

Exploring Higher Education

Audio transcript

Slide 1: Introduction – Exploring Higher Education

Hello everyone. My name is Pete Marlow and I work at UWE Bristol in the Widening Access team. We work with local schools and colleges in the area to support students, like yourself, to explore your options and plan for your next steps.

This session is all about exploring Higher Education. I appreciate that it might feel very early to be thinking about what you might be doing at 18. However, it can be useful to find out more about all the pathways and options available to you. It helps to get you thinking and coming up with ideas. Also if you have a longer term plan in mind, you can work out what you need to do to get there.

Slide 2: Today's session

Higher Education, or HE, means studying at university, college or apprenticeship for a higher-level qualification, usually a degree. There are a number of reasons why people go to university and we will explore these in more detail.

There is lots of choice available, and we'll consider some of the options relating to subjects and career ideas. This can have implications on what you choose for your post-16 options and beyond.

There is a lot of information out there, but we'll help you to find your way around. Don't forget you are only in Year 10 or 11, so you have plenty of time to think about this, and of course to change your mind.

Slide 3: Higher Education

It's worth pointing out that all post-16 options *could* lead to Higher Education at 18 or later on in life.

To help you make the right choice for after Year 11, you need to think about how you learn best, what kind of environment you want to be in and what is right for you at the time. This could be academic courses like A-Levels, or semi vocational courses such as BTECs, where you get a broad understanding of a work sector, or perhaps in the workplace doing practical assessments in a specific job role with an apprenticeship.

Slide 4: University true or false?

What do you know about HE already? Try this quick 'true or false' activity as a starter.

1. False – No, increasingly students are staying local and living at home.
2. False – There are lots of different study options for people achieving range of grades in a range of subjects.

3. False – There are different hours for different courses.
4. True – No age limits. 84-year-old student currently studying a law degree at University of West London.
5. False – No, many people choose a wide range of careers they hadn't initially planned for at the start of their degrees.
6. True – College courses are definitely a way into university for many people.

Slide 5: Why study in higher education?

There are lots of different reasons for going to university and benefits this experience can give you. Some common ones are listed on the screen now. Getting a degree can help you get into a particular job you may want to do or alternatively, give you more time to consider your career plans whilst you study a subject of interest, if you aren't sure, as is the case with most people.

There are lots of opportunities available at university to widen your experience and develop your skills. For example, you could get involved in work placements, studying internationally, field trips, industry projects, take part in a huge range of clubs, societies, sports. During your time at university, you'll certainly meet lots of new people, both from the UK and all over the world, many of whom could become new friends.

Slide 6: Typical concerns about higher education

On the screen you can see some typical concerns some people about going to university. Let's have a look at them now.

Most graduates are unemployed: Currently graduate unemployment is low with just **5.5%** of graduates unemployed 15 months after graduating.

I don't know what I want to do in the future: There are lots of careers and employers including the NHS, Sky, Deloitte and Amazon that employ graduates from any subject area in professional jobs. There are more options than you might think. Ideas and opportunities will come up while studying. It doesn't matter at all if you're not sure which career path you want to take at the start of your degree.

It will cost me too much: University fees are £9,250 per year plus a living cost loan or maintenance loan of up to £9,000 a year to cover rent, food, phone, travel and more. Most students borrow this money in the form of a student loan.

You don't start repaying loans until you earn over £25,000 per year. If you earned £30,000 a year, you would be paying back £37.50 a month, which is a manageable amount.

Slide 7: Types of HE courses

It's important to know that there are a few different course combinations on offer.

- Single subject – you would study just one subject for example Criminology.
- Joint Honours – you would study two subjects in equal amounts, 50/50.
- Major/minor – you would study a bigger chunk of one subject so the split would be 75/25.
- Sandwich year, or placement year is the opportunity to spend a year gaining skills and earning a wage in industry. Some courses will offer shorter work placements, which you can build into your course.

Slide 8: HE qualification levels

The table shows the range of HE qualifications available at different levels.

A degree is usually three years long and where most students start. Some courses have an 'integrated foundation year'. This is the chance to boost your grades if needed, or pick up a new subject. For example, you studied English and Media at level 3 and want to study Science at uni. In some cases, degrees can have an integrated Master's year, for example Engineering, and usually last four years.

Vocational qualifications like foundation degrees, HNCs or HNDs last one-two years. You can top-up and do third year at university to get full level 6 degree. These are linked to an industry sector and usually available at colleges.

With this variety of qualifications there will be options to suit all learning styles, interests and entry grades.

Slide 9: Over 35,000 courses

There really is a huge range of courses to choose from, which is a real positive. Whatever your study interest, chances are you can take a degree to learn more in this area.

Some degrees will be vocational, where you will learn about an industry or role and gain practical experience required for this role. Others will be non-vocational, which cover broad study of a more general subject area. Others are semi-vocational, where you'll learn about an industry helping you specialise in an area as well as keeping options open about a range of jobs.

Slide 10: Ideas for exploring courses

When you're considering what you might like to study in HE there are some good places to start thinking, which include:

- any possible career ideas you have - research these careers and find out if there are particular qualifications you need to get into that job.
- your favourite subjects.
- your interests and what you enjoy learning more about.
- what you're good at.
- skills and knowledge that will be useful in the future

Slide 11: Exploring course ideas

This slide gives you an idea of the wide range of degree courses available that link to subjects you may be studying or considering for the future. These examples really are just a flavour of what is available across each subject area but helps make the point that there could be lots of interesting and perhaps new areas for you to explore and potentially study.

Slide 12: Finding the information

Research is a really important in planning your next step. There is a lot of information out there, which can be confusing, so we have selected some websites for you that are helpful, up to date and accurate.

- **Careerpilot** has really good information on all your options after GCSEs and beyond. You'll also be able to research careers by school subjects and interests.
- **UCAS** is where you apply to university, but it also has lots of really good information to help you make choices, including subject guides helping you get an idea of what studying that subject would be like at university.
- **SACU** has an interest-based online tool that will match you against possible subjects that might be a good match for you.
- **The Complete University Guide** has some really good subject guides, as well as information about where you could study them.

You can find details of all these websites on the handout that accompanies this session.

Slide 13: Summary

To summarise, we've started to explore what higher education study is and some of the possible benefits. Even though it's early, I encourage you to start to explore what's out there. As we've seen, there's a huge range of possibilities so it's important to be curious and keep an open mind, so that you don't miss anything that could really suit you.

The websites I've discussed are a great starting point for this. The more research and exploration you do, the better your decision making will certainly be for your next steps.

Slide 14: Thank you

Thank you very much for watching. I hope you found the information useful and I wish you all the best for the future.