

Parents' Guide

Making the right decisions



Getting started

Going to university is an exciting prospect for everyone involved in the decision because it comes with all sorts of wonderful hopes, dreams and ambitions. It can also create anxiety too, especially if your child is the first one in your family to go. After all, it's a big decision that involves a big commitment, so it needs to be made carefully, from a position of thorough knowledge.

This guide has been specifically created to help you help your child make the best possible decision about which university and degree course is best suited to his or her ambitions. It outlines the important questions you need to ask, who you should talk to, and where. It also provides you with answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about the practicalities of going to university.

Now it may seem a bit daunting to begin with, so the best place to start gathering information is with the basics.

Determine your child's genuine talents and interests.

Although universities specialise in developing knowledge, skills and talents, they need a real foundation on which to build them. So an honest appraisal of your child's genuine talents and interests is essential in helping them to choose the best university and course to enhance them.

Talk to friends or family who are already doing similar things.

Nothing beats talking to someone who's already working or studying in your child's area of interest. This can give you a personal and realistic insight into what to expect.

Talk to careers advisers at school, TAFE and university.

You should talk to the careers advisers at your child's school, at a TAFE or a university, because they're experienced at answering your questions and can provide valuable advice on what's available out there.

Check out the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) Guide.

The UAC Guide will give you a good outline of the various courses provided by universities in NSW and the ACT. All Year 12 school leavers get a UAC Guide from their school (so make sure your child brings it home). If your child isn't a current school leaver you can buy a Guide at participating newsagents. Alternatively, you can call the UAC Infoline on 1900 957 500 or visit www.uac.edu.au and they'll send you one.

Find out about universities offering courses your child might be interested in.

Collect as much information as you can from all the universities that are offering courses in areas that interest your child. Most universities have information centres you can call or email for a brochure, or visit their websites and download the course info.

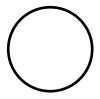
At UWS you can contact our **Course Information Centre** on 1300 897 669 and via email at study@uws.edu.au or visit our website at <http://yourfuture.uws.edu.au>.

Go to Open Days and Information Nights at various universities.

These events are free and are an open invitation for you to visit their campus, talk with their staff to get first hand information about courses and support services, check out their facilities and get a general feel of each place. To find out about these events at UWS, visit myfuture.uws.edu.au/events.

Talk to their future employers.

It makes sense to find out what your child's future employers are looking for in graduates. What sort of qualifications do they need? What kind of work experience should they have? Just as importantly, ask them what the employment and career prospects are like out there, now and in the future?



Where and what to look for

How can I tell which university is the best one for my child?

Universities are as individual and varied as the people who go to them. They have their own unique strengths and weaknesses, personalities, attributes and characteristics. So it's important that you encourage your child to ask the right questions, in order to find the right fit.

Here are some important questions for your child to ask:

What are the courses like and how do they teach them? It's a good idea to compare the specific subjects that are actually taught in their preferred course. How are they delivered? How much, if any, practical work is involved? When does it start and how long does it last?

How good are the facilities? Are they appropriate for the course? Are they up to industry standards? How many are available? When do they get to start using them? Are you able to see them for yourself?

What's the graduate track record like? The success of past graduates is a good indication of what is possible to achieve. Find out about them in university publications such as the UWS University Course Guide and Area of Study brochures.

How much does it cost to study there? It's very important to know the total cost of study in order to budget accurately. This should include all course fees, text books, personal equipment and parking fees.

Do they provide scholarships? Scholarship opportunities and qualifications vary between universities. At UWS we've partnered with business, industry, local government and the community to provide as wide a range of scholarships as possible.

What about overseas study?

Consider the value of international experience. Some universities provide opportunities for students to do part of their course study overseas, or take part in student exchange programs.

Is there support if it's needed? Every student has different needs, at different times. Find out what each university provides in the way of counselling, learning skills assistance, academic preparation programs, bridging classes, disability support, chaplaincy, careers and employment advice and services.

Is it easy to get to? Getting to and from university can add considerable time and cost to your child's day. It's important to know how long it will take to get to campus, and how much it will cost. Take into account train or bus fares, parking fees and road tolls. Or if they need to live on campus, find out how much this will cost.

What is campus life like? How a place looks, feels and behaves can affect the learning experience. Every campus has a different atmosphere, and the social life and facilities can vary greatly, so you should check them out to see which ones are the best learning environment. UWS runs regular guided campus tours for students and parents, so if you'd like to go on one visit myfuture.uws.edu.au/events.

How can I help choose the best course for my child?

The range of course options available is extremely broad, providing hundreds of career paths and professional possibilities. Deciding on the right one can be quite confusing, especially when many young people aren't sure which career path they would like to pursue.

Our research shows that students who aren't personally absorbed in their course are more likely to drop out than those who find their course interesting and relevant to their own career goals.

Given that university courses take between three and six years to complete it's very important that your child chooses a course that is within his or her capabilities and which will sustain their interest over that time.

Encourage them to work it out for themselves. If your child is uncertain about which type of course to do, these are some of the questions you may want to ask, to help narrow down the many options out there.

What kind of career would you like? Do you want to work indoors or outside? Do you want to work in an office or with your hands? Do you want a practical job or one that uses your imagination? Do you want to work with lots of people or independently?

Which subjects do you enjoy doing at school? Do you prefer science or art? Studying people, things or places? Which ones stimulate you the most?

Which subjects are you good at in school? Are you good at it because it's easy or because you really like it? Which ones make you want to try harder and find out more? Which give you the most satisfaction?

What are your favourite hobbies? What things do you really love doing outside of school? What activities or interests make you the happiest? What would you do for nothing if offered?

How to apply

Now we've decided, how do we apply?

It's important that your child applies through the right channels to make sure that his or her application is properly assessed and processed.

All applications for entry to university undergraduate courses must be made through the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC). UAC processes applications on behalf of all participating universities in NSW and the ACT.

Students apply online at www.uac.edu.au.

Year 12 school leavers

When applying for entry into most university courses, Year 12 school leavers are considered on the basis of their ATAR or equivalent. Some courses have additional selection criteria such as an interview, audition or portfolio presentation. Please make sure that your child reads the UAC Guide carefully, as it contains all the additional instructions for these particular courses.

Non-current school leavers and mature age students

If your son or daughter has been out of school for a while and is a 'non-current school leaver' (often referred to as a mature age student) then their application will be based on at least one of the following criteria:

- » secondary school result or TER/ ATAR – if applicable
- » work experience – must be at least one year full-time paid employment
- » studies that have been undertaken since leaving school. For example TAFE or UWSCollege diploma, and any previous university study such as UniTrack – with a minimum of two subjects
- » result in the Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT).

What is the ATAR/UAI?

The **Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR)**, formerly the Universities Admissions Index (UAI), is a ranking order between 0 and 99.95 that provides a measure of a student's overall HSC achievement in relation to that of other students. The ATAR helps universities rank applicants for tertiary selection. The ATAR is a rank, not a mark or percentage.

ATAR cut-offs can differ for different universities, or even different campuses at the same university. The ATAR cut-off is not an indication of the quality of a course or institution or the level of difficulty of a course, it simply reflects the demand and supply for a course. Popular courses tend to have more applicants (which can push up the ATAR cut-offs) so students with higher ATARs are more likely to take up the places. Different courses also allow for varying numbers of students to enter each year. As a result, the larger the course capacity, the lower the ATAR tends to be.

UWS Triple Advantage

The University of Western Sydney gives students from Greater Western Sydney three entry advantages over others, to provide opportunities for local students to realise their higher education dreams.

Advantage 1: UWS Regional Bonus.

If your child currently lives, or is studying Year 12, in the Greater Western Sydney region, your child will automatically 5 point bonus* when he or she applies for a UWS course through the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC).

Advantage 2: UWS Subject Bonus

Bonus* points may also be awarded on the basis of outstanding performance in a nominated range of HSC or IB subjects.

Advantage 3: UWS Early Offer

If your child lives or is studying Year 12 in the Greater Western Sydney region and your child's 2009 ATAR meets or exceeds the 2009 published cut-off for a course they have in their top three preferences, they will be automatically considered for an early, conditional, offer of a place at UWS.

* Bonus points are added automatically, up to a maximum of 10 per applicant.



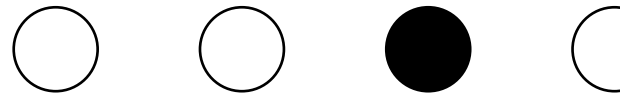
What scholarships are available?

Most universities offer scholarships with eligibility usually based on students' academic achievements. In addition, the Commonwealth Government provides equity scholarships for students experiencing financial hardship, who have a disability or come from a non-English speaking family. The value of these scholarships can range from a \$1000 one-off payment to as much as \$10,000 per year. So it's important that you check out all your child's options because he or she may well be entitled to receive some form of financial support.

At UWS we offer a unique range of scholarships with many different criteria for eligibility. They reflect our strong commitment to providing academic excellence and higher learning opportunity for students in the Greater Western Sydney region. Our scholarships support students who have diverse interests and skills, and who can and do make an active contribution.

UWS works closely with business, industry, and the community to ensure we offer scholarships that meet the real, practical needs of our students, so that they can concentrate more fully on their studies. Our scholarships also provide our students with the opportunity to establish professional relationships while they study, to pave the way for a successful transition from graduate to working professional.

For all the details about UWS Scholarships, including the eligibility requirements, and how to apply for them, please visit <http://myfuture.uws.edu.au/scholarships> or call us on 1300 897 669 for a copy of the scholarships guide.



What options are available for high achieving students?

UWS is leading the way in transforming our brightest minds into tomorrow's leaders with our unique advanced courses for high achieving students.

Our advanced degree courses provide talented students with personal academic mentoring, hands on industry experience, networking opportunities and professional development workshops.

The **Aspire Leadership Program** is a unique professional development and personal enrichment program that's been specifically designed to cultivate and enhance the leadership qualities of our most gifted students. Students are invited to Aspire on the basis of their ATAR score (90 minimum) as well as their personal qualities, leadership potential, motivation and non-academic achievements such as community service. High Achieving students may also be eligible for a UWS scholarship valued at up to \$10,000 per year.

For more information about courses, scholarships and programs for high achieving students, visit myfuture.uws.edu.au/serious.

Can my child live on campus?

Most universities offer some form of student accommodation on campus. It ranges from dormitories and residential halls, fully catered or self-catered shared and single occupancy rooms to townhouses. So it is likely that you'll be able to find accommodation to suit both your child's needs and your budget.

UWS Residential Colleges offer a wide range of high quality, affordable, accommodation options on each campus, that provide your child with the unique opportunity of living in a pleasant, safe and secure, rich learning environment.

For more information about the accommodation options we provide please visit residences.uws.edu.au or www.uwsvillage.com.au.

How much does it cost to study at university?

Most undergraduate places at university have a large part of their cost paid for by the Commonwealth Government, and are referred to as Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP). There is also a Student Contribution that needs to be paid, to make up the balance. Students can apply for assistance in paying their Student Contribution through the Commonwealth Government's Higher Education Loan Program (HECS-HELP).

If a student applies for this option, the amount of HECS-HELP debt they accumulate depends on which band of study (see table of fees) subjects fall into, and how many subjects are studied in the year. If the Student Contribution is paid upfront, students may be eligible for a 20% discount on the contribution.

If you need further information or details about course fees and contributions contact the HECS-HELP enquiry line on 1800 020 108 or visit www.goingtouni.gov.au.

What support services are available for my child?

Most universities understand that for many students the move from high school to university learning is a huge change for them, and so they provide a range of support services to help them make that transition as easily as possible. They also provide on-going programs and services to help students develop their learning skills, deal with personal issues, make friends, find careers and generally make their time at university as enjoyable as possible.

At UWS we're committed to providing all our students with the right support, at the right time, throughout their degree courses. Our many services include:

- » **Careers and Cooperative Education Programs** and services connect students and recent graduates with employers.
- » **University counsellors** offer free and confidential guidance to students wanting to talk through, and change, areas of difficulty, conflict or crisis in their lives.
- » The **UWS disability service** makes sure that students with a disability or chronic health condition get the right help and support they need.
- » The **UWS Student Learning Unit** runs a variety of programs and courses that help develop students' academic literacy, mathematics and study skills.
- » The **UWS Students' Association (UWSSA)** has offices on every campus and provides welfare, representation and advocacy support services for students.
- » **UWSCoconnect** provides organised sporting, recreation and leisure activities across all the UWS campuses to help students mix and socialise, and share their university experience with friends and family.

What if my child doesn't get a place?

Missing out on a university place can be very disappointing, but it's neither the end of the world, nor the end of your child's higher education journey. In fact, for some it can be a blessing in disguise, because it gives them the time to consider more carefully what it is they really want to achieve and how they want to achieve it.

UWSCollege Diploma Courses

UWSCollege Diplomas are the equivalent of a first-year undergraduate university program in the relevant discipline at UWS. So the successful completion of the UWSCollege Diploma course guarantees your child entry into the second year of the relevant UWS degree. For example, the successful completion of the Diploma of Engineering guarantees entry to the second year of either the Bachelor of Engineering or Bachelor of Construction Management at UWS.

UWSCollege offers five Diploma courses in the popular fields of Business and Commerce, Engineering, Information and Communications Technology, Science and Social Science.

Foundation Studies

University Foundation Studies are designed to prepare students for university study, both academically and socially, by offering courses that are an introduction to the knowledge and skills needed for an undergraduate degree at UWS. Successful completion of Foundation Studies, at the required level in a relevant stream, offers guaranteed entry to the first year of the relevant UWS degrees.

UWSCollege offers Foundation Studies in five streams: Arts/Humanities/Education, Nursing, Science/Engineering, Business, and Information Technology/Computing.

More information about Diploma and Foundation Studies programs is available at www.uwscollege.edu.au.

UniTrack

UniTrack is an option for your child if they have previously missed out on a place at university and want to make themselves more competitive next time they apply for university entry. UniTrack gives them the opportunity to enrol in individual subjects from a wide range of degrees at UWS. Some of the units have minimum entry requirements, such as a ATAR or subject pre-requisite.

Your child can enrol into a maximum of two subjects per session (per six months). This is equivalent to studying part-time. UniTrack does not guarantee a place at university, however, successfully completing two or more subjects can improve their chances of getting in. After completion your son or daughter can then apply again for university through the usual UAC process.

TAFE/Vocational Education and Training (Vet) Studies

TAFE provide a wide range of courses that can be used as alternative pathways into university.

UWS has a large number of agreements in place with TAFE and other VET providers that allow graduates from TAFE/VET courses entry to UWS with credit towards their UWS degree.

It may suit your child's abilities and personality far better to study at TAFE or with a private education provider, or to take up an apprenticeship. These are all proven, effective paths to successful working lives, which are always worth considering. After all, you can always apply for university in future years as a 'non-current student leaver' or mature age student.

How will my child be prepared for their career?

At UWS we have many close working relationships with industry, business, government and community project groups in the Greater Western Sydney region. As a result, many of our courses are able to offer students relevant industry placements and real life work experience, so that they graduate with a CV as well as a degree, giving them a real edge when applying for positions.

Many of our students are also offered full time employment before they even graduate because of the working relationships they've established during their industry placements.

Our **Careers and Cooperative Education** services also provide links to industry and internships, as well as access to graduate employers through on-campus careers expos.

Find out firsthand



UWS Events

You can help your child find the right course by getting first hand information from the people who deliver them, by coming to one of our on-campus events:

UWS Open Day – Speak directly with academics and course advisers about the various study options available.

UWS Days – Showcases UWS courses through an interactive workshop program. Students should contact their school careers adviser to register their attendance.

Parent Information Evenings – Designed specifically for parents, these events allow you to speak with university representatives and have all of your university questions answered.

Guided Campus Tours – Discover firsthand the facilities available across UWS's five teaching campuses on a guided campus tour.

- » For more details about these events: call 1300 897 669 or
- » visit <http://future.uws.edu.au/events>.

For more information contact the UWS Course Information Centre on 1300 897 669 or study@uws.edu.au

Find out firsthand from current students about their experiences, have your course information questions answered and request course information mailouts.

myfuture.uws.edu.au
study@uws.edu.au
1300 897 669

Talk the talk

A quick and simple explanation of common university terms

Alternative Pathway/Entry – Another way of gaining admission to a university degree, other than by ATAR. This may include alternative study such as TAFE, UWS College or UniTrack.

Assumed Knowledge – A base level of specific knowledge required before beginning a particular degree course. For example, assumed knowledge for a B Science may be HSC Chemistry. The course will be taught assuming the student has acquired the specific knowledge.

Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) – Formerly the UAI, the ATAR is rank between 0 and 99.95 based on a student's HSC performance against all other HSC students in NSW.

Bachelor degree – A first-level university or undergraduate course requiring three to six years of full-time study, or the part-time equivalent. Bachelor is often abbreviated to B – eg B Science.

Bonus Points – See **Triple Advantage** – Bridging Course Pre-university study programs that help students gain and develop the required skills in certain subject areas, for example Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology. They're usually run in the weeks immediately prior to the beginning of the degree course.

Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) – A university place that is financially subsidised by the Australian government. Most undergraduate degree places are CSP with students paying a contribution that can be deferred using HECS-HELP. For more information visit www.goingtouni.gov.au.

Combined Degree – Two degrees studied simultaneously and usually completed in four to six years of full-time study, or the part-time equivalent. For example, Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws.

Deferment – Students who have been offered a place in a course may choose to delay starting their study for a period, usually 12 months.

Education Access Scheme (EAS) – An admission scheme administered by UAC on behalf of universities for students who've experienced long-term educational disadvantage, such as disrupted schooling, financial hardship, long term medical condition or disability.

Elective Units – Bachelor degrees are typically made up of core study units (compulsory), alternate units (chosen from a pool of approved units) and elective units. Elective units can be taken from any discipline and used to specialise within the chosen degree or to diversify a student's studies. For example a student studying International Studies may specialise in languages but also take on science electives.

HECS-HELP – A government loan scheme that allows Commonwealth Supported students to defer the payment of their contribution amount.

Honours – An additional period of study (usually one year full-time), that is often research-focused, following the completion of a Bachelors degree. Abbreviation: Hons

Lectures, Tutorials and Practicals – Students are required to attend a combination of classes, delivered in different ways, for every subject they're studying in their degree. Lectures are large information sessions attended by everyone enrolled in the subject, usually 1-2 hours in duration. Students are then divided into smaller tutorials (15-30 students) for more interactive, in-depth exploration of subject matter. Some subjects may also require practical classes which are small, hands-on classes in specialised facilities such as anatomy labs, computer rooms and industrial kitchens. Most full-time degrees require between 12 and 20 hours of face-to-face class time per week.

Major and Sub-Major – Most degrees require students to select and complete one major which consists of eight to 12 subjects from one discipline. For example, within a Communications degree a student may choose a major in Advertising or Public Relations. Sub-majors generally consist of four subjects from the one discipline other than the Major.



Postgraduate – May refer to a student continuing or returning to study at university following the completion of an undergraduate degree or the course the student is studying – for example, Masters degree. Abbreviation: PG or Postgrad.

Preferences – Each university course that a student includes on his or her application to UAC, is a preference. Students may have up to nine preferences on their application and should list them in order of personal priority.

Special Tertiary Admissions Test (STAT) – STAT is a multiple choice test administered by UAC that is designed to assess a range of competencies commonly considered important for success in tertiary study. STAT provides applicants the opportunity to prove their competency and competitiveness for admission.

Teaching Session – Most degrees are taught in two sessions – the Autumn session from March to June and the Spring session from July to November. There's also an optional Summer session from December to February, during which students can undertake additional subjects if they're available.



Triple Advantage – A UWS admissions scheme for students studying or living in Greater Western Sydney. Students may be eligible for one or more of the following:

- 1 Regional Bonus Points – automatic five bonus points for UWS courses
- 2 Subject Bonus Points – automatic five to 10 points for excellence in HSC subjects
- 3 Early Offer of Admission

Please note: a maximum of 10 bonus points will be awarded across all bonus point schemes. For more information visit <http://yourfuture.uws.edu.au/tripleadvantage>.

UniTrack – An option for students who've missed out on a place at university and want to become more competitive for university entry next time they apply. It gives them the opportunity to enrol in individual subjects from a wide range of degrees at UWS.

UWSCollege – UWSCollege is an affiliate of UWS and offers Foundation and Diploma courses. Successful completion of a UWSCollege Foundation or Diploma course guarantees entry into UWS degrees.

Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) – The central body that processes applications for admission to most undergraduate degrees at participating universities in NSW and the ACT. For more information visit www.uws.edu.au.

Universities Admission Index – (UAI) See entry for ATAR

Undergraduate – May refer to a student studying at university for the first time, or the course the student is studying – for example Bachelors degree. Abbreviation: UG or Undergrad.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) – Tertiary study tailored towards developing a skill for the workforce. Most VET courses are offered through TAFE or private colleges, and may be used as an alternative pathway to university.



OPEN
DAY

The text 'OPEN DAY' is rendered in large, white, 3D block letters. The letters are set against a dark background with intricate, reddish-brown decorative elements. These elements include a globe, a network of lines and nodes, and several stylized human figures in various poses. The overall aesthetic is modern and academic.

UWS PARRAMATTA CAMPUS
WWW.UWS.EDU.AU/OPENDAY

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