



For Families and Friends

If a friend or relative is starting to think about further or higher education, particularly if it has been a while since they've left school, you can only help them if you understand some of the decisions and choices that might lie ahead. In this section you can find all the information you need to support family and friends with their choices and applications.

BENEFITS OF FORMAL EDUCATION

Your friend or relative will already have been through years of compulsory schooling, so, why should they consider going on to formal education? This page details the benefits to help your friend or relative decide whether to go on to post-compulsory education.

What is formal education?

Formal education refers to studying for qualifications at further or higher education level. These include first degrees, higher national diplomas at Higher Education level and HNC and HND at Further Education level. Most courses take place in Universities or Further and Higher Education Colleges. Students can choose to study different courses depending on their preferences. A wide-range of courses are on offer, with content and delivery (part-time, full-time, flexibly, even online) varying from institution to institution.

What benefits can formal education offer?

Completing a course of study can bring your friend or relative benefits on many levels. In terms of getting a future job, a qualification can lead to increased earning potential, greater opportunities and a more rewarding career. Most experts would agree that the financial benefits usually far outweigh any costs that are incurred in completing a course. A formal qualification is an absolute

must for some vocational courses, such as medicine, dentistry, chartered engineering and architecture, while some professions such as law or speech therapy require additional postgraduate qualifications. Formal education also develops important transferable skills, such as numeracy, communication and information technology, which can give them an edge in the fast-changing world of employment.

Yet there is far more to formal education than just studying. Universities and Colleges are thriving social and cultural centres, with much to offer students of any age, nationality or social background. Many students would agree with the old cliché that your student days are the best days of your life. Many of the friendships, personal and professional, that are formed at university or college turn out to be lifelong bonds.

Is formal education right for my friend?

Further and Higher education might not be right for everybody, but with so many institutions, offering such a wide range of courses, there's sure to be something that will appeal to them, so it's worth seeing what's out there. Deciding where to go and what to study are the key interlinked questions that need to be answered before applying to university or college. While answering these questions may seem almost impossible at first, once your friend or relative sit down and decide on personal preferences and priorities it becomes easier to research these and narrow down choices.

How can I help?

All colleges and universities have student support services with experienced staff to help students. However, support for their families and friends is not always available. Below are some strategies to help you cope with the experience



- Listen to what the problem is and suggest where to get support
- Encourage them to become familiar with the college/university facilities and courses available
- Remember this may be a major change in their life

APPLYING FOR A COURSE

Most colleges have their own application forms and handle their admissions, which keep the process informal and local, but universities do not. Students applying to university make all their applications on one form and there are sent to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), which then forwards copies to the chosen universities. Admissions then review applications and they may get an offer. If they do not receive an offer, UCAS provides another opportunity to make applications.

See section 3 for further information about types of courses and progression routes.

FINANCE

One of the things they need to consider is how much it will cost to attend a course.

- Students studying non-advanced courses at colleges – National Certificate or National Qualification courses – are usually eligible for a bursary award to help cover the costs of travel, books and living expenses. These are means-tested and relate to their income.
- Students aiming to study at an advanced level must apply to the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) to have their

tuition fees paid. SAAS will pay the student's fees directly to the university or college. To study outside Scotland, students may have to contribute themselves to tuition fees.

- For advanced level courses, there are no "up-front" tuition fees in Scotland. There is instead a Graduate Endowment Fund. This is a one-off payment made after graduation in recognition of the benefits of participating in Higher Education. Graduates can pay either in full or by taking a student loan. Where the Endowment is to be paid by a loan, this will be deducted from earnings once the graduate's income reaches £18,000/year.

Student loan

The main source of financial support for advanced level students is the Student Loan. Loans are paid in 3 instalments through the academic year. Student loans are repayable, and repayments will begin automatically once the student has left college or university and earning £18,000.

See section 4 for further information about funding available.

STUDENT SUPPORT

All institutions provide Student Support Services with advisers on a wide range of problems from finance to counselling. Tutors and lecturers can also provide assistance.

See section 4 for further information about student support.