

Queen Mary, University of London

Advice and information for parents and carers
of applicants to Higher Education



Queen Mary
University of London





Contents



At Queen Mary, we recognise that many parents have concerns regarding their son or daughter's transition to higher education, from worries about how their child will be supported and where they will live, to

financial considerations – and whether a degree really does improve career prospects. The Education Liaison Office has produced this booklet in order to address these issues. We have a huge amount of experience of advising both students and their parents on a whole range of higher education-related topics, regularly visiting schools to give talks, and meeting thousands of students each year through these visits and attendance at UCAS conventions. We keep up to date with the issues that concern you and are happy to pass on our knowledge.

We hope you will find this booklet useful, but if you have any queries about higher education in general and Queen Mary in particular, please do not hesitate to contact the Office. Either email education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk call 020 7882 3064 or visit www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/educationliaison

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Why choose Queen Mary?	4
Why study at the University of London?	6
Support for students at Queen Mary	8
Accommodation at Queen Mary	10
What are the career advantages of a degree?	12
Student finance explained: fees, loans, grants and bursaries	14
Help your child to budget	17
Studying at home – help your child get the best out of university	19
Off to university...	21
Parent case study	23
What happens next?	24
Useful contacts and websites	25

Why choose Queen Mary?

Sending a child off to university can be a daunting prospect for many parents. However, you can rest assured that your son or daughter will be fully supported in a welcoming environment during their time at Queen Mary.

Here are just some of the reasons why Queen Mary is a great place for your child to study:

Satisfied Students

The 2011 National Student Survey (which asks students about their experiences at university) places Queen Mary equal first in London (among the major universities). Queen Mary also scores higher than the average achieved by any of the Russell Group universities confirming that the vast majority of our students are very satisfied with the quality of the teaching they receive here, our campus and the quality of a University of London degree from Queen Mary.

The University of London

Queen Mary is the third largest University of London college, with around 16,900 students, and all Queen Mary graduates gain a University of London degree – recognised world-wide as a guarantee of quality.

High-quality research

The vast majority of our academic staff also undertake research. This means that students will benefit from being taught by real experts in their subject, often doing cutting-edge research – whose enthusiasm and knowledge is guaranteed to rub off. Students get a real buzz from, for example, reading their tutor's comments on a news item in a national newspaper, or seeing them in a TV documentary. The latest Government Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) rankings confirmed our position as a top research university, ranking us 11th nationally (*The Guardian*).



The Queens' Building

Teaching quality

At Queen Mary we use small group teaching and tutorials in many subject areas, and students' feedback is encouraged and acted upon. We also have an excellent modular scheme which allows students considerable flexibility to choose topics which interest them. Our excellent performance in the 2011 National Student Survey confirms that the vast majority of our students are very satisfied with the quality of their degree and of the College.

Good career prospects

Our location between the City and Docklands gives our students a huge advantage in the job market, and many of our graduates go into financial careers such as investment banking, accountancy and management consultancy. The quality of Queen Mary graduates is well-known, and many blue-chip companies advertise their training places with us and visit the College to recruit students. Our students graduate with the necessary transferable skills to succeed in their careers, so it is no coincidence that Queen Mary graduates are consistently in the top 10 for graduate starting salaries in the UK (The Sunday Times University Guide 2012).

Campus lifestyle

We are one of very few city-based campus universities, so students mix with people from many departments and never have to walk far. The Westfield Student Village at the Mile End Campus boasts 1,195 en-suite bedrooms and all just a few minutes' walk from our lecture theatres and the Students' Union. Your child will never be bored here! We have a vibrant student body who are able to take advantage of extensive sports, social and entertainment activities.

Friendly community atmosphere

Everyone who visits Queen Mary is struck by our friendliness. Relations between staff and students are excellent, and the social life of the College is legendary. The Students' Union supports a big range of clubs and societies. Never underestimate the value of a healthy social life at university!



Why study at the University of London?

You'll know that Queen Mary is part of the University of London, but what exactly does this mean for your child?

Choice and reputation

With 3,700 courses to choose from at around 40 colleges and smaller institutes, virtually every degree subject you can think of can be studied somewhere in the University of London – from anthropology and ancient history to tropical diseases and zoology.

The quality of the teaching and research at the colleges and institutes of the University is consistently high (check the league table scores in *The Times* or the *Guardian* online), and the University as a whole also has an outstanding international reputation.

Career prospects

Employers know about the University of London and the calibre of its graduates. Wherever in the University your child studies, he or she will get a University of London degree, respected world-wide as the sign of a well-qualified graduate – giving your child a head start in their chosen career. Nearly half of all the University's graduates stay in the capital after completing their degrees, are highly sought after by top companies and organisations – and earn good salaries.

University of London Students' Union (ULU)

Based in Bloomsbury, ULU is one of the largest students' unions in the UK, representing all 120,000 students in the University. ULU campaigns on educational and regional issues such as student finance, fair trade and ethical employment. It supports a long list of clubs and societies, and publishes the London Student newspaper. They also run the Duck and Dive pub, the Gallery restaurant and a live music venue.

Sports

For the more athletically inclined, Queen Mary now boasts a brand new industry leading gym, with two fitness studios, daily fitness classes and a ladies only section. QMotion Health and Fitness Centre is the place for your son or daughter to keep fit and have fun. But ULU also runs some very high quality sports facilities. Energy Base is open to all the University's students and membership includes use of the 60-station gym and 33-metre swimming pool, exercise classes and even beauty therapy treatments (at reasonable prices). Students can also take part in London-wide intercollegiate sports leagues or play for ULU itself. Recent ULU successes include top rankings in the British University Sports Association (BUSA) championships for the water polo and ice hockey teams, and other medals in sailing, karate and volleyball.



Senate House

Culture

Is your son or daughter a culture vulture? Good news: several of the University's Colleges house important museums and galleries. These include The Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, and the Petrie Museum of Archaeology at UCL. Many others also collaborate with cultural institutions like the British Museum, the British Library, the Natural History Museum, the V&A, the South Bank Centre, the Science Museum, the National Theatre, the National Film Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe and Tate Modern. Free (the magic word for students) lectures, concerts and events on a wide range of subjects are organised by all of the Colleges. Recent popular events at Queen Mary have included lectures by Jon Snow, Channel 4 News anchor (on 'The Reporter as Witness'), Melvyn Bragg (on 'Arts and The Media'), Andrew Marr (on 'Journalism and History'), and Jeremy Paxman (on 'Why do we still have a monarchy?').

Libraries

If one library just isn't enough for your child, then you will be pleased to hear that they also have access to not only all the other Colleges' collections, via the Inter-Library Loan system, but also to the main University Library at Senate House in Bloomsbury. This is a fantastic resource, housing important special collections in a range of subjects including English literature, history, palaeography and manuscript studies and even magic! It's definitely worth joining.

Support for students at Queen Mary

Although your son or daughter will obviously be treated as an adult once they start university, it is reassuring to know that he or she will be fully supported should any problems arise. At Queen Mary we take our students' welfare very seriously and pride ourselves on providing a real community atmosphere in which your child can flourish and make the best of the student experience. Most students have a trouble-free time at university, but just in case problems do arise, your child will have access to the following support:

Personal tutor

This is a member of the teaching staff of your son or daughter's department, with whom they can discuss academic issues such as module choice, and any difficulties they might be having. They should meet with their personal tutor early in the first term and will usually keep the same tutor for their entire degree.

Advice and Counselling Service

The Advice and Counselling Service at Queen Mary, University of London offers a range of free and confidential professional support services.

Welfare Advisers have specialist training to offer professional advice on a range of welfare rights, financial and legal issues. This helps students to understand their rights and entitlements and access professional support to remedy any problems, therefore enabling them to concentrate on their studies. Advice includes: all aspects of Student Finance; (loans, grants, bursaries, fee status); welfare and disability benefits; NHS funding; council tax; immigration law and more. As well as helping students find

solutions to problems, Welfare Advisers can also give advice on how to avoid problems before they happen. For example, students can get help with planning a budget and check that they are getting all the funding they are entitled to.

Professional counsellors and therapists are also available to offer support with emotional, personal and psychological concerns.

The Advice and Counselling Service also welcomes enquiries from prospective students. Your son or daughter can contact them on 020 7882 8717, or visit their website at www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk

Disability and Dyslexia Service

Queen Mary's Disability and Dyslexia Service provides advice, guidance and support for students with disabilities and/or specific learning difficulties like dyslexia, as well as providing support to students who may be coming to terms with a recent diagnosis of a disability or specific learning difficulty.

Many students who do not necessarily consider themselves disabled are offered support and guidance through the Disability and Dyslexia Service, as well as students with short-term disabilities and those with specific learning difficulties.



Students with disabilities or dyslexia who are interested in studying at the College may contact the Disability and Dyslexia Service staff on 020 7882 2756 for an informal discussion about their support needs whilst studying, or email dds@qmul.ac.uk. Prospective students with sensory or mobility difficulties are invited to evaluate the College environment on a campus tour. Queen Mary, University of London, is a campus-based university; this makes it particularly attractive to students with disabilities. More information on the support available through the Disability and Dyslexia Service can be found at www.dds.qmul.ac.uk

Student Health Service

Queen Mary's onsite Student Health Service provides a number of medical services for its students including consultations with a GP or nurse.

Information about other health services such as dentists, opticians and sexual health is also available at the Student Health Service. It is recommended that students register with the Student Health Service as soon as they arrive at College in their first term.

Careers Service

As a parent, you are undoubtedly concerned about your child's career prospects. Queen Mary's Careers Service supports our students in all aspects of career planning and job applications throughout their time at the College.

As well as offering the opportunity to talk to a Careers Consultant one-to-one, the team runs a comprehensive Information Library and organises over 80 on-campus events throughout

the year: employer networking events, skills training and recruitment fairs.

The team also maintains an online Jobs Board giving students 24-hour access to part-time job vacancies, work experience opportunities (including internships) and graduate jobs. This service has been extended to include international opportunities.

Queen Mary Careers Service is part of The Careers Group, University of London, the largest careers service in the country. This means that our students have access to major recruitment fairs and sector specific careers courses too. The careers team regularly visits employers to find out what they are looking for in new graduates, and spend time researching the graduate labour market on your child's behalf. In addition to their one-to-one and group work responsibilities, careers staff produce a wide range of targeted written materials for students to take away.

To find out more about all of our careers services and how they can support your child during their time at Queen Mary, please visit: www.careers.qmul.ac.uk

Accommodation at Queen Mary

When picturing university student halls, it's not uncommon for parents to imagine old-fashioned, dark and damp rooms along dimly-lit corridors. But not at Queen Mary! We can offer your child high-quality award-winning accommodation in our recently developed Westfield Student Village.

Rooms

Our **en-suite** rooms come complete with a self-contained shower room, plenty of storage space and an under-desk fridge/freezer unit.

En-suite flats typically comprise between six to eleven rooms, with students sharing a large kitchen/dining area. **Non en-suite** rooms feature plenty of storage areas as well as a washbasin. Students will be sharing a shower room and kitchen with only five others. For **both** types of rooms, broadband and daily communal-area cleaning are provided as standard.



Eating and drinking

There is a variety of food outlets on campus.

The Curve is just one of several catering facilities where students can enjoy breakfast or lunch. Situated in the Student Village, students can visit the sandwich deli bar, hot food counter or even our coffee bar, where we proudly brew Starbucks coffee. For a place to drink and space to relax away from their rooms, students can chill out at **World Marché**. Situated within the Village and offering great views of the Regent's Canal, World Marché is ideally located for students living in the Village.

Mucci's also provides genuine Italian food in a relaxed café environment.

Ground serves a range of sandwiches and paninis, cakes and pastries as well as Costa Coffee.

Groceries

For all grocery requirements, students can visit the **Village Shop**. There are other food stores and supermarkets near the Campus.

Laundry facilities

The Village boasts three separate areas for laundry so Queen Mary students no longer have any excuses for sending their dirty washing home!



Reception point and stewards

Plenty of support is available to all those staying on campus. Each flat is overseen by a residences steward who is available 24 hours a day to provide any assistance that may be required. Furthermore, should a student's light bulb expire at 3am, don't worry, as the Village 24-hour manned reception is available to help.

Although we aim to accommodate as many requests as possible, due to high demand we cannot always guarantee room availability, especially if your child lives close enough to commute. However, we will always help students find alternative accommodation in the local area.

To find out whether your son or daughter is eligible for a room on campus, or for any further information on our accommodation, please visit our Residences Office website at www.residences.qmul.ac.uk

What are the career advantages of a degree?



As well as giving students endless opportunities to deepen their subject knowledge and meet large numbers of new people (with whom socialising is more or less compulsory) getting a degree greatly improves their chances of landing

that dream job. Head of Careers at Queen Mary, Emily Huns, explains the career benefits of getting a degree.

In the current economic climate, what has happened to graduate employment?

Whilst the current climate makes job-hunting more challenging for everyone, evidence consistently suggests that graduates are in a better position than non-graduates. Unemployment amongst Queen Mary graduates is relatively low and, what's more, students can improve their chances significantly by doing three things:

- building work experience from Year 1 (good work experience for first years doesn't have to be paid and could include community volunteering or a job role on-campus);
- attending some of the 80+ careers events run on the QM campus each year;
- taking advantage of the weekly training Queen Mary Careers provides in applications, CV writing and interview technique.

Can graduates still earn a lot more than A-level leavers?

They can do, yes. Much depends on which sector and role the graduate goes into. Average graduate salaries – in the larger firms which report such figures – were increasing year-on-year for a long time and have stayed remarkably stable during this recession.



Are graduates still in demand?

Yes! Despite the recession, Queen Mary Careers has engaged 25 additional employers in on campus careers events for students this year, and the graduate job market is starting to recover – particularly in financial services. Other sectors are still affected by the current climate. We are keeping an eye on hiring figures across all sectors and update students regularly via our website and blog.

What should students do – study a subject they are likely to enjoy, or one they think will lead to a job?

Generally, one they enjoy and are good at, since motivation and a good grade are two of the five most important factors in making a graduate employable. The other three are work experience that showcases graduate level skills, a real understanding of what a job entails and a well presented and evidence-based application and interview (my team can help students with all of this).

Remember that around half of graduate jobs are open to students whatever they've studied. However, if a student feels safer doing something they feel will lead them to a job rather than the subject they enjoy most, that's ok too – as long as they like it enough to do well in the subject.



How can university careers teams help students?

By:

- helping students find work experience and part-time work on and off campus;
- arranging careers events through which students meet prospective employers and network with past students;
- guiding students through their career options after university;
- advertising vacancies;
- training students in CV- and application-writing and interview techniques;
- advising them on whether or not postgraduate study will make them more employable.

Finally, tell us a little bit about Queen Mary's Careers Office

Well... there are 14 of us (that includes careers consultants, information officers, an employer liaison officer and two students helpers). We're based in the Queens' Building, on the Mile End Campus, with a satellite service for medical and dental students at our Whitechapel Campus. We provide all the above services plus have a particular focus on integrated careers work in academic departments, graduate careers coaching, creating new student work experience opportunities and skills training for student groups such as Students' Union societies and volunteers. Read more about the team and our range of services at www.careers.qmul.ac.uk, where you'll also find job vacancies, our Jobs Blog and student career profiles.

Student finance explained: fees, loans, grants and bursaries

Most parents worry about the costs associated with going to university, particularly in light of the recent changes to funding in higher education. Fortunately, there is no requirement for students to pay tuition fees up front or while studying. The overall support package available should cover essential living costs and universities also offer non-repayable bursaries.

With the new finance arrangements for 2012 splashed all over the media it is understandable that you may be confused. In fact, students will be able to borrow the cost of their tuition fees and money to cover their living expenses – and repay them after they graduate, in manageable amounts related to their income. Additionally, there will be lots of ‘free’ money available to students if they are from a low or even middle income household.



Tuition fees: how much – and how do they pay?

From 2012, universities will be able to charge between £6,000 and £9,000, as long as they meet strict criteria to ensure that all students can access their courses, regardless of family income. The majority of universities have announced that they'll charge £9,000, but check their websites for full details. The good news is that students do not have to pay their fees upfront. Instead, they can take out a Tuition Fee Loan from Student Finance England, who pay the fees direct to their university. The loan is available to all eligible home students, on part- and full-time degree programmes, irrespective of family income.

Living costs:

Students will need money for accommodation, food, books, socialising, communications (smartphone, plus apps), and so on. For most students, this will mean taking out a Student Loan for Maintenance, again from Student Finance England, to cover their living costs. Eligible students are entitled to at least 65 per cent of the maximum amounts available; the other 35 per cent depends on household income.

The maximum loan available will vary depending on where the student lives and studies. If the student moves away from home to study in London, the maximum will be £7,675. For a student living away from home outside London it will be £5,500, and for students living at home it will be £4,375. The loan will be paid into the student's bank account in termly instalments: advise your son or daughter to not spend it all in freshers' week on clothes/socialising/a car!

How will students repay the loans?

The fee and maintenance loans will be combined and students will start paying them back through the tax system from the April after they graduate, but, only if they are earning over £21,000. The most important point is that their monthly repayments will be linked to how much they earn, not the amount they actually owe: graduates repay at a rate of 9 per cent of their income above £21,000. For example, a graduate earning £25,000 will pay back approximately £30 a month. If for any reason their income drops below £21,000, their repayments will stop. Any debt left after 30 years will be written off. The interest rate is linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI), plus extra depending on their graduate income. The maximum interest rate, which will only apply once a graduate is earning over £41,000 a year, will be RPI plus 3 per cent.

Maintenance Grant (non-repayable)

If your family's household income is £25,000 or less, your son or daughter will be entitled to a non-repayable Maintenance Grant of up to £3,250; students from households with incomes of up to £42,600 will be entitled to a partial Maintenance Grant. The student's family income will be assessed before they go to university. Like the maintenance loan, any grant the student receives will be paid termly. (However, the maintenance loan will be reduced by 50p for every £1 of grant the student receives.)

Bursaries (non-repayable)

Universities charging between £6,000 and £9,000 have to agree to provide financial support to help students from low income backgrounds. Students should check universities' websites to



find out what they are offering; as an illustration, Queen Mary, University of London, plans to offer a generous bursary package: £1,500 a year for students in receipt of the full Maintenance Grant and £1,200 for students who get a partial Maintenance Grant. Visit www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/feesandfunding for further details.

National Scholarship Programme

The Government has announced a £150m National Scholarships Programme for students from lower income families. Again, students should check with individual universities to see how they will administer this. For example, Queen Mary plans to offer 266 students from low income families a £3,000 benefit in their first year: a £1,500 fee reduction plus £1,500 made up of a cash bursary and 'in-kind' support. In their second and third years, they'll receive the Queen Mary Bursary.

Student finance explained: fees, loans, grants and bursaries (cont)

Scholarships (non-repayable)

Many universities also offer scholarships, although information on these can be hard to find. They usually reward academic achievement, for example, excellent results in year 13 exams, or, once the student is at university, their first year exam results. To find out more, students can contact university finance advisers, usually located in welfare or student support offices; they can advise on all aspects of financial support.

Additional sources of funding

Student bank accounts

These usually include an interest-free overdraft facility, which, if used effectively, can be a useful source of cash, especially at certain times of the year, for example when waiting for the next loan instalment. However, please encourage your son or daughter to do their homework and choose the best overall deal – not just the best freebie! www.fool.co.uk is a good starting-point.

Earnings from part-time work

Many students choose to work part-time and in the vacations to top up their income, but to avoid this compromising their studies we recommend that your son or daughter first checks with their department for guidance on the maximum number of hours a week they should work.

Sponsorships

Some companies, the Armed Forces and some Government departments pay students to go to university, so sponsorships are well worth applying for. Your son or daughter should ask his or her careers teacher for guidance here.

Trusts and charities

Some trusts and charities can help with a small grant but this is usually a one-off payment and students generally need to have exceptional circumstances to get this type of financial help. Your child should speak to a Welfare Adviser at the Advice and Counselling Service if they are interested in applying, as we can advise on trusts and charities that fit their circumstances, and on making an application.

Students can work out how much money they are eligible to receive by reading the Student Financial Support (undergraduates) leaflet, written by the Advice and Counselling Service at Queen Mary www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/money/ug

Important note: these arrangements refer to students living in England and studying for an eligible course at an English university, and who qualify as home students. Some of this information might change before your son or daughter starts university so keep up to date at: www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance and/or www.bis.gov/studentfinance



Help your child to budget

As a parent, one of the most important ways in which you can support your soon-to-be-a-student son or daughter is by encouraging them to plan and stick to a realistic budget.

Queen Mary's experienced Finance Advisers suggest that you **encourage your child to:**

1 Plan in advance

The worst pitfall awaiting the badly-organised student is the failure to budget in advance. Your son or daughter really does need to think about their spending. This means sitting them in a room with a calculator and getting them to total up their income for the months they're at university: Student Loan; any Maintenance Grant payment, university bursary or scholarship, part-time job earnings and so on. The next step is to plan their expenditure...

2 Be realistic

Where does the money go? If your child is leaving home, rent will obviously be the biggest chunk. Then they'll spend at least £50 a week on food, including snacks during the day, £5 or more a week on toiletries; a minimum of £15-20 on their social life; and £10 on mobile phone (a conservative estimate!). Then there are books and equipment, photocopying, TV licence, possibly field trips... and so on. The vast majority of students find that their outgoings are more than their income (see tip no. 7, below).

3 Remember the hidden extras

These include rental deposit for second year private-sector accommodation, club membership fees, travel home at weekends and other unforeseen expenses.



4 Avoid credit and store cards

The message for your student son or daughter will be this: you are poor – if you can't afford it now, don't buy it – you won't be able to afford it next week, either.

5 Shop around for the best bank deal

Get them to look beyond the freebies, and consider what the account can actually do for them. Ask them to look at the overdraft facility in particular.

6 Open bank statements

It's vital that your son or daughter knows if it's all going wrong financially, so that they can get help before going into melt-down; it's much easier now to track finances online.

Help your child to budget (cont)

7 Sort out a part-time job early on

This is the key to most students' financial survival, and it makes sense to organise it as soon as possible. If your child already works for a chain, they could ask to be transferred to a branch near their university. We advise the 'little and often' approach right from the start, rather than leaving it till the summer (ie exam) term and then working when they should be revising. Also, encourage him or her to get some office skills, especially word-processing, and approach office temp agencies – their hourly rates are higher than for shop or security work. Working during the holidays is also a good option. University summer holidays can be as long as 14 weeks, giving plenty of scope for some full or part-time work. Most universities also employ: bar and shop work and student tutor and student ambassador schemes are very popular, so encourage your child to get their applications in early.

8 Learn to cook; avoid the takeaway trap

Being a student means eating cheaply, which usually means going self-catering. You can pass on some essential money-saving tips early on: no ready meals; no living on takeaways. Make sure they locate cheap food sources as soon as they arrive (discount supermarkets, street markets and so on). They should also invest in a student cook book.

9 Shop within one's means

That means no designer clothes or sports cars!

10 Get help as soon as things go wrong

This is probably the most important advice. They can book an appointment with one of the College's Finance Advisers who will help them with their budgeting, sort things out with the bank and, if necessary, help them apply for a hardship payment from the Access to Learning Fund.



Studying at home – help your child get the best out of university

More students are choosing to live at home and commute to a local university, and this can make sound financial sense for your son or daughter – but what can you do to make sure that they get the best from their university experience, both academically and socially?

Independence

University is very different from school or college: your child will be treated as an adult – and the apparent lack of school-like discipline might come as a shock to both you and him or her. Instead, self-discipline will be the order of the day, with your son or daughter facing the challenges of meeting coursework deadlines and getting to early morning lectures without reminders or nagging from teachers. It is therefore important that you give your child space to develop their own way of organising their time. Ultimately, getting that project/essay/lab report/exercise in to their tutor on time is your son or daughter's responsibility – the university will not write to you if a deadline is missed or a tutorial

not attended – and you might need to resist the urge to try and manage their academic studies for them. This ability to work independently is one of the key transferable skills which employers will look for in a graduate: it's therefore vital that you allow your child to find their best method, whether it's the 'keeping on top of things and handing work in early' or the 'I can't study until the adrenaline flows' (ie the night before it's due in) approach.

Study space

As well as psychological space, physical space in which to actually study is a good idea, if you can provide it: somewhere quiet and conducive to intellectual activity, ideally with a desk or table for books and a computer. If this is not possible, remember that your child will have access to their university's extensive library and computer suites, which usually have long opening hours during term-time. It is not unusual for students to spend entire evenings in the library, especially if an exam or essay deadline is looming.



Studying at home – help your child get the best out of university (cont)

Social life and extra-curricular activities

Just as universities typically look for non-academic activities in a UCAS application, graduate employers also like to see a rounded individual with evidence of communication skills and other abilities developed outside formal study. It's therefore important that your child takes full advantage of all aspects of university life, not just the academic side – from developing new friendships and joining clubs and societies to taking part in sport and voluntary work or getting involved with the Students' Union. Some students who live at home neglect this side of student life and can be at a disadvantage when applying for jobs, as their CVs can be rather narrow. Students who live at home are not barred from entering the Students' Union! Encourage your son or daughter to take part fully in Freshers' Week at the start of their first year. This means attending the Freshers' Fair and signing up for some clubs, maybe putting their name down for a couple of sports teams. Encourage them to get involved from the start with any departmental social activities and to consider undertaking voluntary work such as helping out in a local school or care home. Encourage them also to make new friends: living at home can mean sticking with their existing social group, and obviously they will want to maintain these friendships – but if they ignore new ones they are missing out on a whole new horizon, not to mention holiday destinations!



Off to university...

It's natural for parents to worry about their children starting university, especially if they are leaving home. Apart from the practical side, from now on your son or daughter is going to be treated as the adult they have become and will have to take responsibility for managing their life. However, there are lots of things you can do to ensure a smooth transition:

Getting there

Students often assume that they just get somehow beamed-up to university, whereas in fact it is likely to be their parents who will drive them there at the start of term. If your child is showing signs of independence and announces that they are going by themselves on National Express, strongly encourage them to re-think this plan. In reality, attempting to transport all their belongings, including duvet and computer, by coach, will be a huge mistake.

What's provided?

Find out what they need to take with them: for example some halls provide bed linen, others don't. They'll need towels too, plus, possibly, mugs, salt and pepper, a tin-opener and tea-towels. The university will send information on what's supplied, so get your child to check.

The next Jamie Oliver?

Make sure they can cook, at least the basics – not just making coffee, although this is, of course, an essential skill. Most university self-catering accommodation is cheaper and the food will probably be healthier than the institutional

cooking on offer in some catered halls. Teach them some of their favourite dishes; make sure they know how to cook pasta, rice and baked potatoes.

Insuring their worldly goods

Insurance is essential: most students now have mobile phones, laptops, iPods... the list is almost endless. If they have a break-in and their things aren't insured, who will re-stock their rooms? Sometimes parents can get their children's belongings added to their own insurance policies.

Do they need a TV licence?

Probably, if they have their own television in their room – check this with the university.



Off to university... (cont)



The mysteries of cleaning

Most halls have a cleaning service, but it is still advisable for students to keep their room, at the very least, tidy enough for a cleaner to get through the door. They might even have to wield a Hoover themselves, so it would be a good idea to know the basics (how to turn it on?). Then there are clothes: many students have never had to do their own washing and ironing (not that the latter features heavily in most students' lives). You have a choice here. You can accept the fact that they will return home halfway through term with a huge bag of washing; or you can show them how to use a washing machine.

Essential equipment

All students feel more secure with certain vital items: coffee, sugar, milk, biscuits. With these they can start out on their social life at university. You should also expect that when they return home for a weekend they will raid your food stores for luxury items.

The goodbye lunch

When dropping them off on their first day at university, resist the temptation to take them out for a goodbye dinner. It's vital that they are around that first evening – that's when friendships are forged and cliques start to form. Take them for lunch instead.

Homesickness

Some students take longer than others to settle in and this stage can last anything from five minutes to several weeks. Some students go home virtually every weekend in their first term, but this usually tails off after that. If they are talking about leaving within the first week persuade them to give it more time – it's a very drastic decision to make based on only a few days' experience. All universities have counselling services, so there is always someone they can talk to if they feel down.

Student-Parent case study:

Alice and Clare Carney

We spoke to recent Queen Mary graduate Alice Carney and her mother Clare about their experiences of Alice starting university



Clare (mother)

What advice did you give Alice?

Don't spend all of your loan on clothes and drink! Try and eat fruit and veg at least once a week! Go to lectures or you'll regret it when it comes to exams. Most importantly, enjoy being a student and make the most of the university experience.

How did you approach the financial side?

We went through how much Alice would have each term and discussed how to budget for rent, food, books, entertainment etc. We also did a trial shopping trip together before Alice left to show how buying in bulk, buying home brands etc can be more cost effective.

How was moving-in day?

A little stressful! It's a difficult balance between wanting to stay and help your child to settle in and leaving them to meet their flatmates. But overall it went reasonably smoothly.

What tips would you pass on to parents whose children are starting university?

Try and encourage your children to learn some basic skills such as cooking and doing their own washing before leaving home. Also encourage them to keep in touch so that you can pick up on any problems they may be having.

Alice

How did you cope with being away from your family?

I'm a real 'home' person so found it a struggle being away from my family at first, but it wasn't as bad as I thought. Everyone's in the same boat and I was so busy and having so much fun during the first few weeks that I wasn't homesick for long!

How much did your parents help you through university?

My parents helped out when I needed it, whether it was proof reading an essay, lending me money towards the end of term when finances were running low or sending the occasional food parcel when my cupboards were bare! They let me be independent but were there when I needed them.

Do you have any advice for students moving away from home?

Don't worry about being homesick as everyone will be feeling the same and you'll be having so much fun you'll soon feel settled. Take lots of home comforts if you're moving into halls to make your room your own and remember to give Mum and Dad a call once in a while to stop them from worrying!

What happens next?

Waiting for decisions from UCAS		October onwards
The student could receive any of the following:		
Conditional Offer	This means that your child will have to achieve certain grades to get a place at this university (for example 300 points or BBB at A-levels, DMM in a BTEC National, etc.).	
Unconditional Offer	This means that your son or daughter has a place, if they want it, with no conditions attached, at this university. This is only likely if s/he already has A-levels or the equivalent.	
Rejection	This means that your child's application has been unsuccessful, and s/he will not be given an offer from this university.	
	Those universities that have made offers might invite your son or daughter to an Open Day to help them make their final choices. Some universities call applicants for interview before making a decision.	
Accept/decline offers	The student needs to choose between their offers – they can accept two: a firm (or first) choice and an insurance (or second) choice; the latter will normally be asking for lower grades/points.	Will vary but generally by the end of April
UCAS extra	If your child has received no offers or has rejected all their offers, s/he can make another application via UCAS extra This system allows applicants to make a single application to one university, then another if that does not produce an offer.	
A-level results day	Judgement day! Make sure your son or daughter is in the UK and not on a Mediterranean beach! They might need to make some important decisions. Has your son or daughter achieved their required grades and met their university offer? If they have, then well done to them! Their first choice university will write to them with enrolment instructions. If they have not met their offer, the student should still contact their first choice university to see whether they will still be accepted; they might, if they have only missed by a grade or two. If conditional offer grades have not been met, and the first choice university withdraws their offer, then the student should contact their insurance choice.	Mid August
Adjustment period	A new feature is a week following A level results when students who have done better than expected can look for the course with higher entry requirements without having to give up either their first or insurance offer.	Mid – late August
Clearing	If the insurance choice grades have also not been met, the insurance choice university may also withdraw their offer. If this is the case, the student is automatically entered into Clearing. Your son or daughter can apply for courses still available at universities across the UK. Full lists of vacancies can be found on the UCAS website – once they find a course which interests them they call the university and ask to be considered. NB YOUR CHILD MUST CALL, NOT YOU!	Results day onwards
Enrolment	The start of your son or daughter's university career. Good Luck!	Late September/early October

Useful contacts and websites

Queen Mary, University of London

The Education Liaison Office

For general enquiries regarding higher education and Queen Mary

email: education-liaison@qmul.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7882 3064

Admissions and Recruitment Office

For all enquiries about admissions to the College

email: admissions@qmul.ac.uk
Tel: 0800 376 1800

Residences Office

For up to date information on our halls of residences, including eligibility, facilities and prices

email: residences@qmul.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7882 5522

Advice and Counselling Service

To find out about the types of support available to Queen Mary students, including support for students with disabilities, plus advice on student finance and budgeting

email: welfare@qmul.ac.uk
Tel: 020 7882 8717

External contacts

UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)

For enquiries about your child's application, plus extensive additional information on higher education in general and a special section for parents

www.ucas.com
Tel: 01242 4680468

directgov

Information on higher education, including student financial support

www.direct.gov.uk

Prospects.ac.uk

A huge amount of information on graduate careers, including the current jobs market, what employers look for in a graduate and a breakdown of career destinations by subject

www.prospects.ac.uk

Unistats

An extensive university and course database, including up to date information on the National Student Survey

www.unistats.direct.gov.uk

Notes



**This guide was written by the Education Liaison
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Pub8513**

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