University

A guide for parents

Ace applications
How to unearth passions and find the best course

Wellbeing at uni
Support is there, for whenever your child needs it

Empty nests
It’s time to recall old hobbies and forge new goals
University presents plenty of opportunity for both parents, and be prepared to support and deal with it all as it occurs.

Sarah Jewell

The key to a successful transition, for both parents and their children, is preparation - and that starts with the application process. The best way parents can prepare is to talk with their child about decision-making. By using the application process to ask questions about themselves and their character, they will be more likely to make sound decisions.

Try to anticipate the extra details that will help students make sense of it all. For example, have a discussion with your child about what they are supposed to do, which is the first week.

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How to apply
‘Talk about the subjects they’re passionate about’

An in-depth chat about what your child enjoys will give you a shortlist; then it’s time to ace that application

Lucy Jolin

When Sammie Scott, 18, began the application process, she found that practical support from her parents was key. “As much as university is my own decision, it will affect the rest of my family too,” she says. “I wanted to make sure they were evaluating things in the same way I was. It was really helpful for me to be able to talk to them about everything.”

In theory, the application process is simple. Confirm grades, choose courses and universities, write a personal statement, send the application off and wait. But in practice, the process for most students is far less cut and dried - and parents can play a big part in helping them to the right decision. “Begin discussions with your child early,” advises David Seaton, assistant director, student recruitment and admissions, University of Bedfordshire. “Be supportive, and listen to them.”

Scott knew she wanted to do fine art, English or illustration, and started by researching the courses herself, encouraged by her parents. “Her father, Steve, and I helped with very practical questions: what’s the content of the course; what do other students say about it; does it have a practical or business edge; and what are the outcomes for former students?” says Sammie’s mother, Fiona Scott.

Deborah Green, director of student recruitment at the University of Hull, says this kind of open discussion can be hugely helpful. “Talk about the subjects they are passionate about, what inspires them and what they hope to achieve from further study and their career,” she says. “If they choose a course they love, they are much more likely to be engaged, perform well and enjoy their time. And always bear in mind that university offers subjects and courses they will not have had a chance to study before.”

Sometimes, settling on a course will help to narrow down the choice of university choice - but if not, the next big decision is where to apply. Again, parents can help - but not too much, advises Seaton. “I’ve encountered parents and students at open days where the student is almost not allowed to say anything. The parents are asking all the questions. They may have genuine concerns, but ultimately, it has to be the student’s decision as to where they go and what they study.”

Fiona Scott suggests having some honest conversations about practical issues. “We talked in-depth about where the courses she fancied were - distance from home, practicalities around travel and money, what things would cost and the chances of getting a part-time job - as we are not in a position to provide financial support.”

Seaton advises parents to memorise the timetable for applications, to ensure no deadlines are missed, and Green says they can be hugely helpful when it comes to writing the personal statement. “Encourage your child to spend time on their personal statement, write as many drafts as is needed and proofread the final version,” she says.

Offering support where it’s needed - and backing off when it’s not - can make all the difference. Sammie Scott has now received an unconditional offer to study fine art at the University of Gloucestershire. And while she’s put in the hard work, she’s hugely grateful to her parents for their encouragement. “Because I want to study the arts, it has taken me longer to find the help and advice I needed to put in my application, because I do feel there is a lack of encouragement for people to pursue creative industries,” she says.

“However, it has definitely given me a newfound confidence in my abilities and attitudes. Even if I don’t always get things right, I know that my parents teaching me to never give up is what led to my unconditional university offer.”

Pens in need

How to help your child nail their personal statement

• Get them to pretend there is one place left on the course, and they are competing with other students with the same grades. Why should the university give this final place to them?
Deborah Green, director of student recruitment, University of Hull

• Encourage them to complete a first draft of the personal statement by June of year 12, so they can see where there are gaps and work towards gaining key knowledge or experience.
Sophia Milnes, student recruitment and outreach manager, Leeds Trinity University

• “Proofread the final version. I see lots of statements with grammatical errors, or sentences repeated because they’ve been copied across from somewhere else.”
Tom Kidd, head of admissions, University of Gloucestershire

• “The clue is in the title - it’s about the applicant. We look for reasons why the applicant has chosen this course or pathway. They can have all the Duke of Edinburgh awards in the world, but we need to be assured that they will succeed on this particular course.”
David Seaton, assistant director, student recruitment and admissions, University of Bedfordshire

• “Students often find writing their personal statement tricky. This might be the first time your child has had to write something that really ‘sells’ them. If they’re struggling, take a look at what the universities they’re applying to want. If it feels right, offer to brainstorm some ideas together.”
Hannah Morrish, student choice and HE lead, TheStudentRoom.com
Experience
‘They are more mature than I was. I didn’t always show up to lectures’

Linda Aitchison, a PR company director, studied modern languages at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. Her twin daughters are in their first year of university in Nottingham.

I was excited for my girls when they went to university, but I also miss them very much. We lost their dad when they were just 13, so it was hard when they left, because this was always going to be a time for me and him. But it has also given me more independence and I’m doing things like getting the house sorted.

I’m proud that they’ve worked so hard and done so well. They are more mature than I was back then. I wasn’t so excited to go to university, because everyone says how amazing it is. I was also nervous because I knew Mum would be on her own, so I make sure I stay in touch. It was harder than I expected to make friends at first, so I needed Mum on hand. Then one day I met a girl on my course and someone in my accommodation, and we’re best friends now.

I enjoy how modern my course is. We talk about things like Brexit, and I’m in the feminism society and the politics and international relations society. I also really like that I’m in the city centre and can go out with my friends easily.

Emily Aitchison, 19, is studying politics and international relations at Nottingham Trent University.

I was so excited to go to university, because everyone says how amazing it is. I once lived somewhere with a toilet next to the bed and I doubt that would pass checks now. If I was a student today I think I’d work harder and have a more academically enriching experience.

Emily Aitchison, 19, is studying politics and international relations at Nottingham University.

I doubt that would pass checks now, but it has also changed in positive ways. I had a great time when I was studying. I worked in a bar and partied a lot, so I’m surprised my girls don’t seem to go to parties as much.

I think they are more mature at their age than I was back then. I didn’t always show up to lectures; I was meant to study Italian, but didn’t go. And I wasn’t as involved in activism as they are, because I didn’t have the confidence. Both my daughters are involved in political stuff and I admire them for it. Sometimes I hear them having conversations about politics, economics or international relations and I’m blown away by how knowledgeable they are.

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The stereotype of students - that we never turn up - hasn’t really changed, but I don’t think that’s true any more, because everyone works hard. Everything is also online now - so lecturers post loads of information after lectures, which is great.

I think my mum didn’t have the same worries about money; I have to pay loads more than she did.

University: a guide for parents

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University evolution
Key milestones

- 1990: The Student Loans Company is introduced; in its first year, it provides £180,000 students with an average of £390 to help towards living costs.
- 1992: Polytechnics and colleges of higher education become universities, following the Conservative government’s Education Act. They can now award their own degrees.
- 1994: Modern apprenticeships are introduced.
- 1994: For the first time, more women than men enrol on undergraduate courses.
- 1998: The Labour government introduces tuition fees for the first time. Students are now required to pay up to £1,000 a year for tuition.
- 2006: Universities are allowed to set their own tuition fees and the cap is increased to £3,000 a year.
- 2010: Student protests against a planned hike in tuition fees erupt across the country. As many as 50,000 people are estimated to have attended a march in central London.
- 2012: The tuition fee cap increase of £9,000 a year comes into effect.
- 2016: The government scraps maintenance grants for the poorest students.
- 2016: Britain votes to leave the European Union (EU), leading to concerns over international students, university funding and the Erasmus programme.
- 2018: UK universities report an unexpected rise in applications from international students. Vice-chancellors urge action to stop an estimated 60% fall in EU students post Brexit.
new dynamic. For those studying in halls, it’s important to consider the following:

- **Set goals for yourself**: What will you do and how will you achieve your goals? This can involve planning your week, setting study targets, and exploring extracurricular activities.
- **Respect and consideration**: Treat your housemates with respect and consideration. This includes doing your share of the chores, being considerate of noise levels, and being mindful of personal space.
- **Communication**: Maintain open lines of communication with your housemates. Discuss your expectations and any issues promptly to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Conflict resolution**: Be prepared to handle conflicts when they arise. Seek advice from a mentor, counselor, or experienced student if needed.
- **Self-care**: Take care of your physical and mental health. This includes maintaining a healthy lifestyle, seeking support when needed, and engaging in activities that nourish your well-being.

By following these tips, you can ensure that your time in halls is a positive and enriching experience.
Welfare at university
For students who feel under pressure, help is at hand

UR
iversity suicide epidemic: student mental health a cause for concern

The rise in mental health problems is often attributed to the increasing pressures and stress that come with university life. University students, reports show, are under more pressure than ever before. The number of students suffering from mental health problems has increased from 82 in 2007 to 134 in 2015. These figures do not include the evidence that backs them up – and do some solo exploring too

University for the first time.

Parents need to know how to support their children

Parents need to know how to support their children, and find out about the day’s agenda. “Write any questions down beforehand – we’ll always point you in the right direction to get the best answer or support,” says Emily Oliver, a third-year Psychology PhD student who graduated from the University of Wolverhampton.

Looking for support

Support is available in a number of ways: from talking things over with a fellow student, to speaking to someone in your university’s mental health service.

Mental health awareness at university

The universities will all present Open days before settling on the university town. Louise Honey, a mental health worker at the University of Law, “The better you know someone personally, the more insight they can give you and you can see if they’re trying to study and they’re doing well.”

In an ideal world, I wish our parents didn’t have to worry about what the student life and the amount of study they’re doing is.很大一部分学生都不想一步到位。这是一种很独特的经验，当然也是一部分学生所不希望的。如果你正处在这种情况下，那么你可以考虑以下的建议：

Karen Pachman and her daughter went on numerous open days before settling on a university that felt right

Karen Pachman

Karen Pachman, going to open days with her daughter: "I’ve never been to university and it just wasn’t right for me in any way. I think it’s really important that parents get their own questions answered. You’re the prospectus and student who will be spending the next three plus years in the university."

Students need guidance, but what if they don’t know what it is they’re looking for? (Image: John Participants didn’t have to worry about what the student life and the amount of study they’re doing is.现在，大多数学生都不想一步到位。这是一种很独特的经验，当然也是一部分学生所不希望的。如果你正处在这种情况下，那么你可以考虑以下的建议：
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Empty nests

‘See the positives, revisit old interests’

For some parents, the void left by children going to university is harrowing; others see it as an opportunity.

Kim Thomas

Louise Rodgers’s two children, 25 and 24, flew the nest several years ago – but they’ve come back at various times too. “Going to university is the first part of their journey to independence, and that can go on for quite a while these days,” she says. “It’s been several years of coming and going in a really lovely, delightful way, most of the time.”

Rodgers takes a dim view of empty nest syndrome. “I feel it’s a little bit of a hark back to when women defined themselves by their status as mothers and wives. And I feel that we all have more complex identities than that now – mother is just one of them.”

Not everyone feels the same way. Celia Dodd, author of The Empty Nest, says that for many parents it can be a wrench when children leave for university. Even when younger siblings remain, parents can feel a sense of loss. “I’ve got three and when each one went it was very painful,” she says.

“It’s a person you’re missing, not a concept. It doesn’t matter if you’ve got 14 children or one child, that’s the essence.”

The process of coming to terms with an empty nest can take time, says Dodd. “The first couple of weeks are hard, and it’s good to do things to cheer yourself up. Try not to constantly ring your child but to think about things you really like doing, because you gradually find out the nice things – that you don’t have to be in two places at once, and you can go for a drink after work, and you can meet your friends.” She suggests keeping a list of enjoyable activities, such as reading a good book, or going for a swim, that you can do when you’re feeling low.

You may be tempted to become involved in your child’s new life by monitoring them on social media, but Dodd’s advice is to steer clear. “I don’t think it’s helpful – you need to weave yourself off. You’ve got to get on without them and you’ve got to let them get on without you as well. They will need your support for a long time but, to some extent, you should try not to badger them.”

Some parents, can become “very depressed”, says Sandy Wolson, director of programmes, postgraduate psychology, at Northumbria University, and feel as though they no longer have a sense of purpose. “It’s very important for people in that situation to do some positives – that finally you can revisit some of the interests that you had years ago but put aside when you were raising your children,” she says.

Dodd agrees. A friend saw the empty nest as an opportunity to throw herself into work, leading to a “magnificent promotion”. She herself chose another route, selling the PR company she ran and retraining as a business and personal coach. “It’s not so much about filling the gap as giving space to other things that you haven’t had time to do or to think about or to experience,” she says.

Wolson suggests it’s a good time to think about returning to study yourself. That could be anything from a short local adult education class to a full degree – what better time to take a course in a subject you’ve always loved than when you finally have time to yourself?

For couples, this can be an opportunity to re-evaluate a relationship. Parents are often so used to relating to each other through their children that it’s very common for marriages to break down at this stage. On the other hand, Dodd says, research shows many couple relationships improve when the children leave “because you have more quality time and you can think about each other and focus on each other”.

So it’s not all doom and gloom. Ultimately, says Dodd, you form a different, more adult relationship with your grown-up children. As Rodgers says of her own experience: “What greater pleasure than to see young people mature and do what they were always supposed to do, which is flee the nest? It’s what we should be preparing for.”

Bernadette Moore has seen her three children go off to university, but it was their gap years that proved the sternest tests.

Interview by Kim Thomas

Last October, the youngest of Bernadette Moore’s three children, Angus, left home to study history at the University of Nottingham. When the older two, now 27 and 23, had left home, it felt hard, because they took gap years in south-east Asia, which meant long periods without contact. University was easier. “It wasn’t too bad, because I could always hop on a train and see them, and I was able to call them much more regularly.”

With Angus gone, Moore finally had an empty nest and some time to herself. “I’ve worked freelance since when my children were little and I have devoted my life to bringing them up,” she says. “Everyone was saying, ‘What are you going to do when Angus leaves? You are going to be bereft.’” But although she dreaded it initially, when the time arrived, she found herself ready: “It was a big wrench but I really did enjoy the freedom. I wasn’t sitting around crying.”

To make sure it didn’t hit her too hard, Moore made sure she was always out of the house doing something at 4.30, the time Angus normally came home from school, and they’ve stayed in touch with weekly phone calls. She has also kept herself busy – with a part-time psychotherapy course, which she had already started by the time Angus left, and organising an art exhibition, which involved travelling from her home in London to Manchester. The empty nest finally gave her the opportunity to travel as well. “I went to visit family all over the UK, and I went to see family in France. I honestly did enjoy my new freedom, because I’d had a child in the school system for 25 years.”

On reflection, she says, the anticipation “is far worse than the reality. It’s not that bad at all.” Her advice to parents contemplating an empty nest is to “have things lined up, so you can get on and do them when they’ve actually gone rather than sitting round thinking: ‘What am I going to do now?’” Having spent anxious hours worrying that her children haven’t returned her calls, she also cautions: “Don’t worry if they don’t ring you back. No news is good news.”

Moore is very grateful for the years she spent looking after her children. But she is also very positive about what comes afterwards: “I have enjoyed this new stage of my life, and once you get used to it, it’s quite liberating.”
Loans, grants and bursaries - how uni funding stacks up

What students pay, and the funding support they can get, varies across the UK

Lucy Jolin

University: a guide for parents

Money talk

University funding facts

• Tuition fees for publicly funded universities can be as high as £29,250 a year in Scotland, £9,250 for studying in England, and £7,190 in Northern Ireland and up to £1,875 in Wales.

• Students who have lived in the UK for at least 3 years before their course starts can get a maintenance loan of up to £25,000 a year. Scottish students can get up to £4,355 a year for living in Scotland for three years before their course starts. However, Scottish students wanting to study in England, Wales or Northern Ireland will need to pay the full tuition fee. In the same academic year, students under 25 can also apply for a young students' bursary package: students could get up to £5,750. Students under 25 can also apply for a maintenance loan of up to £9,250 for studying in Scotland, £7,190 in Wales, and £4,355 in England. There are no limits on how much you can pay to Student Finance England, Scotland or Wales.

• Students from Wales will also have to pay standard tuition fees wherever they study in the UK, unless they need to apply to Student Finance Wales for a student loan to cover these. However, Wales Government Loans (WELSH), which gives direct financial support to students after they graduate, will be paid according to where the student will be studying and what their parents’ household income is - so no new loans. Welsh students can apply for a maintenance loan too - also assessed on parental income. Students living in Northern Ireland will only apply to Student Finance Northern Ireland, which pays up to £3,759. Students living in Scotland can apply to Student Finance Scotland, which pays up to £4,355 and pays an additional £205.20. Students from Wales and students aged 25 or over can apply for a young students’ bursary package. Students in Scotland or Northern Ireland still need to pay the full tuition fee wherever they study in the UK.

• The maximum for a student living in England is a maintenance loan of up to £1,875 – which doesn’t have to be paid back. The amount they are eligible for depends on parents’ household income. The contribution of £205.20 is also found that £1,000 a year. Students in Scotland or Northern Ireland who are eligible for the Student Loans Company’s full support package can get up to £8,430. Neither loan will expire after 30 years. It’s estimated 60% of students take out loans, with working behind a bar or in a shop to being a student ambassador. "We would always recommend students use their university job search services to find part-time work as work for an employer is a sign of responsibility and ability. So is volunteering fairs, " says Paul Fennell, head of careers and employment services at Beckett University. "Working and study have become a necessity for most students; it’s a great way to make sure the student lives the experience in a balanced way. "

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(The Sunday Times, 2019)
How to prepare for uni
A few key life lessons to smooth the transition

W hen you send your kids off to university, it’s time to part with all memories of early cooking disasters. Sure, there are likely to still be burned crusts and soggy bottoms in the future, but from now on, those are all part of the learning process.

That’s not to say there aren’t things you can do to ensure your children are as prepared as possible. Here’s your pre-university checklist for everything you can do to help.

Let’s kick off with cooking.

Starting off with a regular supervised meal slot in the family calendar can be helpful. You should take a back seat, but be there to turn down the heat when the vegetables are burning, and to explain why that’s happening. Dispatching them with a recipe book of family favourites with easy-to-follow explanations can also be comforting.

If you can afford it, consider doing a sample shop to help them settle in during the first week, and to give them a template for what a week of well-balanced meals looks like. Teach them where and how to shop – which supermarkets are cheapest for which products, and how to swerve the multipack pizza deals and head to the fresh veg aisle.

After cooking - in happy households at least – comes cleaning. Don’t panic on this front: your children are smart enough to get into university, and so can probably work out a lot themselves. But teaching a few fundamentals, such as separating colours when doing laundry, is a good start. One cheap must-have is a sponge with a handle - ideal for cleaning your own dishes in a sink stuffed full of other people’s dirty crockery.

A pre-university trial month, in which you do the bare minimum to help, will give them a genuine idea of the responsibilities of solo living – but explain that you’ll be on hand once they are away to answer any panicked pleas for advice.

When it comes to budgeting, students have their work cut out for them: in many cities, the maintenance loan will barely cover the cost of rent. Be aware that it’s also means-tested, so the government expects you to subsidise the remainder if it grants your child a lower loan on the basis of your income. If you can afford it, it’s worth thinking about what a reasonable level of support might look like, and outlining that in advance, rather than hand-painting with handouts. Either way, university is about learning to live on a tight budget. Remember that budgeting for an individual may cost more than an individual who is part of a family, since they will lose out on economies of scale.

Time management can be a big challenge for children who have never lived away from their parents for any length of time. Students suddenly lurch from days that were highly structured - waking up to go to school, doing homework, eating meals with the family, lights off at a certain time - into a much freer arrangement, with only themselves to police it. They need to self-motivate to attend lectures and do coursework, cook their own meals, and turn in on time. Teach them the benefits of a routine, even if it’s a loose one. Emphasise the connection between eight hours of high-quality sleep and good mental health, and how to structure their workload and manage stress.

Lastly, teach them to look after themselves. Adjusting to university and independent life isn’t just about the practical details. It’s also about learning that you’re in control of all aspects of your life – including your health. Have an open, realistic conversation with your child about alcohol and drugs, and the connection between abuse and poor mental health. Remind them that it’s normal to feel anxious or lonely, and that settling in will take time. Check out the wellbeing support on offer at the university, and make sure your student child knows how to access it. The first term is long, so an offer to pay for your child to come home for a weekend is a good idea, whether they take you up on it or not.

It was very much Harry’s decision to go to university at all. He said: “I want to go.” And I said: “Are you sure, because ultimately it’s a big part of your life, it’s going to cost a lot of money, and you’re going to have to fund it yourself. I’m not in a situation or willing to be able to fund it.”

We went to an open day at Northumbria University in Newcastle. We sat in a lecture, and looked around some of the accommodation and the library. He did look at other universities, but he was pretty keen on going to live in Newcastle.

I said to him: “If you need any help with the application just let me know.” But he pretty much did it himself - he asked me the odd question. Northumbria was his first choice and he got it.

I took him up on the day. We had a car full of stuff, and I think we’d thought of quite a lot of things. We gave him a box with cutlery and crockery, but brought back some other things we realised we wouldn’t need - other kids had brought pans, for example, so they were doubling up.

We also made sure he at least had a larder full of food at the beginning, although we accepted that after the first few weeks he would probably be eating pot noodles and pizza. We took him to the supermarket, and got him some of the things he wanted, but we also got him vegetables - broccoli and that sort of thing.

We went to the accommodation and met his flatmates. They all seemed like a good bunch. We made sure he knew about things like where the doctors was. We also went to the library, which I thought was brilliant. I just walked around and thought: “I could work in here.” It seemed a really great space.

I told Harry that he should contact me whenever he needed me, but I also said I didn’t want to go three weeks without hearing from him. As it turns out, I probably contacted him more than he contacted me, just to check in and see how it was all going.

We went up in the first term, then my wife and I went up in January, and we went around Newcastle and met his new friends.

I think he felt fairly well prepared, and when I left he seemed pretty chilled. I didn’t really feel he needed me to be around, actually.

I think there’s a pretty good support structure if you do need help, but I think he slotted in fairly well and felt pretty comfortable being there.
Be ready

Results Day is coming

Prepare for Results Day with our Top 10 tips at northumbria.ac.uk/resultsday

Experience

New York is a long way. She was very nervous, naturally.

Robert Thomas, who lives in Penarth, Wales, tells us how he felt when his daughter, Louise, went to study Arabic at Columbia University

She uses Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook so get a good picture of what she’s doing

Beyond Britain

Tips for studying abroad

- Whether they’re jetting off to sun-soaked Barcelona, or preparing to hit the beach in Sydney, your child is about to embark on a truly exciting adventure. To help you prepare, we’ve put together a few pointers.
- Travel and health insurance
  - For customers in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the UK, you’ll need to take out the host university health insurance if you want your child to study. If you’re in any other country, check to see what’s covered. If you’re not covered, you’ll need to sort out your own insurance.
  - If you’re worried about unexpected medical expenses, illness or death, you’ll need travel insurance.
- Visa
  - Read through all the information the host university sends you about visas and make sure your child does too. You can use a service such as the Universities UK Visa Service, so everyone is clear about what they need to do.
- What to do in an emergency
  - Check where the nearest embassy or consulate is, and get the phone number. Don’t forget to tell your bank and insurance company.
- Photos and everything
  - It’s good to take a photograph copy of all your important documents, including your passport. And if you need it for a night out, don’t take your passport, say baker, a student in Paris.
  - “If your phone is your passport, you can’t throw it away. But if you lose your passport, you can’t.”
- Learn a few local phrases
  - Learn a few local phrases. Even if you are fluent in a language, say baker, “it’s my experience, trying to speak the language can make all the difference.”
  - Download apps like Duolingo or Babbel to help.
- Pack lightly and with good bags
  - Your child must keep an eye on weight and be able to fit everything they need into their bag. Be sure that your child knows how to pack for the specific course.
  - “These are more than rafts – keep clear of students on the packed public transport,” Baker adds.

University: a guide for parents

With lower fees and courses taught in English, non-UK unis are a smart option

Here’s a sensible choice

Unis are a smart option taught in English, non-UK unis

While the number of students taught in English in Europe is growing, international students can study in German or in French. In the UK, they’ve been a smart choice for many years, because the qualifications are also held in most undergraduate programmes. While in Spain, the average cost is £13,772 per year. Tuition fees in the US and Australia are higher – and both countries require a student visa. But scholarships are available to student of any nationality.

Students are increasingly keen

Students are increasingly keen to study abroad – information available to a student depends on the host university. And that challenge between two and 12 months, usually to Europe and beyond last for

Erasmus students get to enjoy a placement of months or a year abroad

Stock photography ▲ Erasmus students get to enjoy a placement of months or a year abroad

The scope of Erasmus placements available to a student depends on their British university’s links to universities abroad – information that is normally available on each website. Students should consider the mix of different universities and destinations and look into the course they would study. “Don’t get too distracted by the big postcards attractions,” says Randall. “You’ve got to look at the whole class experience, like the course and accommodation.”

If your son or daughter is about to study abroad, says Randall, “you’ve got to work through this with them.”

“Give them the opportunity to do a leap of faith for your son or daughter,” says Katrien de Moor, the health office at the University of East Anglia. “You’ll be more able to understand the whole experience’ “You’ll be more able to understand the challenges,” she says.

Robert Thomas and his daughter, Louise, at Columbia University

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