it. Your rights to confidentiality will be respected at all times.

What happens to my application next?

Once your application has been sent by your referee, you will then receive an acknowledgment from UCAS. UCAS then sends a copy of your form to all of the universities or colleges that you have applied to and they then make their decisions:

- 1) You may be given a **Conditional (C) Offer** – stating what results you need to achieve to be accepted
 - 2) You may be given an **Unconditional (U) Offer** – you already have the grades required
 - 3) You may be **Rejected (R)** by the university or college which means that they are not offering you a place
- You will receive information from UCAS on **ucastrack** – this service enables you to track your offers online and gives you dates by which you should reply to your offers
 - UCAS will send you details of your offers as they receive them – this could be at any time up to the end of May through **ucastrack**
 - You cannot reply to any offers until you have received them all

Accepting Offers

- When you have been sent all of the decisions from the universities/colleges, UCAS will send you a 'Statement of Decisions Letter' and instructions on how to reply to the offers (also through **ucastrack**)
- You will also be given a date by which you must reply to UCAS – you must make sure that you reply by the deadline date otherwise the universities can withdraw their offer to you
- You will be required to choose two offers – one Firm offer (CF) as your first choice and an Insurance offer (CI) – this is in case you don't get the grades required for your first choice
- If you have no offers then you are eligible for two further systems –
 - **ucasextra** – a new system that gives you another choice through UCAS and then
 - **Clearing** – a UCAS service that helps people find vacancies on higher education courses
- Once the exam results are published, the institutions make their final decisions about applicants holding a Conditional Offer by comparing their results with the offer made

- They then inform UCAS of their decision and UCAS then send out confirmation of offers to successful applicants and details for unsuccessful applicants

1) **ucasextra**

- If you find yourself without an offer and you have used all of your 5 choices already, you can use **ucasextra** to have an additional choice through UCAS
- You don't have to wait until **Clearing, ucasextra** operates from mid-March to the end of June. Universities will list their vacancies on the UCAS website (on the **ucascourse** service) or you can contact the universities/colleges direct
- UCAS will let you know if you are eligible for this system when they inform you through your final decision letter
- Follow the instructions given carefully on the website
- If you are made an offer, then you choose whether to accept it or not

2) **Clearing**

- Last year the **Clearing** system found places for more than 38,000 people
- If you are eligible for **Clearing**, you will automatically be sent a **Clearing Entry Form (CEF)** – however, you don't have to wait for this before telephoning universities
- Lists of courses with vacancies will be published on the UCAS website and in The Independent, The Independent on Sunday and The Mirror from the middle of August until late September
- Once you have found a course, contact the university or college to see if they will accept you
- If you accept a place through **Clearing**, you will be sent a confirmation letter automatically from UCAS

UCAS personal statement

Admissions tutors don't just look at qualifications, they want to know about you and what other interests you have. The information in the personal statement gives you the opportunity to create the right first impression. It supports your reason for applying and gives you a chance to explain your career aspirations. You may not be interviewed so this gives you the chance to say why you would be appropriate for the course.

Consider including the following

- Your reasons for choosing the course
- Your plans following the end of the course – how you will use your degree
- Relevant background experience
- Interests, achievements, skills and abilities (Duke of Edinburgh etc.)
- Any involvement in widening participation schemes, such as summer schools or mentoring activities
- Independent travel
- Positions of responsibility which show good communication skills
- Any job, work experience, voluntary work you have done relevant to the course
- Your sports and leisure interests
- If you are deferring entry, how you plan to spend your gap year

Key principles

- Think about the impression that you want to give
- Make sure that your statement applies to all of your course options
- Organise and sort the information
- Remember that what you write will be discussed at interview – so only write about the things that you are prepared to talk about
- Don't repeat information that appears elsewhere on the form
- Be as positive and as truthful as you can
- Check the spelling and grammar

- Don't use long words that you don't know the meaning of – you may be asked about it in your interview!
- Get a second opinion – ask your tutor, careers adviser or social worker to check it through
- Print a copy for yourself to keep and read it to remind you when you go for an interview

Things to avoid

- Clichés - For example 'I have always wanted to be a Accountant'
- Copying someone else's personal statement or copying one from the internet - admissions tutors can spot this and they have computer software to check this
- Poor linkage between HE course and current experiences
- Careless presentation – spelling/grammar errors
- Too many unrelated hobbies
- Listing of items

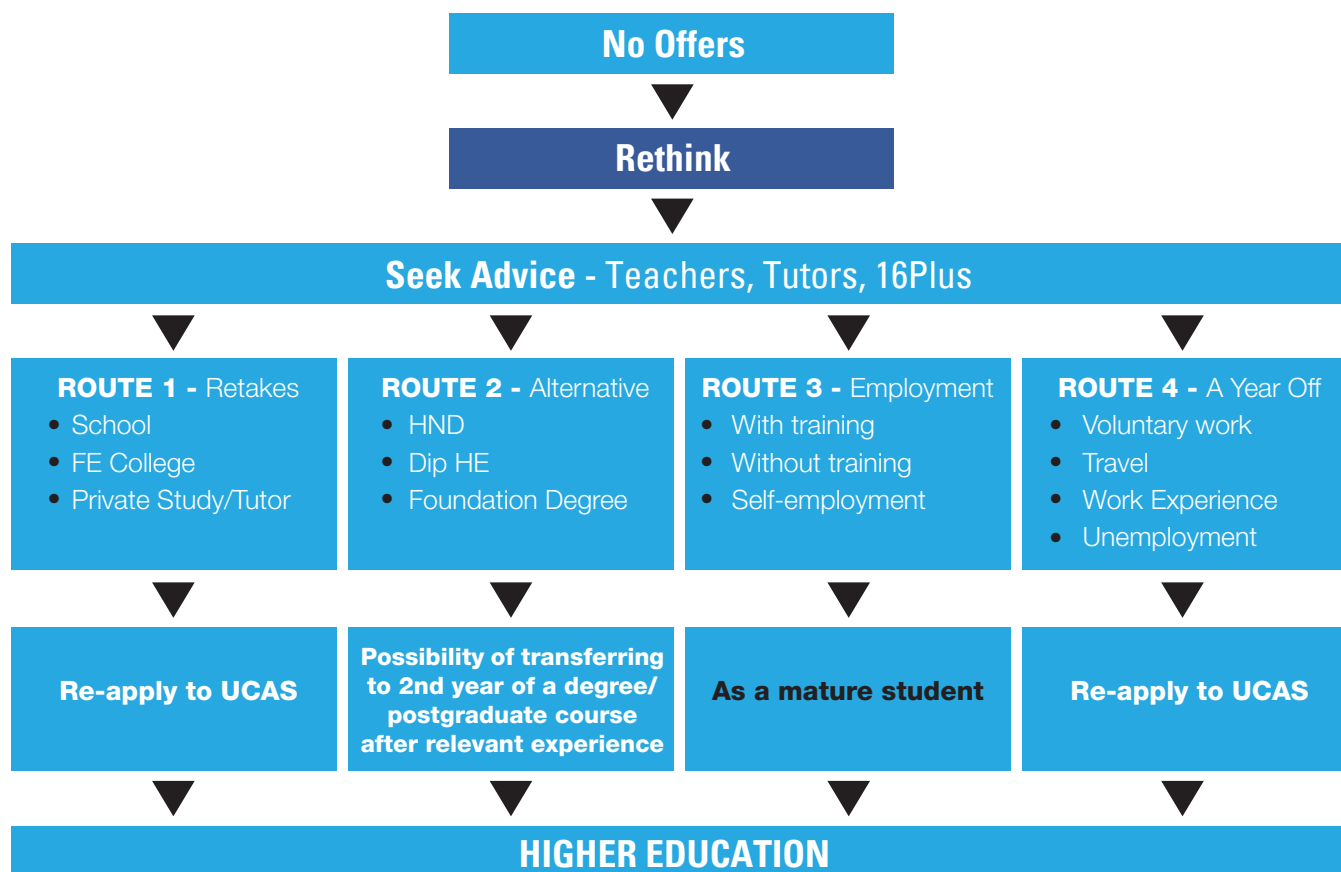
You can enter up to 4,000 characters, this includes spaces, for your personal statement or 47 lines of text (this includes blank lines), whichever comes first. You do not have to use all the space provided. When you save text, the system will tell you how many characters are still available or if you have used too many. You can view your statement after you have saved it. You cannot use features such as bold, italic or underline.

Prepare your personal statement offline using a word-processing package and copy and paste it into the UCAS Apply system, as UCAS Apply will time-out after 35 minutes of inactivity. Use word count to keep track of the characters you have used.

Preparation

- Begin with a blank sheet of paper – write down unconnected words or sentences about your career plans, study interests, work experiences, influences, personality, interests
- Make sure it is all relevant
- Organise the information in a logical order
- Use clear paragraphs
- Be honest
- Work with friends – read each other's drafts – exchange ideas





The personal statement is probably the most important section of the UCAS form it is the only part of the form where you have a chance to sell yourself!

Interviews

When an institution sorts application forms, they decide to either accept, interview, invite to open days or reject the applicant.

- Interviews are sometimes required when a course is very competitive, when a student is offering alternative qualifications, when a course is practical or when personality is important – for example teaching or social work
- Each institution has its own policy on interviewing which they can change from year to year depending on the number of applicants
- Applicants for health, english, biology, geography and creative arts courses are likely to be interviewed
- The chances are that you will have at least one interview – it could be one-to-one, a panel interview or a group exercise – be prepared
- Performing arts applicants will usually have an audition, a maths applicant can be given a problem to solve. English Literature applicants may have to write a short essay, art and design applicants will have to show a portfolio

Preparing for interview

- Preparation can make an enormous difference to your interview
- Take a copy of your UCAS form and read it through before your interview – focus on your personal statement as you will be asked questions regarding this
- Read the prospectus and course details
- Dress smartly but comfortably
- Check your travel arrangements

- Be prepared to answer:
 - Why you chose that particular course
 - What your future plans are after graduation
 - Your interests, voluntary work and ambitions
 - What you can contribute to the course and institution
 - Strengths and weaknesses
 - What your views are on...
- Prepare some questions to ask – about assessment methods etc
- Do some background reading on your subject

Tips

- Stick to the point and answer the questions in a clear way
- Don't be afraid to say 'I don't know'
- Show that you really care about your subject
- Try to relax and be yourself – and smile!
- Switch off your mobile phone before the interview!

What do admissions tutors look for?

Confidence, pleasant personality, politeness, enthusiasm, genuine interest, motivation, potential, commitment, understanding, communication skills, insight, independent thinking, knowledge, experience, and the ability to be responsive and analytical.

- They will ask you open-ended questions (e.g. Why do you want to study this subject?)
- Be honest, take your time answering, say what you think, be prepared to justify what you have just said
- Be prepared for unusual questions (e.g. What's the most striking thing you've heard in the news this week? What do you know about this university?)

Open days

An open day can be called many things – introductory meetings, visit days, open days, pre-taster days or preview days.

- Each of the above suggestions can mean a different thing, so find out first what they mean

Pre-taster days or preview days

- Normally arranged by the college or university departments for specific subjects, including talks on programmes available, entry requirements and career prospects
- A tour of the department and an opportunity to meet current students
- Sometimes overnight taster courses
- Your opportunity to find out more about the course, explore facilities and experience the atmosphere

Open day, introductory meeting, visit day

(for those made an offer on the basis of the UCAS form)

- An opportunity for you to ask questions and talk to student representatives
- See the departments and university facilities
- Decide if the course is right for you
- Decide if you want to accept the offer
- It is not a selection test
- You may wish to visit the colleges or universities with your family, carers or your social worker

Timetable of action for students applying to HE

You will need to apply to university a year before you want to go.

Nearly all applications for HE courses go through the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

Year 12 and Year 13 August - September

- Request prospectuses online from universities that interest you
- Research courses and universities carefully
- Talk to career advisers and teachers about your plans
- Gain relevant work experience if needed for your course
- Attend university open days and visit colleges that interest you
- Work consistently towards your exams and course work and ask for support if you need it

Year 13 August - September

If you want to apply to Oxford or Cambridge or for dentistry, medicine and veterinary courses apply now as the deadline is October

October - January

- Apply online for up to five places at www.ucas.com
- Apply early to ensure you have the best chance of success
- Take time over your application
- Ask a teacher or careers adviser to help you with your application
- Deadline for all courses (except some Art & Design courses) is mid January but your school or college will have an earlier deadline
- It is still possible to apply until June 30th BUT your chances of getting a place are much reduced

February - May

- You will need to decide which offers you want to accept
- You need to choose one firm choice and one insurance choice as a back up
- These offers will be either unconditional or conditional on your exam results
- If you get no offers contact UCAS Extra for an additional choice

May - July

- Confirm your offers online at UCAS
- Do not miss confirmation deadlines or you will lose out on your place
- If you get the grades you get the place
- Follow up any accommodation letters/forms
- If you get no offers, contact UCAS extra for an additional choice

August - September

- Exam results are announced in August
- If you don't get the grades check with the universities that you have applied to see if they will accept you anyway
- Use the UCAS clearing system to apply to courses that still have vacancies
- Phone admissions tutors at universities and colleges to ask about vacancies
- Talk to teachers and careers advisers

Children Act 1989

Section 23C of the Children Act 1989 requires a local authority to pay a Higher Education Bursary to former relevant children who pursue a course in higher education in accordance with their Pathway Plan.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/23C

Accompanying regulations deal with the payment arrangements that local authorities need to put in place to pay former relevant children who undertake such a course. These regulations prescribe the meaning of higher education for the purpose of determining eligibility for the bursary and set the broad framework for arrangements in relation to the timing of payments.

Accompanying Regulation for Wales:

Explanatory Memorandum to the Children Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary Wales) Regulations 2011.

www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2011/823/contents/made

Accompanying Regulation for England:

The Children Act 1989 (Higher Education Bursary England) Regulations 2009

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2009/2274/contents/made

Money Matters

Whilst studying at university, you will have two main types of expenses - your tuition fees and your living expenses.

There is help available for both expenses in the form of **Grants** (money you don't have to pay back) and **Loans** (money you have to pay back). The amount that you will be entitled to will depend on how much your course costs, where you live, where you study and your household income.

The figures used in this section are based on funding for the 2014/2015 academic year. Please visit

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk for the most up to date information.

Tuition Fees

For the academic year 2014/2015, the maximum you could be charged for tuition fees within Wales, England or Northern Ireland is £9,000. **Welsh students (students who live in Wales) only pay £3,685** of this amount and the Welsh Government pays the remaining amount to your chosen university. The cost of tuition fees payable by you will depend on your course and institution. Please contact your chosen university for further details on their fee levels. Whilst you may be expected to make a contribution towards your tuition fees, **you will not have to pay any fees upfront**. Student Finance Wales will provide a Tuition Fee Loan of £3,685 and a Tuition Fee Grant to cover the difference between this figure and the amount that your university charges. **The loan can be repaid when you complete your studies; the grant is not repaid.**

Students who live in Wales and who are eligible to receive the fee grant can access the grant whether they choose to study in Wales or elsewhere in the UK.

Tuition Fee Loans are non-means tested. This means that your eligibility is not based on your household income. **You do not have to pay your Tuition Fee Loan back until you are earning over £21,000 per year (before deductions).** Your repayments will be deducted automatically each month from your pay. For more information on interest rates and repayment tariffs visit: www.direct.gov.uk

If you study in Scotland the fees will be different depending on what course you decide to do. You can still apply for a loan to cover all or part of this cost. Please visit www.saas.gov.uk or contact your university of choice for further information.

Deferring Your Studies

Students are able to defer their studies in order to pursue a gap year. If you defer a year you will be subject to the fees and funding that apply in the year that you actually start your studies.

Department of Health/Social Work courses - If you are in training for certain areas of Healthcare or Social Work, you may be able to get a bursary through the NHS/Care Council for Wales to pay for your tuition fees (either a portion or in full). Any bursaries paid for fees are non-repayable. Please note that bursaries for fees are based on a number of factors including where you live, what course you are studying and where you are studying. For further information contact your university of choice and also see the websites below. **NHS funded courses** www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students **Social Work courses** www.ccwales.org.uk

Living Costs Maintenance Loan (Student Loan for Maintenance)

Loans are available to help with your living costs, e.g. course materials, accommodation, food, clothes, travel etc. You can apply for a Maintenance Loan if you are on a full-time course, sandwich or part-time course of initial teacher training. Your loan is usually paid in three instalments, one at the start of each term, directly into your bank account (33% in terms 1 and 2 and 34% in term 3). The amount you can borrow will depend upon your household income and where you live whilst you study. In Wales, 75% of the loan is non income-assessed, while 25% is income assessed. This means that a proportion of the loan paid to you will be dependent upon your household income.

Your living arrangements during term-time	Maximum Maintenance Loan available
Living at the parental home	£4,027
Living away from home and studying at a university or college outside London	£5,202
Living away from home and studying at a university or college in London	£7,288
Studying overseas	£6,202

The amount of loan receivable will also depend upon the amount of Assembly Learning Grant awarded. **Most Care Leavers will be entitled to the FULL amount of Living Cost Loan** (minus any deductions for level of **Welsh Government Learning Grant**) as detailed below (for academic year 2014/2015).

Repaying your Student Loan for Maintenance and Tuition Fee Loan

Please note that the details on loan repayments below relate to the current system and may change for your chosen year of study. If you would like more information please visit Student Finance Wales www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

You do not have to pay your Maintenance Loan back until you are earning over £21,000 per year (before deductions). Your repayments will be deducted automatically each month from your pay. For more information on interest rates and repayment tariffs visit: www.direct.gov.uk

The amount that you pay monthly will be linked to your income once you start working and you will not have to make any payments if your income is below a certain level (currently £21,000 per annum). Repayments will be collected through the tax system (and shown on your pay slip) linked to individual earnings, so the less that you earn, the less you pay, the more you earn, the more you pay.

Welsh Government Learning Grant

The **Welsh Government Learning Grant** (WGLG) provides financial support to help meet general living costs for Welsh students and is paid in three instalments, one at the start of each term, just like your Student Loan. How much you get depends on your household income, and will be calculated by Student Finance Wales when you make your application. The FULL amount for 2014/15 is £5,161. For every £1 of WGLG you receive, the amount of Maintenance Loan you are entitled to will be reduced by 50p, up to £2,575. This means that up to £2,575 of repayable loan will be replaced, by the non-payable grant.

Note: You may not be eligible for the full amount of funding if you have previously studied at HE level. For example if you have completed a 2 year Foundation Degree at an FE College you will not be entitled to the first years worth of funding at HE level. Seek advice from Student Finance Wales if you think this applies to you.

Student Case Study

Jess lives with foster carers in Carmarthen. She is 19 and is going to Bristol University to study Psychology full time in 2014. She will be living in Bristol in a student flat when she goes to university. Her tuition fees will be £9,000

Maintenance Loan - Paid directly to her	£2,622
Tuition Fee Loan - Paid directly to her college/university	£3,685
Tuition Fee Grant - Paid directly to her college/university Non-repayable	£5,315
Assembly Learning Grant - Paid directly to her Non-repayable	£5,161

Rachel will not have to pay back the tuition fee loan of £3,685 or maintenance loan of £2,622 until she has left university and is earning over £21,000 a year (before deductions). Based on current rates if she is earning £25,000 she will only have to pay back around £25 a month.

Liam lives independently in Neath Port Talbot. He is going to be studying for a 3 year undergraduate engineering degree at Swansea University and will live in halls of residence.

Maintenance Loan - Paid directly to him	£2,622
Tuition Fee Loan - Paid directly to his college/university	£3,685
Tuition Fee Grant - Paid directly to his college/university Non-repayable	£5,315
Assembly Learning Grant - Paid directly to him Non-repayable	£5,161
Swansea University Income Related Bursary and Priority Subject Bursary – paid directly to him* Non-repayable	£1,500
Swansea University Care Leavers Bursary – paid directly to him** Non-repayable	£1,000

*Liam is eligible for both an income related bursary and a priority subject bursary. These total £4,500 and are paid in instalments over the duration of the course.

**Liam ticked the UCAS box declaring that he has been in Local Authority Care as a young person for at least 3 months. This entitles him to a non – repayable £1,000 bursary Care Leavers' Bursary for every year of study to pay for accommodation.

Bursaries vary between institutions; contact your chosen college/university to check to see if you are eligible for one

Compiled using Student Finance Wales' Student Finance calculator – www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Special Support Grant

Some students will be eligible for a Special Support Grant instead of a Welsh Government Learning Grant. You will be eligible if you are over 60, or in receipt of certain Disability/Income related benefits. If you have dependent children and no partner, or your partner is a full time student you may also be eligible. The Special Support Grant, much like the WGLG is non-repayable and paid in three instalments. There is no reduction in Maintenance Loan for students in receipt of the Special Support Grant.

Bursaries

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 them. Bursaries and scholarships do not have to be paid back. Each university offers different amounts and have different criteria. Examples of bursaries on offer are: Excellence bursaries (for good A-level/B-Tech results), Sporting bursaries, Income related bursaries and Priority subject bursaries. Some universities offer a Care Leavers' bursary which is additional money for young people who have been in Local Authority Care for at least 3 months.

Contact your chosen college or university who will be able to provide further details.

Other Additional Support

Welsh medium scholarships - The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Undergraduate Scholarship Scheme is offered to students who are studying a range of degree courses - either in full or in part - through the medium of Welsh. Up to £1,000 a year is available for completing some studies through the medium of Welsh. For more information see www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk/myfyrwyr/en/studentfinance

Help for parents - As well as the information above, students with children can get additional support on a means tested basis. These include Parent Learning Allowance, Adult Dependents Grant (for those who have a financially dependent partner) and help with childcare through a Childcare Grant (to pay up to 85% of any registered Childcare costs).

Help for disabled students - For help with extra course-related costs which arise as a result of your disability. Your household income has no effect on the amount you receive.

Discretionary support - Financial Contingency Fund (FCF) is available through universities and colleges in Wales (Access to Learning Fund (ALF) in England). For more information on your eligibility contact Student Services of the university you are applying to.

Welfare benefits - Students with children or a disability may retain an entitlement to certain benefits like Housing Benefit and Income Support (please contact the Benefits Agency for further clarification). Child Tax Credit is usually not affected by Student Support.

Department of Health courses - Currently no fee loan is required for NHS bursary courses. Some Health courses are covered by a means tested bursary and some by a non-means tested bursary. Whether a student is entitled to access the above support depends on the nature of the course and their personal circumstances. All bursaries paid by NHS are paid monthly and are non re-payable.

Other available scholarships/bursaries - There may be organisations or even employers looking to support students. Visit www.scholarship-search.org.uk to find out what is available.

Applying for financial assistance

In Wales if you are a new student in 2014/15 you apply for funding through Student Finance Wales. They will assess your entitlement for your Tuition Fee Loan, Welsh Government Learning Grant, Maintenance Loan, Bursaries and any additional support you are entitled to. The application forms (PN1) are usually available in February/March. You should not wait until you hold a firm offer for a place at a university before applying for student finance. This avoids any delays in obtaining your Student Finance package when you start your course. You can apply online at www.studentfinancewales.co.uk. You should also be able to get the application form from your school or college.

Whether you apply online or in paper format, there are a few things you will need to remember:

- If applying online, make sure you print a copy of your completed application before submitting it
- Make a note of your account login details and keep them safe
- If you are asked to send any additional documents as evidence, make a photocopy and post the documents recorded delivery
- Make sure you've given authority for your information to be shared with your chosen university to ensure you are automatically assessed for any further bursaries payable
- You can call Student Finance Wales if you would like to discuss your application.
- Alternatively, you can call your university of choice and speak to their Student Support Services who can answer any questions you are unsure of

Assessing your form

Once Student Finance Wales have received your form, they will assess your application - this could take anything from 6-10 weeks so make sure you get the form in as early as possible. Once they have assessed your application, you will receive an entitlement letter telling you how much you are entitled to - including a breakdown of your Tuition Fee Loan, Maintenance Loan entitlement, Welsh Government Learning Grant and any other grants based on your circumstances. You will receive 3 copies of this letter - PUT THE LETTERS IN A SAFE PLACE as they will be needed in the future. If you apply online, the letter will also include a declaration which you must sign and return.

Your money

When you enrol/register on your course you may need to take a copy of your Financial Notification letter with you so your university can send confirmation of your attendance to the Student Loans Company (SLC). You will also need to pick up your university identification card. You should receive your first instalment three working days later. If you haven't received your Loans and Grants you can visit your university's Student Support Services who can ring the SLC on your behalf and find out the reason for the delay. Student Support Services may also be able to provide a short term loan which can help with living costs depending on the reason for and length of time of the delay. The remaining 2 instalments will be paid to you over the rest of the academic year – the exact dates will be printed on your payment schedule from The Student Loans Company.

Example

In most cases, Care Leavers will receive the maximum amount of student funding. To give you an idea of how much this will be you can refer to the example Financial Notification overleaf. Please note that the amounts stated are based on the maximum funding available for Welsh domiciled students for 2014/2015 academic year. The amounts do not include any university/college bursaries. These bursaries are assessed by your chosen university/college.

[illegible]

**Ensure that this letter
is taken to enrollment at
your University/College.
Your First payment
will be made only after
your attendance has
been confirmed by your
University/College**

Health Care Professions and Teacher Training courses

Many Health Care professional courses are fully funded by the National Health Service whilst some are part funded by the NHS and part funded by Student Loans Company.* If you were entitled to Student Loans during your course you will follow the repayment proposals detailed previously. If you studied on a course solely funded by the NHS, the majority of the funding you have received would have been a grant and therefore non-repayable. To find out more on the type of courses the NHS provide funding for, please visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students

*Important note: Ensure that you are up to date with NHS funding arrangements for 2014/15. Please visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/students for the latest information. For those undertaking Teacher Training Courses, there are various incentives available – tuition fees may be paid for you and some schemes offer awards up to £5,000, for more information contact the Teacher Information Line **0845 6000 991**.

Where does the money go?

Accommodation

Costs vary considerably between universities and areas and rent costs can vary between £50 - £120 per week.

Utility bills eg electricity, gas, water etc

If you are staying in halls of residence these are normally included. If utility bills are not included in your rent you need to budget for them. The amount can vary greatly but a recent survey by Save the Student found that the average spend on utility bills was around £48 a month.

Internet and landline

Most halls of residence include this in the total cost. If renting privately and it's not included, expect to pay around £12 a month.

Food

This is likely to be your largest expense after rent payments, expect to spend on average £41.00 a week on food.

Daily Travel

In term time students may have to travel distances between lectures in different areas or travel from halls of residence to the main campus. If you live at home you need to budget for travelling in to university on most week days.

Socialising/Entertainment

Students spend on average £29.12 a week going out and socialising.

Mobile Phones

A recent survey by the Student Loans Company found that the average spend on mobile phones was £25.50 per month. Make sure you're on the best contract for you and compare prices by providers.

Books, equipment and field trips

This can vary greatly depending on what course you are doing. The average spend on books and equipment is £10.50 a week. Some field trips are compulsory and costs vary.

Photocopying and printing

Photocopying at university is NOT free - this can cost around £10 a week.

Insurance

You'll need insurance to cover your belongings.

TV Licence

If you live in halls of residence and have a TV in your room you will need your own individual licence. If you live in a shared house and you've signed a joint tenancy agreement with your housemates, you may only need one TV licence (check with TV Licensing). The cost of a TV licence in 2014 is just over £12 per month if paying by direct debit.

Clothing

A recent survey by the Student Loans Company found that the average spend on clothes per month was £32.50. Drawing up a good budget can help you manage your money better. You can visit your university's Student Support Services to get advice on budgeting and how to make your money go further.

Remember – most Care Leavers are entitled to a Welsh Government Learning Grant (in Wales) of £5,161 which is non-repayable. This will be divided into 3 instalments put into your bank at the beginning of each term. Use this money to cover these expenses.

Saving money top tips!

Use a budget planner and stick to it! Visit the Student Support Services in your university where they can help you prepare a suitable budget. Use an online budget calculator to help you such as:

www.ucas.com/students/startinguni/managing_money/budgeting/budget_calculator

www.savesthestudent.org/money/student-budgeting/student-budget-calculators.html

Put money aside for bills. They can creep up on you when you least expect them. It may be a good idea to have a separate account with no overdraft facility that you can put in enough funds to cover your bills - any money left in your 'main' account is then available for you to spend.

Check for direct debit discounts, direct debits also mean you won't forget to pay a bill.

Don't exceed your overdraft without prior agreement. Make sure you speak to the bank to agree an overdraft (should you need one) before going overdrawn. If your agreed overdraft is not enough or you feel that you may go over the agreed limit, speak to the bank first as charges can be expensive.

Mobile phones can cost a lot of money to use, especially if you are on an expensive contract. Compare various networks/tariffs to find the best deals.

Make sure you are in receipt of all the student support you are entitled to. Contact your Student Finance Wales or Student Support Services in your chosen university to clarify your Student Support package.

Use the library or buy second hand books. This can save you a lot of money over the year as new text books can range from £10 - £70 each!

Take advantage of student discounts and offers. NUS discount can give up to 10% off purchases in some shops. If you are not sure whether they provide student discount, ask!

Learn how to cook and avoid takeaways by ensuring you always have food in the house. Do a regular shop.

Make your own packed lunch for university. Buying lunch every day on campus can range from £2 - £6. Only pay with cash. If you can't afford it, don't have it! Paying for items on your card can make it tricky to keep an eye on your budget and the amount of money you have left.

Only use credit cards if you know you can pay the bill at the end of the month as interest on some credit cards can be expensive. Store card interest can be even more expensive.

Check your bank statements regularly. If your bank only sends them every 3 months, change this to every month or register for online banking.

Communicate. Talk to your bank, creditors and Student Support Services staff to ask for advice. They can help with any problems you might be facing and the sooner you tell them your circumstances the sooner something can be done.



Glossary

Page 52

Admissions Tutors – Lecturers at college and universities who decide who gets accepted onto a course.

Bursaries and scholarships – Funding that may be available from individual universities and colleges. For example excellence awards if you do well at A 'levels and sporting scholarships.

Campus – A university site that usually includes all facilities required by students such as lecture halls, accommodation, shops, canteens and bars.

Exchange Programme – Courses which offer the opportunity to study abroad.

Freshers' week – The first week of the first term of university. You will be invited to join clubs and societies and shown around campus.

Graduate – What you are when you have achieved a degree.

Halls of residence – The place where many students live during their first year.

Honours Degree – The majority of degrees are honours degrees and split into classes; First class, Upper second class, lower second class and third class.

Humanities – This term is used to describe courses such as English, history, criminology, music, languages and many others.

KIS (Key Information Sets) – Sets of information about student satisfaction, employment and salary data, accommodation costs, financial information, such as fees and students' union information to help you compare universities.

Modular Degree – Most universities structure their degrees into units called modules.

National Student Survey (NSS) – The NSS is a national survey which asks students to feedback honestly about the quality of their HE experience. The results are publicly available to help prospective students make decisions about where and what to study.

Non-vocational courses – The degree you study does not train you for a particular job for example French, History and English.

Open Days – All colleges and universities offer you the chance to look around campuses and talk to lecturers. A great way to find out more about institutions that interest you.

Postgraduate – Study that you do after a degree such as a masters or PHD.

Prospectus – Individual universities and colleges provide these books free of charge. They outline their courses accommodation, fees, facilities and entrance requirements. All this information is also available online.

Sandwich course – A course which involves time spent in industry or business.

Semesters – Most courses are organised over two semesters or terms.

Student Support Services – All universities and colleges have departments dedicated to supporting students while they are at university.

Students' Union – All universities have a Students' Union which is run by students and represents the interests of students and also provides information and organises social activities.

Undergraduate – What students are called when working towards a degree.

UCAS – University and College Admissions Service. All applications to university or college are made online through UCAS.

UCAS Tariff – Is a points system used by Higher education institutions. Each of your A' levels (or equivalent) are awarded points the better the grade the higher the points.

Vocational courses – The job you get at the end of your course is directly related to your degree. For example nursing, social work, physiotherapy and engineering.

Frequently asked questions

Page 53

Will a degree guarantee me a good graduate job?

Having a degree will not guarantee you a job but you are more likely to be in a better paid more interesting job if you have one. The harder you work and the better class of degree you achieve will give you more choices.

How much do graduates earn?

The average salary of a newly qualified graduate is £25,000 per year. This will depend on what career you choose.

Can I study part time?

Yes many institutions offer courses that you can study part time. You can also study via distance learning through the Open University.

Can I study courses in Welsh?

Yes many of the Higher Education institutions in Wales offer modules in the medium of Welsh. Research further at www.mantais.ac.uk

Can I work while I am a student?

Yes lots of students work part time but Universities do not recommend working more than 15 hours a week. This can be a great way to learn different skills and gain work experience.

Are any higher education courses free?

Yes many Health Care professional courses are fully funded by the National Health Service whilst some are part funded by the NHS and part funded by Student Loans Company.



Useful Websites

Page 54

General Information

www.careerswales.com	Careers and education information and advice
www.gogapyear.com	Ideas and information on taking a year out
www.nus.org.uk	National Union of Students
www.cliconline.co.uk	Information and advice service for young people in Wales aged 11 to 25
www.brightknowledge.org	Guide to education, careers and student life.
www.studentstories.co.uk	Honest accounts of student and university life from those who have experienced it firsthand.
www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk	Has a downloadable HE Handbook for Care Leavers detailing what support is available for Care leavers in English and Scottish Universities
www.push.co.uk	Independent guide to UK universities, student life, gap years, open days, student finance etc.

Information for foster carers

www.fostering.net	The Fostering Network is the leading charity for foster care in the UK providing advice and support for any aspect relating to fostering and leaving care. The Fostering Network Wales have published a free guide for foster carers. For your free copy of 'A foster carer's guide to inspiring and supporting Care Leavers to Higher Education' please email wales@fostering.net
--	---

Information on funding and financial support

www.studentfinancewales.co.uk	Funding for students in Wales
www.studentcalculator.org.uk	Use the Brightside student calculator to help you work out your finances
www.unigrants.co.uk	Where and how to get extra funding for your degree
www.scholarship-search.org.uk	Allows you to search for scholarships by subject or by organisation.
www.buttuk.org	Offers small grants for young people leaving care, young carers and refugees to help with living costs such as rent, food, bills, transport or course materials.
www.nasma.org.uk	National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) is a charity working to help students by providing advice, information and training.

Information on your rights

www.voiceyp.org	Children's advocacy organisation
www.nyas.net	National Youth Advocacy Service

Applying and choosing a course

www.opendays.com

University and college open day directory

www.prospects.ac.uk

Careers site for students and graduates

www.ucas.ac.uk

Application information

www.hotcourses.com

Search for courses and read student reviews

www.unistats.com

Compares courses and universities

www.bestcourse4me.com

An independent website providing information to help you choose the best course for you including employment statistics

Higher Education Courses Taught in welsh

www.colegcymraeg.ac.uk/myfyrwyr/cy/myfyrwyr

Helps you find courses taught in the medium of Welsh

Work experience

www.gowales.co.uk

Work experience for Higher Education students and graduates in Wales

www.volunteering-wales.net

Volunteering opportunities local to you

www.unaexchange.org

Volunteering opportunities abroad and in Wales





This guide is produced by the South West Wales Reaching Wider Partnership which is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Members of the Partnership are:

Careers Wales West
Carmarthenshire County Council
City and County of Swansea
Coleg Sir Gâr
Gower College Swansea
NPTC Group
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
The Open University in Wales
Pembrokeshire College
Pembrokeshire County Council
Swansea University
University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Money Matters compiled by Alison Maguire, Money Advice & Support Office, Swansea University.

All information was correct at the time of going to print.
All universities and colleges have different entrance requirements which are likely to change from year to year. Funding and fees arrangements tend to change every year as well.



**For further information please contact: Tel: 01792 602 128
reachingwider@swansea.ac.uk • www.swansea.ac.uk/reaching-wider**



@ReachingWider



reaching.widerswwp

