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Introduction for teachers and coordinators

Everything you want to know about Going to Uni has been designed for use with classes and for individual student tuition. The 20 questions are grouped under four headings:

To go or not to go

Getting started

How much would it cost?

Studying - What's it like?

All the questions are asked by students who are the first in their family to consider going to university and are answered by graduates from exactly the same background. Students from a wide range of backgrounds are represented.

There is no set order to view the questions; prioritize the viewing of each question to suit the interests and concerns of your students. Question number one, *Why go?*, is designed to start the discussion going and could be shown first; after that any question can be viewed following on from the issues arising in the ensuing discussion.

In preparation for viewing, either in small groups or individually, students could be asked to consider their current views on going to university and to write down a list of issues that concern them in an order of priority. All positions should be legitimate, from “ I definitely do not want to go” to “I really want to go”. There may be other issues specific to the culture and background of students that make them hesitant to consider a university education. These should be discussed in a non-judgemental atmosphere where students can feel comfortable in revealing their concerns and writing them down.

Some investigation about where universities are, how big they are, and how much it costs to go could be initiated. This can raise the issues of leaving home, starting to live independently and how that feels. Students that are already clear that they want to go to university but are not sure where, can be referred to the UCAS website which will advise them on what universities do what degrees. This can lead to a discussion on whether all universities are the same and what ‘A’ level grades may be required for different universities.

At the end of this preparation students should have focused on their concerns and be ready for some answers. The notes they make at this point can be referred to after viewing to see if the issues that concern them have been addressed satisfactorily and whether further questions have arisen. After viewing a number of questions they could also consider whether their position has changed either in favour or against going to university and why.

Cont/

Introduction for teachers and coordinators *continued*

The discussion after each viewing should allow plenty of time for students to talk through the issues that have arisen, whether they have been answered satisfactorily and any fresh concerns that they may now have. Allow students to select the next question they want to see, even if only two or three questions are viewed by the whole class in a teaching session, encourage students to use the DVD individually or in small groups at a time of their own choosing.

Briefings and Advice Sheets

There are briefing and advice sheets for each question summarizing the key points covered in the answer. These can be printed out for students or they can access them themselves directly from the internet: team-video.co.uk/notes/uni.pdf They are designed as a checklist that can be referred to in the classroom sessions or taken home for discussion with parents and guardians.

Student Tours of Universities

If you are planning a visit to a university with a class or group of students, either or both films will be excellent preparation. The two featured universities, Sussex and Greenwich, are very different; Sussex a purpose built campus set outside a provincial city centre, Greenwich a multisite campus in South London and beyond. If no visit to a university is planned both films will give students a clear indication of the size, architecture, academic and social lifestyle of university life.

Before viewing students can discuss their current understanding of what a university is, what happens there and whether they could envisage themselves going. Some research could be undertaken on how many universities there are, the range of courses and subjects on offer and how different they think life might be at a university, from that of school or college. Certain keywords and their understanding can be raised: lectures, tutorials, seminars, loans, grants, halls of residence. These will be addressed in the films but getting students to focus on them prior to looking at the film can make it a point to look out for when viewing.

After viewing and discussion, students should have a clear image and basic understanding of what universities are like. If a visit is planned students should write down questions specific to their concerns, whether it be academic, financial or social. All universities offering tours for students will provide question and answer sessions and every effort should be made to encourage students to use this time to raise the issues that concern them and to come prepared with questions ready to ask. See *Questions to ask while on a visit* after 20 Questions student advice briefings.

Useful Websites:

- www.ucas.ac.uk - Listings of all university courses and grades required.
- <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/index.htm> – government information about university courses, funding and applying.
- www.nus.org - The national union of students information about funding, different universities' student unions and general welfare advice.
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide> – university guide and ratings
- <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/public/gug/?CMP=KNGvccp1-times%20university%20guide> – university guide and ratings

20 Questions

To go or not to go

1. Why go?

- To get a more enjoyable job. Does what you want to do in the future require a degree?
- To gain independence – learn to live without your parents.
- To learn life skills like cooking and budgeting.
- To meet people like you.
- Because you can – the chance is there for you to take which might not have been there for your parents.
- To give you time and opportunities to find out what you would like to do in the future.
- Because you enjoy the subject and want to learn more about it.

Additional Information

- Graduates can expect to earn up to £100,000 (according to government figures) more than non-graduates over their working lifetime.
- University is an opportunity to widen your horizons, meet different people and live somewhere new.
- Going to university can open new opportunities and you can get involved and interested in things which you may never have discovered if you hadn't gone. Most universities will have subsidised courses in lots of different activities from sports to languages.

2. What grades will I need to get in?

- Grade offers depend on the university and the subject.
- Apply to places that match your expected grades.
- There is flexibility – if you just miss the grades you need you may still be able to take up your place at university.
- Remember that certain subjects will require you to have done certain A-levels. This is especially true of sciences, maths and medicine.
- It's a good rule to try and do a mix of subjects you need and you enjoy at A-level.
- As well as having good grades it is important to have an excellent personal statement – show passion and commitment. Talk about other activities, in addition to school work, that you have participated in to show you are an all rounder who will contribute to university life.
- Getting into university is competitive so try your hardest to stand out.

Additional Information

- If you don't get into university when you first apply, or you fail to get the grades at A-level that you need for your offer you can use clearing.
 - Clearing matches applicants with empty places at universities.
 - Clearing starts in August and applicants can use the UCAS website to find university courses offering places and the grades required for them.
 - To find a place through clearing you need to be flexible but make sure that you would still be happy going to that university.
- If you don't have the required grades or subjects for the degree you would like to do you can often take a Foundation degree.
 - Foundation degrees are designed for a particular area of work and are more flexible and shorter than bachelors degrees.
 - Foundation degrees can be "topped up" to the level of a bachelors degree by taking additional years of study.

3. Which University should I choose?

- Go and visit lots of different universities – go to open days.
- Remember you have to spend three years there so make sure you really like it.
- Look at what university is good for your subject.
- Look at the details of the courses offered and find out which currently offers what interests you. Look at assessment methods – do you want to have more exams or coursework based assessment.
- Look at all the details – are there lots of campuses? Which campus will you be on?
- Do your research!

Additional Information

- Most Towns in the UK have at least one university in them – think about the type of town you want to live in: busy, small, historic, multicultural, close to home.
- Universities come in all shapes and sizes – think about what would suit you: isolated, campus based, spread about in large cities, collegiate.
- Do you have any particular hobbies that you want to pursue at university - check to see they have the facilities.
- Look up the key professors that might be teaching you. Look at their research – does it interest you? Unlike at school this will influence what they teach you.
- All universities and university student unions will have a website – have a look at these to get more information.
- See if you can find Freshers groups on social networking sites and talk to students already at the university.
- The Times and The Guardian newspapers produce University Guides which give basic information about universities and the subjects they do well in.
- The National Union of Students produces an annual National Student Survey which asks all final year students about their time at university. Use this to find out how satisfied students are at universities; you may want to go to:
www.thestudentsurvey.com

4. Should I take a gap year?

- Think about what you can do in a gap year: travel, earn money, gain work experience.
- Advantages:
 - You can use it to earn money.
 - You can test out jobs to see if they really interest you.
 - You can learn skills, which will help you at university, and when looking for employment after university.
 - You will gain more independence and confidence.
- Disadvantages:
 - Getting back into the swing of academic work can be difficult as you will lose skills and knowledge.

Additional Information

- Plan your gap year effectively: universities and future employers will be less impressed by an empty year than one in which you occupied yourself productively. Do lots of research.
- If you do not get into university when you apply, or you fail to gain the grades needed, you can use a gap year to gain more experience and useful skills which will improve your application. Applying to university with your A-level grades known can be less nerve-racking, as it will be easier to know which universities to apply for.
- Deferring your place: when you apply to university you can ask for a 'deferred place' which means you can start a year later. If you gain a place at university and then decide you want to take a gap year you can contact the university and explain your situation and they may still let you defer.
- Lots of graduates are choosing to take gap years after university, before going on to jobs or further study. Keep this in mind if you want to travel but are worried about taking a year out before university.

5. My parents are anxious – what should I tell them?

- Don't worry – It is perfectly understandable for parents to be anxious about their children going to a place they have never been to, but reassurance not confrontation will win them over.
- At open evenings at school your teachers will be happy to discuss any concerns with your parents about you going to university
- Take your parents to university open days: this means they can talk to professors, students and university staff, they can look at security, welfare provision, accommodation and other facilities.
- If your parents are worried about who you may be living with, most universities give accommodation options including single sex accommodation and accommodation for specific dietary needs.
- Your parents (and friends and partners) can visit you at university.
- You do not have to leave home to go to university

Additional Information

- Most universities and student union websites will have advice pages for parents.
- Lots of universities run specific tours for parents so they can get their questions answered.
- All universities will have a welfare system in place including personal supervisors, financial advice, counselling services, health services and religious guidance.
- Most university student unions will also have advice services and a welfare team who run events and are available to talk to.

Getting started

6. The first day – how bad is it?

- All new places: schools, clubs, etc. are a little unnerving on the first day and university is no different, everybody is in the same situation and wants to fit in and make friends
- First things to do: tell your parents you are going to be fine and ask them to go, find a pub or meeting place, meet everyone in your flat and block.
- Remember you will not be alone: everyone will be lost and needing help. People will be friendly and sympathetic.
- In most universities your first week is a 'Freshers' week' designed for you to get to know the university and make loads of friends. This is your opportunity to have fun for a week and join in with lots of activities.

Additional Information

- Just like at school a lot of preparation is done by universities and student unions to ensure that your arrival at university is as fun and reassuring as possible:
 - When you arrive at university you will probably be given a welcome pack with a map and a list of activities going on during your first week. This should help you to feel more at home and settle in.
 - When you arrive at your accommodation there will be second and third year students there to show you around and take you to your room.
 - The university will probably organise something for your first night so you can meet people – don't worry about staying in your room and feeling lonely.

7. Settling in – what is Freshers' Week?

- In most universities your first week is a 'Freshers' Week' designed for you to get to know the university and make loads of friends. This is your opportunity to have fun for a week and join in with lots of activities.
- During 'Fresher's Week' there is normally a 'Freshers' Fair' where all the sports clubs and other societies will have stalls. This is an opportunity for you to find out about activities you can do whilst at university.
- Most universities and students union run lots of events during this week for you to meet people, including a 'Freshers' Ball'.
- Another good activity you can do during this week is to take a tour of the university and find out where your first lectures and seminars will be.
- You will also find out about different catering options on campus.
- This week is a steep learning curve – you'll pick up loads of new skills including doing your own laundry, cooking and budgeting.
- It's loads of fun!

Additional Information

- Most universities will provide you with a list of things you should do during this week like signing up at the health centre, meeting your supervisor, getting a student card.
- Departments will also organise events so you can meet your professors and other students on your course. There may also be introductory lectures or library tours to show you where the books you will need are.
- Lots of the events during Freshers' Week may seem very alcohol based, however most universities and cultural and religious societies will organise alternative events.
- Lots of universities will organise tours of the local area and show you where the supermarkets, clubs and bars are. This is a great way to find out about life outside of campus.

8. Where will I live?

- For some students one of the best things about university is the ability to live away from home. It increases your independence and forces you to grow up!
- Some students will want to live at home during their time at university as it costs less and you will have the security of still living with your parents. However there are drawbacks such as travelling, you will use time and money and it may be harder to meet people.
- First year students are normally guaranteed university accommodation within student halls of residence (halls).
- Student accommodation normally comes with a range of facilities (en-suite or shared bathrooms) and prices. Think about how much your budget will let you spend on accommodation.
- After first year the university will give you help in finding accommodation. In most university towns there are estate agents that specialise in renting to students. Most universities will also have members of staff who can help you look over housing contracts.

Additional Information

- Make sure you check what the range of prices of accommodation are, as different universities will vary significantly.
- When you go on a tour make sure you see the accommodation and check to see if all the accommodation is of this standard. Many universities will have a range of older and newer accommodation and many will only show you the nicest during a tour!
- Some universities will have catered halls – these provide breakfast and an evening meal that will be included in the price of the accommodation. Try to find out what time food is served and what type of food is served (especially for those with specific dietary needs) as it may be that you will end up not eating the food you have paid for.
- Many universities will offer accommodation for those with special needs including disabled students, students with specific dietary needs, students who wish to live in single sex accommodation and even 'quiet blocks'.
- Many universities will offer different lengths of lets. The cheapest option may involve moving your possessions out of halls during the holidays in which case you will need to think about whether this is possible or not.
- When looking around a university ask about where students in second or third year live. Can you live near to the university? How much does off campus accommodation cost on average? How safe do students feel where they live? You will live off campus for longer than on campus so it is important you think about these issues.

9. Can I choose who I live with?

- If you live in university halls of residence then you will not be able to choose who you live with.
- Some universities will have forms where you can express preference or questionnaires designed to match preferences.
- There is flexibility in terms of single sex accommodation.
- Most universities will have a procedure where you can move accommodation if you don't like where you are originally assigned.
- Whilst it may seem frightening that you can't choose your housemates many people become good friends with others in their house. Even if you don't end up as best friends you will probably get on. Everyone's in the same position and will probably be very friendly.

Additional Information

- Don't worry if you don't make best friends with the people you live with. You will make most of your friends through your course or through societies and clubs you join.
- Going to university with some household skills like cooking and cleaning will make it easier for you to get on with housemates.
- Remember there will be a university welfare system in place to deal with any issues which may arise – from noise and mess issues to more serious disagreements.

10. Is it all work and no play?

- The full student experience involves more than just studying. At most universities there are a wide range of clubs and societies which will cover most hobbies and sports, as well as for more unusual activities.
- If a society doesn't yet exist for something most universities will let you set one up. Most universities or student unions will give you funding for this.
- Another way to get involved in extra-curricular activities is through the student union.
- Students do usually have to pay to join these clubs and societies but usually this will not be very much. Any costs will usually be heavily subsidised and will be a lot cheaper than if done outside university.
- Every Wednesday afternoon all university students will have no timetabled classes as this is put aside for students to play sport (including matches against other universities).
- Remember that it is completely up to you to balance work and play. So long as you get all your work done you can squeeze in as much fun as possible.
- Campus universities can become a bit of a bubble especially at the start of first year. Everything you need is on campus: where you work, where you live and where you socialise.
- Going to a university far from home can mean that you lose touch with friends from home especially as you will make new friends at university. However remember that university holidays are very long and you will probably be spending some of it at home.

Additional information:

- Employers aren't just looking for a good degree, they will also look at other activities you have undertaken at university including those with societies and clubs and any part time jobs you may have.
- Most universities have a students union. The students union represents the needs of students to the university and is responsible for most of the extra-curricular activity on campus. Most student unions run shops, bars and clubs. They also fund and support student societies and look after student welfare. All student unions are run for students by students so there are lots of opportunities to get involved.
- Lots of universities will have programmes which will help you volunteer in the community around the university, for example helping in schools. This can be a good way to break out of the university bubble as well as gaining useful skills for employment.

How much would it cost?

11. How much will it cost? - Loans, grants and bursaries

Note: Filmed in 2010, so the figures discussed in the clip have now been superseded by the 2012 increases in fees, loans and grants. The current figures are listed on page 16.

- Most home students will have some form of student loan to pay for their university course.
 - This is a loan – you will have to pay it back.
 - Loans are repayable once you have a job which pays over a certain level (see additional information).
 - There are two types of loan: **tuition fee** and **maintenance**.
- Some courses, such as nursing, come with a bursary. This is where you are paid to do your course.
- As well as getting a loan some home students will be eligible for a maintenance grant.
 - This is dependant on how much your parents earn.
- Some universities will also offer scholarships and bursaries dependant on how much your parents earn and your academic success.
- Bank loans are different from a student loan and they are a much more dangerous form of debt and you must pay it back.
- Different universities will have different living costs depending on their location. Students at London universities are eligible for a higher maintenance loan to reflect the higher living costs.
- There are lots of different costs to think about when going to and choosing a university, such as travel and accommodation costs.
- Remember the loan is your responsibility – not your parents!
- Although it seems scary the loan is there to help you get your degree and a better job.

Cont/

How much will it cost? - Loans, grants and bursaries *continued*

Additional Information

- The company that administers loans to English students is called Student Finance England.
- Remember to apply for a loan as soon as you have confirmed your place at university. The later you leave your application the later you will receive your money and you may not have your loan on time for the start of term.
- The government's package to help you fund your studies is a mix of loans and grants dependent on your parents' earnings.

From September 2012

- **The loan comes in two parts:**
 - **Tuition fees:** From September 2012 any university can charge up to £9,000 – this is subject to the university meeting conditions to widen participation and access for students from low income backgrounds.
 - **Maintenance loan:**
 - The loan amount students are eligible for depends on parents' earnings. The less your parents earn, the less loan you are given. The difference is made up by the maintenance grant.
 - There will still be a higher level of loan given to those living away from home and those studying in London.
 - The loan is repayable once a student leaves university and starts earning more than £21,000 a year (to be adjusted in accordance with inflation each year after 2016).
 - 9% of your salary is deducted automatically from your monthly pay.
 - Loans will begin to accrue interest when you start to earn £21,000 at the rate of inflation (RPI). As earnings increase an increasing rate of interest will be paid, reaching a maximum of the rate of inflation (RPI) plus 3%, at earnings of £41,000 and above.

- **Maintenance Grant**

From September 2012, if you're a new full-time student and your household income is £42,600 or less you could qualify for a living cost grant (also called a maintenance grant).

Cont/

How much will it cost? - Loans, grants and bursaries *continued*

Living cost grants help with everyday costs like food, travel or accommodation and don't have to be paid back. **Remember loans you repay; grants, bursaries and scholarships are non-repayable.** You receive:

* the maximum grant of £3,250 a year, if your household income is £25,000 or less.

* a partial grant if your household incomes is between £25,001 and £42,600.

<u>Household income</u>	Grant	Loan (elsewhere)	Loan (London)	Loan (parental home)
Up to 25,000	3250	3875	6050	2750
26,000	3069	3966	6141	2841
27,000	2887	4057	6232	2932
28,000	2705	4148	6323	3023
29,000	2523	4239	6414	3114
30,000	2341	4330	6505	3205
31,000	2160	4420	6595	3295
32,000	1978	4511	6686	3386
33,000	1796	4602	6777	3477
34,000	1614	4693	6898	3568
35,000	1432	4784	6959	3659
36,000	1250	4875	7050	3750
37,000	1069	4966	7141	3841
38,000	887	5057	7232	3932
39,000	705	5148	7323	4023
40,000	523	5239	7414	4114
41,000	341	5330	7505	4205
42,000	160	5420	7595	4295
42,600	50	5475	7650	4350

How much will it cost? - Loans, grants and bursaries *continued*

The amount of **grant** students receive will directly affect how much living cost **loan** (also called a maintenance loan) they will be entitled to. Students with household incomes of £42,600 or less have their loan for living costs reduced by £0.50 for every £1 of grant awarded.

- **Scholarships and Bursaries:**

Most universities also offer their own bursaries and scholarships. These are paid annually, usually in the form of cash. You don't have to pay the money back. Each university decides on their own eligibility criteria so again, check with your chosen university to see what they're offering and whether you're eligible. Most universities give you a bursary if you're eligible for a full grant but many will give you a bursary even if you are only eligible for a partial grant.

- **National Scholarship Programme**

If you are from a lower income family (less than £25k a year) you may get help through the new £150m National Scholarship Programme. Some universities may offer a reduced level of fees or possibly a free year on some courses. Each university will decide what support they'll offer so you'll need to check to see what your chosen university is offering and whether you're eligible.

Find out which universities or colleges offer the National Scholarship Programme.

- **Disabled Students' Allowances**

Extra financial help will also be available to disabled students studying on a full-time or part-time basis through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). These grants are paid in addition to the standard student finance package. They do not depend on income and do not have to be repaid.

- **Students with dependants**

There is also support for full-time students with child or adult dependants in the form of the Adult Dependants' Grant, Childcare Grant and Parents' Learning Allowance.

Cont/

How much will it cost? - Loans, grants and bursaries *continued*

Summary of post September 2012 changes:

The bad news is that students will have to pay more per year for their course and the majority of universities are charging the full £9,000 per year tuition fees. The good news is that universities will have to provide more scholarships and bursaries (which do not have to be repaid) and the income at which you start repaying your loan is higher (£21,000) previously (£15,000).

- It is important to note that universities charging the full £9,000 per year tuition fees have to demonstrate to the Government that by doing so they are not excluding students from low income backgrounds by offering a range of grants and bursaries such students can benefit from. Universities will have to justify their charges on an annual basis and will be anxious to demonstrate they are fulfilling the criteria.
- **Students should therefore not be put off applying to Universities charging the full amount and thoroughly check out exactly what the university they are considering provides. Remember each University will be different in terms of what non-repayable scholarships and bursaries they offer.**

Video Clip

Very clear explanation from financial advisor on student loans and their repayment.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=55fKa-ErQ8E&feature=player_embedded

12. Will I need to get a job while at university?

- When you know how much money you will get from the loan company and how much it will cover (rent or more) you may find you need more money especially if your parents can't support you.
- Getting a job can help you make ends meet.
- Most universities suggest you should only work 10-12 hours a week so it does not affect your studying.
- Most universities will have a career's service which can give you the details of possible student jobs in the area.
- There may be more unusual ways to make money at university such as participating in the psychology department experiments.
- Be careful of working too many hours as it can really impinge on your studying.
- Remember that the summer holidays during university are very long and you can use them to earn money.

Additional Information:

- If you think that you will need to work full-time during studying, you can study part-time at most universities.
- Most universities and student unions will hire students. This can be an excellent way to juggle work and study as you will be working right on site and for an employer that understands your need to be flexible.

13. Managing my money – Will I be broke?

- At university, possibly for the first time, you will have responsibility for a large sum of money which will have to last you for an entire term. You need to budget your money and be organised.
- Beware of overdrafts; although they are interest free on most student accounts you will have to pay it back. If you use it all up in your first few weeks at university paying it back will be very stressful.
- Find out if your parents are in a position to help you out if absolutely necessary.
- Your university and students union can help you. If you are worried about paying your fees or accommodation costs you can contact the student finance office. Most universities also offer a hardship fund (normally around £200) if you need short term assistance, for example to pay your rent before your loan comes through. However it is best not to rely on these services.

Additional information

- There are lots of online budgeting services available that can help you manage your money. One such service is:
<http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/banking/Budget-planning>
- If you are very worried about money you can try to get funding from an educational charity or trust. However these are very competitive and it is unlikely they will fund the entire cost of your course.
- Every year NatWest Bank produces the NatWest Student Living Index which rates different cities in terms of their cost effectiveness for students. It looks at factors including average costs of rent, how many students have jobs in the city and how much they earn on average. It can be a useful tool for planning which universities to apply to.

14. How much will I have to spend on books?

- Textbooks at university are very expensive.
- However university libraries will have copies of most of the books you need.
- Beware of buying lots of the books on the suggested reading list before term has started. Wait and see how many of them are actually useful before buying them.
- You will make friends on your course who you can share books with.
- You can often buy second hand books from older students. Some universities even have a bookshop for this purpose.

Additional Information

- Most university libraries will have a special section for highly demanded books which can only be borrowed for a short amount of time. This is to ensure that all students should have access to the essential books for their course.
- If you do want to buy books try second hand bookshops near the university. Previous university students may have donated the book you need.
- If your university doesn't have a student book swap service then contact your department or department society as they may set something up.
- The Internet is becoming more widely used on most university courses: lots of the reading you will need to do will be from online journals and resources.

Studying - What's it like?

15. How hard is degree work?

- The jump from A-levels to first year doesn't feel too hard as lots of the work still feels like A-level work.
- Second and Third year feels much harder as you need to reach a higher level of academic understanding.
- A-levels will prepare you, especially if you studied your degree subject at A-level.
- Don't worry, there is a support network; professors and lecturers will help you with anything you don't understand or to get you to the required level.
- At university no one will chase you to ensure you complete your work – you have to monitor yourself.
- Different subjects will have different working patterns. Some subjects will have more lectures, seminars, workshops (contact hours), others will involve more reading and researching (independent study).
- Going to university involves both a social and an academic jump. Both will take getting used to and different people will find different aspects of going to university more, or less difficult.
- The amount of independent study expected for some degree courses is a big jump from A-level: you are expected to find out what is expected of you and then carry it out without assistance from a teacher.

Additional Information

- Most universities provide taster lectures for A-level students. Go along to see the level of work expected of you for a degree.
- Remember that all of the students at university will have come from A-levels and that universities have designed their courses, especially in first year, to help you make the transition.

16. What timetable do you have?

- Your timetable at university will depend on the subject you take but most subjects will have fewer teaching hours than at school or college.
- Your contact (teaching) hours will be different types depending on your course:
 - Lectures: Where you get lectured on a specific subject by a professor for an hour. This is in large groups of students (normally 50 -150) and is not interactive.
 - Seminars/Tutorials: Where you are broken up into smaller groups (normally 10-25) to discuss the lecture and the reading from that week.
 - 'Labs': Most sciences will have 'labs' where students will learn the practical side to their course.
 - Workshops: Most sciences and Maths will have workshops, where students solve and discuss set questions and problems.
- For some students most of their work will take place outside of contact hours to prepare for seminars. This work is very important as otherwise you will not be able to participate properly in the discussion.
- University lectures can often seem daunting especially as you have to take down notes on what the professor is saying. Don't worry as you will develop your own technique for doing this and there are often lots of ways to find out the information. Lots of university professors will put their lecture notes online.
- Even if you only study one subject at university this will normally be broken up into different modules which focus on specific aspects of the course.
- Most universities will allow you to study modules outside of your course. This gives you the chance to study different disciplines you may be interested in.
- If you want to study more than one subject you can find joint honours courses which allow you to study two or more subjects. Use UCAS to search for the subjects you want to study.
- Remember that unlike at school if you are not where you need to be on time, no one will chase you and classes will start without you!

Additional Information

- When researching different courses look at how many contact hours you will be given and how much independent study is required. Think about which you prefer and factor this into your course choice.

17. Keeping up – Who can I turn to for help?

- Don't worry there are lots of people at university who can help you with your work:
 - Other students/your friends; at university it isn't competitive – people will support you. Working together is also a good way to build friendships.
 - PhD students: in first year you will often have PhD students leading your seminar and they will be happy to help you.
 - Tutors/Professors: Most universities ensure that professors have an hour set aside a week where you can ask them for help. You can also email them. In first year most professors in your department will be able to help you but as you progress you will need to ask the specialist professor.
 - Supervisor/Academic advisor: Most universities will assign students to a specific professor who is like your form tutor. They can help you with academic problems.
- Most universities offer a study skills service where you can improve your academic skills such as essay writing, researching and exam studying.
- All universities will offer support for disabled students including those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

Additional Information

- Most university student unions will have someone who is responsible for academic work. They can also give you advice if you are finding work difficult or are unsure about where to seek help.
- Don't be afraid of asking for help or more information. Professors are normally really pleased when students go to see them with questions or essay ideas as it shows that you are really interested in their subject.

18. Working to a deadline – Will I be chased?

- At university no one will chase you – you are responsible for getting your work in and turning up to classes on time.
- You will have timed deadlines to get your work in. If you miss these you will be penalised.
- Most lectures are voluntary but you will find them useful and they are worth going to.
- Seminars, tutorials and workshops are compulsory and you may be penalised if you do not turn up for enough sessions.
- Don't worry about forgetting deadlines as your friends and course mates will normally remind you!
- If you fall behind it can be hard to catch up. In first year it may not be worth trying to catch up as you only need 40% to pass the year and your grades do not normally contribute to your degree. It is much more important to catch up in second and third year.
- Most universities will offer you assistance if you fall behind. You may be able to get deadline extensions depending on why you fell behind.
- If you think you've chosen the wrong course you can swap courses. This is easier the earlier you do it but it can be done later on. Swapping courses, however inconvenient, is better than staying with a course you really dislike.

Additional Information

- When starting out at university it is very useful to make sure that you know exactly what is expected of you. Most universities will give you a course pack that will outline all your assessments and course requirements.

19. What exams do you sit?

- The method of assessment depends on the course. Types of assessment include:
 - Written exams
 - Coursework
 - Presentations
 - Practical exams
- If you fail any of your exams you can retake modules at the end of the summer. The grade you can receive at a retake will be capped (however well you do in the exam there is a limit to the grade you can receive).
- If you fail your retakes you will have to retake the year.
- Most exams will feel the same as at school.
- Your degree and any assessments are graded at:
 - 1st - 70% +
 - 2:1 - 60-69%
 - 2:2 – 50-59%
 - 3rd – 40-49%
 - Fail - 0-40%

Additional Information

- Different courses at different universities will have different assessment methods. Think about which type of assessment suits you better and choose a course which reflects this.
- Some universities will have modular assessments with exams or coursework due in several times a year. Other universities will only have finals or two sets of exams during your degree.

20. Can I get thrown out of university?

- Just like at school you can be thrown out of university.
- You can be thrown out for either unreasonable behavior or for academic offences, such as not doing any work.
- There are rules at university but they tend to be more relaxed than at school. So long as you aren't disturbing anyone else, most behavior is allowed.

Additional Information

- Most universities will have a strict set of guidelines that you will have to abide by, especially around academic offences. Most universities will punish cheating or plagiarism (pretending other people's work is your own) and is taken very seriously.
- If you are ever accused of academic or social misconduct you can contact your student union as they can help represent you to the university and try to achieve a positive outcome.

University Campus Tours – Greenwich and Sussex Universities:

Things to see and ask on your visit to a university:

- Academic spaces: lectures halls, specialist buildings (laboratories), seminar rooms.
- The library: computers (how easy is it to access a computer?), books (different loan types – shorter and longer loans), study spaces, group study spaces.
- The student union: social spaces (bars, clubs), the focus of “Freshers’ Week” and “Fresher’s Fair”.
- Leisure spaces: theatre, sports complex, cafes and canteens.
- Shops (supermarkets and bookshops) and banks.
- Accommodation blocks

Questions to ask:

- How big is the university?
- What does the university specialise in?
- How convenient is it to get to the nearest town? To get to shops/banks/cafes?
- What is the surrounding area like?
- Is it on just one campus or split up?
- When looking at accommodation:
 1. How much is it?
 2. What does it include?
 3. What choices are there?
 4. Can you change?
 5. How many people will you share a flat/kitchen with?
- What other activities can you get involved in at university?
- What academic options does the university offer (foundation degrees)?
- How big will your lectures and seminars be?
- How should I choose a university? How does this university rate for the course I want to do?
- Could you see yourself there? What is the atmosphere like? Are there people like you there? Or people you could make friends with?