

**DISCOVER
UNIVERSITY**



**University
of Exeter**

**Your guide to
higher education**





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What is higher education?

You can study for a higher education qualification at a university, with some courses available at further education colleges. Higher education allows you to have access to teaching and research facilities which enables you to develop your knowledge further. Most people will start higher education after they finish their A levels or equivalent qualification.

Students often describe these years as some of the best of their lives,

having made fantastic memories which stay with them long after they have finished their studies.

You will have the opportunity to study subjects you enjoy, and may have the chance to take up opportunities like study abroad or gaining valuable work experience through placements working for companies in the UK or overseas. It is also a time where you can build confidence and develop vital life-skills.



Higher education is ‘a chance to develop skills which you will need in life, both in work and every day’.

James

Benefits of going to university:

Graduates on average earn more than non-graduates.

Access to jobs which require you to have studied at degree level.

Opportunities to study something new or expand your knowledge in a subject you are already passionate about.

Meet new people and have the chance to try new things.

Develop key skills such as time management, budgeting and independence.

What is it like to study at university?



I have found that studying History at university is very different from the experiences I had at school. Instead of following a set curriculum, the flexibility in module choices, particularly in years two and three, have meant that I could deeply explore my interests. I love the approaches taken by the lecturers as instead of linear and top-down history, the course has allowed me to explore interesting and engaging themes. Generally, an idea will be introduced in a lecture and then I will independently read around the topic, using suggested reading lists to form my own opinions. I frequently relate the history I study to the society that we live in.

Lucy, BA History



Studying at university will be different for everyone, depending on what subject you take, how you prefer to learn and research, and what your interests are. Whatever you study, university gives you the opportunity to be more independent and to ask and answer questions in new ways. My dissertation (a big report of my own research study) has allowed me to not only study an area in depth but use this information to try and improve mental health services. I prefer using online resources from the comfort of my room to study. Other students may prefer using the library as a quiet place and using the physical copies of books and journals. The university experience allows you to be supported and gives you the opportunity to make positive change.

Christopher, MSci Applied Psychology



Studying Politics has been incredibly flexible and I have been able to explore my interests in political philosophy, economics and political economy. This has led to me developing a strong interest in economics and how political factors such as women getting the right to vote and the end of slavery has impacted taxation and governmental systems. It has been an amazing three years and I have had a lot of freedom to explore my interests, which has given me a unique perspective on the political world around me.

Branwen, BA Politics

Read what our students have to say about their experience of university!

YEAR ABROAD



I had the amazing opportunity to spend my third year of university studying in Australia. As well as deepening my knowledge with engaging course material, getting involved in university life with campus societies/activities allowed me to fully immerse myself into my experience studying abroad. I was part of a wide college community that included many other international and domestic students who made me feel welcome as soon as I arrived. I was able to travel extensively inside and outside of Australia including countries such as Malaysia, Vietnam, and Fiji whilst meeting many incredible people along the way.

I gained true independence and expanded further many interpersonal skills which I may not have gained otherwise. It was truly one of the most enjoyable and rewarding experiences I have ever had which I would recommend to anyone if given the chance!

Emma, BA History and Politics



YEAR ABROAD



On my year abroad, I studied Law at IE University in Madrid, I was able to collaborate and learn from students from every continent, being consistently inspired by their alternative approaches to academia and their own perspectives about what the future holds for the legal industry. There was also a sense of excitement, resounding daily, from experiencing different aspects of an alternative culture; be this going to sunbathe between classes or exploring the busy backstreets of Madrid at 11pm!

When choosing to study Spanish alongside my Law degree, I made my decision primarily on the ability to continue my linguistic skills acquired from my A level studies. Although studying abroad was ancillary to this, I was unaware that it would be the highlight of my university career this far.

Miranda, LLB Law with European Study



Student life

Every university has an organisation that aims to support and represent the students and provide the best university experience possible. Normally called a Students' Union, it is a democratic organisation, which means that whenever any important changes are made the final decision comes down to the students and their elected representatives.

What's on offer?

This short list provides a sample of the sort of activities on offer at the University of Exeter. Each university will offer different opportunities.

Societies:

- Circus Soc
- Film Soc
- Erasmus
- UNICEF on Campus
- Chocolate Soc
- Beach Soc
- Doctor Who Soc
- A Cappella
- Community Action
- Raising and Giving
- Hide and Seek Society
- Fashion Soc
- Flute Choir
- Italian Soc
- Islamic Soc
- Debating Soc
- Disney Soc
- Motor Soc

Sports:

- Boxing
- Water Polo
- Triathlon
- Cheerleading
- Speleology
- Tae Kwon Do
- Korfbal
- Lacrosse
- Snow Sports
- Volleyball
- Fencing
- Climbing
- Archery
- Football
- Basketball
- Hockey
- Rugby
- Netball

If you can't find a society or sports club that interests you, you can always set up a new one.



“One of the most exciting parts of coming to university for me was all of the new opportunities I had to try new things and meet lots of friendly people. I threw myself into every event I could during Fresher's Week, this led me to going to hockey, netball, and volleyball sessions; beach BBQs, balls and even an inter-halls inflatable course!”

**Laura, BSc Marine Biology
(Penryn Campus)**

“I joined the rock climbing society as I always enjoyed the outdoors. I've made so many great friends who I subsequently spent a lot of time with over my three years at university.”

Amy, LLB Law

“I am a member of a few societies and at the end of my first year I'm already involved in running the Hip Hop Society. I used to love my dance lessons at home and this allows me to continue doing something I love whilst also using it as a break from my studies.”

**Sasha, BSc Evolutionary
Biology**

“Societies are a great way to meet new people of similar interests - no matter how bizarre it may be! For me, I have always had a love of music and when I discovered the university has a Taylor Swift society, I rushed to sign up. It felt surreal that so many people had the same mutual love for my favorite artist as me. It also enabled me to meet people from different courses and years whom I would never have met otherwise.”

**Krishang, BSc Business
Management**

Where will I live?

If you choose to go to university and decide to move away from home then you will need to know what accommodation options are available to you. Most universities provide accommodation for their first year students, known as halls of residence. Living in halls of residence is a great experience as you will have the opportunity to gain independence, meet new people and perhaps even learn to cook! Universities will offer a variety of accommodation for first year students, usually self-catered or catered and either on or off campus. Typically you will then arrange private accommodation in the local town for the remainder of your studies and support will be available to help you do this.



LIVING IN HALLS

At first, moving away from home can feel like quite a daunting prospect, however, I can honestly say that I really do enjoy it! Living away from home can be a really fun experience as you get to live with your friends, or make new ones. You certainly do learn new skills when you live away from home for example; you have to make sure that you are looking after the accommodation you are living in and you also have to learn how to live on a budget – some of my favourite nights at university have been cheap free movie nights, where it's just a bunch of mates having a laugh watching a film! Living away from home at university has certainly been something that I have thoroughly enjoyed, and I've learnt a lot about myself through the process.

Matthew, BA Geography



“I have found living away from home to be a great experience in Exeter. The university and the city as a whole feel very welcoming and everyone is very friendly. It does not feel overwhelming, and still feels homely.”

“Living at university has given me some of the best experiences but also provided me with opportunities to develop independence and skills I need for later life.”

“I moved to Exeter from a very different part of the country and was worried about moving to somewhere a long way away from my family. However, the friends that I made living in halls of residence made it a really special time, creating memories that will stay with me forever.”

How does student finance work?



Universities charge tuition fees to cover the costs of delivering your degree programme.



If you are a Home student you will normally be able to apply for a loan to cover your tuition fees in each year of your degree.

As well as taking out a loan to cover your tuition fees, you may need money to help with living costs. Most students are able to apply for a maintenance loan to help with the cost of living. Universities also offer a range of scholarships and bursaries.



If you are a full-time student with children or adult dependants you may qualify for extra financial support.



You apply for your tuition fee loan through the student finance organisation for your government at the same time as you apply for a maintenance loan. They will pay the tuition fees directly to the university on your behalf. If you are eligible for the tuition fee loan you will receive it regardless of your household income. Your maintenance loan will vary according to your household income, and will be paid to you in instalments.



You only start to pay back your tuition fee and maintenance loan once you are earning a salary that is over the repayment threshold. You make repayments in monthly installments.

You can find out more about what student finance might be available to you, and details of how repaying your loan works at [gov.uk/student-finance](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance) where you can also find links to the relevant funding bodies for students from across the rest of the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

Supporting you

Universities and higher education providers are used to supporting students as they move on from sixth form or college. At university you will have access to a number of support services. You should check with the university or college that you are applying to but they are likely to have services similar to the following:



Tutors: Personal tutors or Academic tutors (or both) are a point of contact for you at the university to check in with your progress and how you are getting on personally or with your course. They can often signpost you to services across the university should you need them.



Wellbeing teams: These teams at universities may come under different names, but are in place to provide emotional and physical support and resources. This may vary from helping you to get the right support if you have additional learning needs to providing temporary support in the event of an unexpected injury.



Faith support: Universities and colleges recognise that for some students their faith is a really important part of their lives, and can be a large part of their support structure. They will either have representatives across a number of religions, a multi-faith chaplaincy, or should be able to put you in contact with groups in the local community.



Study support: Many universities have teams that are able to assist you adapt to the new ways of studying that university brings. This could vary from 1:1 support to online resources, and anything from giving you guidance about writing an academic essay to preparing for exams.

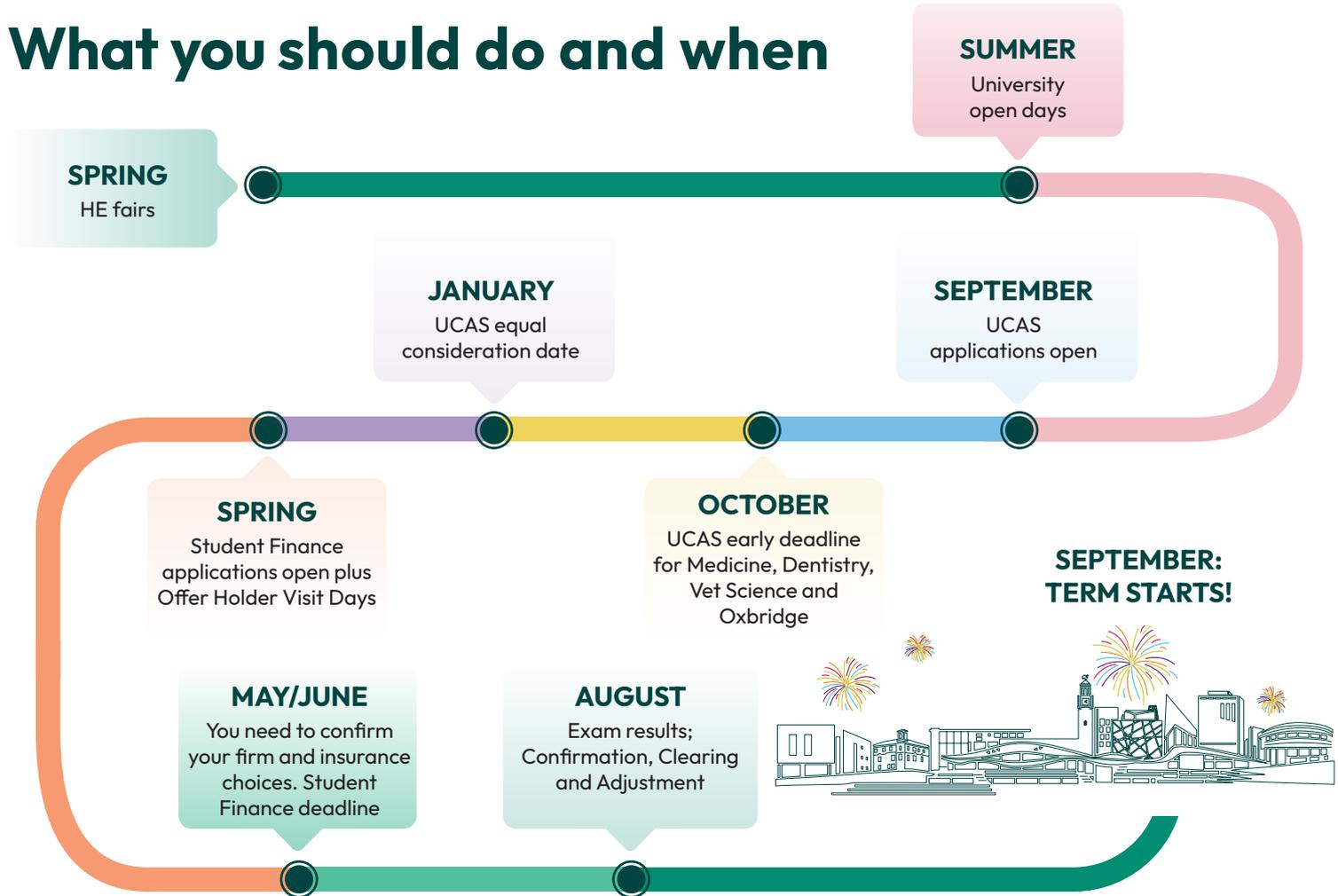


Careers support: Universities want you to succeed in the world of work, so have teams available to support you with building your employability to be able to gain the jobs you want once you graduate. For example, you might be able to access CV writing and interview workshops, find work placements or part time jobs during your studies, and even access help once you've finished your degree.



Finance advice: There is often a team that you can be put in touch with who can help you if you need extra guidance or support when it comes to managing your money at university.

What you should do and when





Deciding where to study

Once you have decided that you want to go on to higher education the next decision you need to make is where to study – it's an important and a very personal one. There will be many factors which will be central to your decision. When you make your choices ensure they are what you want and that they are for the right reasons. We've created the adjacent table with a number of factors people take into account when making their decisions about where to study so that you can think about the importance they hold for you. This list is not exhaustive, so if you have other factors, make sure you consider their importance too.

| Factors | Level of importance for you | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Accommodation available | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Cost of living | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Course | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Distance from home | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Employability | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Entry requirements | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| League table rankings | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Location | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Module options | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Sports clubs and societies | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Teaching facilities | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Teaching styles | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Transport links | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Campus or city | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |
| Year abroad/in industry | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ | ▲ |

What can I study?

There are over 36,000 degree programmes listed on the UCAS website that you can choose from at universities and other degree providers in the UK. Broadly, we can categorise subjects into the below groups:

Academic subjects

These can be similar to subjects you may already study. Just a few examples are English, History, Biology, and Mathematics. There are also subjects you may not currently study such as Engineering, Archaeology, or Marine Biology. If you wanted to combine subjects, then consider Joint Honours courses. Some examples are History and Politics, or Physics and Mathematics. You may also want to consider broad based subjects such as Natural Sciences or Liberal Arts.

Vocational and applied subjects

These specifically prepare you for a particular career, perhaps within a specific industry sector. These include courses such as Engineering, Business, Law, Medicine, Veterinary Science, Games Design, and Events Management.

How do I choose what to study?

If you already know what career path you want to follow, then you may find it straightforward to choose your degree subject. For example, if you want to be a doctor, you need to complete a degree in Medicine. If you are not sure what career path you want to follow then that is completely fine! Many students do not make up their mind until they are at university or after they graduate. You may also want to consider subjects that offer a year abroad, or year in industry.

It is important that you choose a degree subject that you are genuinely interested in. You will be studying this for at least three years, and it will be more intensive than your current studies. Choosing a subject that you are passionate about and curious for will also help you to write an effective personal statement as you must demonstrate a genuine interest in, and commitment to, your subject.

Use resources like the [UCAS course finder](#), university websites and prospectuses, and any support and advice from Careers Advisors and teachers.

Submitting your application

There are thousands of courses on offer at hundreds of different higher education providers across the UK. Most providers will either have websites or printed guides called prospectuses which provide details of each course.

All programmes have specific entry requirements which you can find out about either directly from a provider or by visiting [ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com). Some programmes may require prior study of a specific subject and may also have minimum grade requirements. You should make sure you have checked what the entry requirements are for a course before you decide to apply.

All applications for full-time study must be made through UCAS. You can do this through your school, college or independently.

The UCAS tariff system is the process for allocating points to qualifications used for entry into higher education. Some providers will list their entry requirements in terms of tariff points, some will list specific qualifications and grades. Students enter universities with a range

of qualifications, but you should check the individual university's requirements before you apply. The universities or colleges you apply to will decide if your predicted grades meet their entry requirements when they consider your application. Remember that a university or college's decision is likely to be based on your overall suitability for the course as well as whether you meet the minimum entry requirements.

Applications are generally assessed on the following:

- Academic achievements
- Predicted grades
- Personal statement
- Teacher/Adviser reference

Key dates to keep in mind are the early/mid-October deadline for Oxbridge, Medicine, Dental and Veterinary programmes and the late January equal consideration deadline for most other programmes.



Personal statement

What do we want to see?

The personal statement is your opportunity to tell universities and colleges about your suitability for the course(s) that you hope to study. You need to demonstrate your enthusiasm and commitment, and above all, ensure that you stand out from the crowd.

1

The reasons why you have applied for a particular programme and how this relates to your current and previous studies and experiences. If you have a career goal it is helpful if you explain how the programme would enable you to fulfil that ambition.

2

Evidence of a willingness and desire to learn at a higher level: universities are looking for students who have the potential and the drive to succeed.

3

Your reasons for the choice of subjects taken at A level or equivalent and, where appropriate, the relevance of those subjects to your chosen degree programme.

4

Details of responsibilities and experience that you have had (paid or unpaid). Universities are particularly interested to see that you recognise how the skills you've gained are transferrable to your studies and life at university. For some people work experience might be the best way to demonstrate this, but for others it could be experiences such as caring for a loved one.

5

Information regarding volunteering and other extra-curricular activities and what you have gained in terms of experience and skills from these interests.

Remember to:

- Ensure your statement is directly relevant to the subject(s) you're applying for.
- Check university entry requirements to find out what they're looking for in applicants.
- Relate your current studies to your application.
- Demonstrate your interest and knowledge in your chosen subject.
- Write about relevant skills and experience.
- Write what comes naturally to you.
- Be focused, convey motivation and enthusiasm.
- Check your form for spelling mistakes and perhaps get someone else to read it through for you.
- Write in full sentences and break up text with paragraphs.

What happens after you have applied:

- You may be invited to attend an interview or visit day.
- Alternatively you may be asked to submit a portfolio or attend an audition.
- The university will decide whether or not to make you an offer.
- You will then decide whether to accept or reject their offer by choosing a Firm and Insurance choice.



Jargon buster

Bachelors degree: A degree awarded by a college or university to a person who has completed undergraduate studies.

BA: Bachelor of Arts: The qualification most associated with undergraduate arts, humanities and some social science degrees

BSc: Bachelor of Science: The qualification commonly associated with undergraduate science and some social science degrees

Bursary: This is extra financial help provided by a university or college for students from households on lower incomes. It does not have to be paid back. Amounts and eligibility criteria vary according to different universities.

Campus university: A university situated on one dedicated site, with student accommodation, teaching

and research facilities, and leisure activities all together. The University of Exeter is a campus university with three campuses.

Catered halls: Accommodation where meals are included in your rent.

Clearing: The process by which universities and Higher Education colleges fill remaining places on their courses. It is managed by UCAS, usually runs between July and October, and you can apply for a course through Clearing if you are not holding any offers or if you did not meet the conditions of your Firm and Insurance choice. Find out more [here](#).

City university: A university situated within a city with facilities, accommodation and leisure activities spread across the local area.

Combined or Joint Honours degree:

A type of degree where you study more than one subject, for example, 'History and Politics' or 'Mathematics and Physics'. Options vary between different universities.

Contextual Offer: When universities review an application, they may take into consideration the context in which applicants have achieved their academic qualifications. If candidates meet certain eligibility criteria, they may be made an offer lower than typical entry requirements. Universities use different eligibility criteria, check their website for details.

Degree Apprenticeship: A programme where you are predominantly based with an employer and earning a wage whilst studying for a degree level course. These courses normally have a different teaching format and are longer than your traditional degree programmes.

Dissertation: An extended piece of writing (typically between 8000–12,000 words) investigating a single clear question, project, or thesis of personal interest to the learner. This would be completed in the last year of study of an Undergraduate degree.

Extended Project Qualification (EPQ): This is a Level 3 course which may be taken alongside A Levels. It prepares students for a successful higher education experience through an extended piece of independent work on a topic of their choice.

Firm choice: your firm choice is your first choice university – this is your preferred choice out of all the offers you have received.

Foundation degree: This is a degree that usually takes two years to complete and is a combination of academic and vocational study,

designed to train you towards a specific job or career path. You may be able to progress from a foundation degree to an Honours degree at university or college in the same subject.

Fresher: An informal name for a first year student.

Further Education (FE): The level of education after GCSEs..

Gap year: A year away from education that some students take before going to university. Often students will use their gap year to travel or to gain work experience and additional qualifications.

Higher education (HE): The level of education that involves undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Humanities: Typically covers ‘Arts’ subjects such as history, literature, classics, theology film, modern languages, and drama.

Insurance choice: your insurance choice acts as a back-up, so if you don’t meet the conditions of your firm choice, you will be committed to attend your insurance choice university as long as you have met the conditions of the insurance offer.

Lecture: A lecturer (teacher) stands at the front of a large room, usually with tiered seating, and talks whilst students make notes.

LLB: Bachelor of Laws. The accreditation given to Law degrees which allows for progression onto further training to become a barrister or solicitor.

Masters: A higher level taught degree typically taken after completing an undergraduate degree.

Module: a unit of study that explores a specific area within a degree subject. Each module has a set number of credits which will vary from course to course. Look at course details online and in prospectuses to see the modules on offer. These will vary across different universities.

NUS: National Union of Students

Open days: This is when the university is open to students who are considering applying. They often include activities such as campus tours, subject talks, accommodation tours, and finance talks. These are often in person, but they may also take place online.

Postgraduate: A student who has completed an undergraduate degree and is studying for a higher degree, such as a Masters or PhD.

PhD: Also known as a doctorate, this is the highest form of degree awarded and involves you carrying out research with little or no teaching. You need to have completed at least an undergraduate degree to study at this level.

Prospectus: These are guides produced by individual universities detailing the unique information about that university and the courses it offers. These are also available online via university websites.

Russell Group universities: The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, as well as an outstanding teaching and learning experience. The University of Exeter is a Russell Group university.

Scholarship: A financial award made on the basis of a range of criteria such as household income, excellent academic, sporting, or musical achievement. It does not have to be paid back. Amounts and eligibility criteria vary according to different universities.

Self-catered halls: Accommodation where you cook for yourself using the facilities in a communal kitchen.

Seminar: Small group teaching where you engage in discussion with other students and a member of staff.

Societies: Clubs of likeminded students who regularly meet up because they share a common interest in something such as acting, singing, computer gaming, watching films, and so on.

Study Abroad: Lets you spend some time studying your subject at another university overseas. It's a great way to learn all about a new country.

Students' Union or Students' Guild: An organisation found in all universities that is run by students and is dedicated to the representation and support of the students at the university.

Student Loans Company (SLC): The SLC provide financial assistance in the form of loans to pay your tuition fees and living costs. They also manage your repayments once you've graduated. Find out more [here](#).

UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. This is the organisation that handles nearly all university applications. The application process is all done online via ucas.com

UCAS Extra: Allows you to add another university choice to help you gain a place before Clearing begins. You will be automatically eligible if all five university choices have been used but you hold no offers. UCAS Extra usually runs from February to July. Find out more [here](#).

Undergraduate: A student usually studying for their first degree on a programme which normally lasts for three or four years. You could be based either at a university or a Further Education college.

Undergraduate Masters: Four year degrees such as Masters of Engineering (MEng), Masters of Science (MSci), etc, which comprise three years of undergraduate level study, with a further year to gain a Masters qualification.

University: A Higher Education institution that offers degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate level as well as being where academic research takes place.

Work Placement: Also known as a 'Year in Industry'. A work placement lets students spend up to a year working for a company whilst gaining skills and experience which will help them to get a job after graduating. Not all universities and courses offer this, check their website for details.

Useful Resources

Our University of Exeter [undergraduate webpage](#) is a good starting point to look at the different courses we have on offer.

Our [Discover University webpage](#) is full of free resources designed to help you with your application to university/ Higher Education.



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exeter.ac.uk/discoveruniversity

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