

## Gateway Qualifications

### QU025532: Preparation for Higher Education

## Unit Introduction:

To get the most out of your Access to HE Diploma you need to have an idea of what you are aiming for. Once you have this you can start to tailor your research, write bespoke applications, and prepare for any potential interviews. This unit helps you begin this process if you have not done so already.

SAMPLE

## LO1: Understand how to identify opportunities for Higher Education

### AC1.1 Use information sources to research Higher Education courses

The first thing you needed to decide prior to starting your Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma was what you would like to study at university/college and how this will link to your chosen career pathway.

**Video by UCAS: Preparing for higher education**

[https://youtu.be/E4jtq\\_DE3EA](https://youtu.be/E4jtq_DE3EA)

#### Did you know?

There are over 37,000 different undergraduate courses offered at over 370 HE providers in the UK.

Your first task was to make some notes about the possible subject areas of interest that you wish to study and what type, of course, would best meet your needs. If you are still undecided about the subject area that is right for you, write a list of all things that you might be interested in and try to theme them to gain some focus. For example, Health and Social Care are often combined together, as are things like Business and Management, and Computing and Business. These types of degrees offer a certain amount of flexibility in terms of progression routes and uses.

Full-time study may not be the best option for you if you are working or have family commitments. Part-time courses will provide you with the flexibility to study around your lifestyle and responsibilities, but your university/college of choice may not offer this option in your chosen field. Therefore, you must keep an open mind when carrying out your research and consider all options.

The UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) website is a valuable source of information for all stages of the HE applications process, including what and where to study: <https://www.ucas.com/>

#### Did you know?

According to The Guardian, the average salary for graduates aged 20-64 is £34,000 compared with £24,000 for non-graduates.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/apr/25/women-with-masters-degrees-paid-less-than-men-without-them-in-england>

### Open days

These are days when potential applicants can explore the university/college campus and facilities. There is also the opportunity to meet staff and students, ask any questions you may have, and explore student life in more detail.



**Caption: “Open days are a great way to find out information about courses and HE establishment.”**

Before you attend any open days, you should get prepared!

1. Through your research, you will be able to compile a shortlist of universities and/or colleges that you would like to visit.
2. By referring to the website of each shortlisted HE provider, you will be able to find out the dates for open days and if they have any activities planned such as campus tours.
3. Consider what you want to find out during an open day and prepare some questions.

Make sure that you take notes from each open day you attend. You should also collect brochures and/or printed information that you can refer to when you start to apply for your chosen degree. If you are unable to attend a particular open day, contact the HE provider to see if they will arrange a visit for you on an alternative date. You could also take a ‘virtual tour’ if their website has this functionality. One other option is to consider attending a Higher Education exhibition where a number of HE providers are in attendance. These are arranged by UCAS and are held across the UK; refer to the UCAS website for more information.

### Researching effectively

It is advisable to review a minimum of five different HE providers. You should look at the range of different courses offered by each in your chosen field of study/career pathway. The purpose of your research is to identify appropriate degree courses and locations, to ensure that you meet the entry requirements for each and that you are confident you have made the right choice for your HE studies. If you were asked to justify your choices, do you have the right information to help you to do so?

- Whilst carrying out your research, you must also keep records of:
- Any websites reviewed, with the date you accessed them.
- Any Admissions Departments that you have contacted and the relevant contact details.
- Who you have given the list of units for your Access To HE programme to and when with contact details.
- Any conversations had with universities and/or colleges, the date and time of the conversation, and contact details of the person talked to.
- Any brochures or course information you have received in the post or by email.
- Any open days attended, including such details as to when, where, who you talked to, etc.

Choosing which HE course to apply for is a big decision and one you need to make only when you have all of the information at your disposal to make an informed choice.

## Multiple Choice Questions for AC1.1

1. Which of the following is not an HE study option? (Select one)
  - a. Part-time
  - b. Gap year
  - c. Distance learning
  - d. Full-time
  
2. Which of the following are useful questions to ask an admissions officer at an HE open day? Select all that apply
  - a. How many credits do I need to achieve at merit or distinction level to fulfil your entry criteria?
  - b. What is your deadline for receipt of UCAS applications?
  - c. Do you require a certain number of units or credits from a particular academic subject as part of your entry criteria?
  - d. How long is your Freshers' week?
  - e. What are the most common destinations for graduates from the degree course that I am applying for?
  
3. Which of the following types of information does the UCAS website provide?
  - a. Choosing HE courses
  - b. Student finance
  - c. Applications process
  - d. Open days and events
  - e. All of the above

### Did you know?

There is a 'career finder' option on the UCAS website which details work opportunities for graduates, including graduate training schemes with a wide range of well-known organisations.

## References and Wider Reading:

**The Complete University Guide.** Features university league tables. Available at:

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/>

**Research Assessment Exercise.** Universities are regularly assessed on the quality of research they carry out. Check to see how your chosen universities rank and find out how research intensive the course is. Available at:

<http://www.rae.ac.uk/>

**Unistats.** Allows comparison of courses at different universities and colleges. Available at:

<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>

**Push Guide.** Advice on alternatives to university. Available at:

<https://www.push.co.uk/>

**The Independent.** The Virgin Guide to British Universities For students, by students. Features: data on teaching quality, employment and drop-out rates, the student 'scene' and student unions. Available at:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/student>