



# TRANSITIONS PACK

This pack is designed to support learners, parents and carers in understanding transitions into GCSE, Further Education and Higher Education studies.



# PREPARING FOR GCSE STUDY

**This guide provides young people and their parents or carers with a timeline of what to expect as GCSE options approach, and what you can do to make sure you make the best choices for you!**

Transitioning into GCSE study is a huge step in any young person's life. As you move into GCSE study you will begin to develop more independence, study skills and tons of new skills from your subjects. These qualifications are a springboard into the rest of your life, and will open so many doors!

## SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER

### **Students:**

GCSEs are your first chance to choose what you want to learn more about, as well as continuing the subjects that will help you later on in life.

#### **At this stage, think about:**

- Subjects you enjoy studying and why
- Your future goals and whether you need specific subjects to get you there
- Talk to your school's careers adviser, your teachers and your family members, too!

**Parents and Carers:**

GCSE choices are the first chance for the young person in your life to have a say in what they learn and how they learn it. Right now having conversations about their future is helpful in getting them to think about their long term plans and how their GCSE options could fit into their pathway.

**At this stage you can:**

- Ask what subjects they enjoy? How are they taught? Some young people prefer BTECs as they are more practical based, for example.
- Begin having conversations with teachers to understand what options are available and whether they believe your young person may be drawn to any.

# JANUARY - FEBRUARY

**Students:**

Around this time Parent Evenings and events to pick your options will take place. These are what you will study for two years and sit exams for, so keep that in mind! Some will be core subjects you have to take and the rest will be up to you and your school.

**At this stage, think about:**

- Your future career goals, and what subjects and skills will help you get there.
- What you love to study and how you like to do it - talk to teachers about how the GCSE is taught and make sure it's the right fit for you.

**Parents and Carers:**

You will be invited to a Parent Evening or options event that will allow you to talk to teachers with your young person there and help them decide on what they want to study until sixth form or college.

**At this stage you can:**

- If you have any concerns, book in a meeting with your young person's form tutor, head of year or pastoral support to talk to them with or without your young person present.
- Go through any handouts together. You may want to research before any events, so you have questions ready to ask teachers about the course or your young person.

# MARCH - APRIL

Schools may put on presentations, mock lessons and provide additional information. This is usually where your final decision is required.

**At this stage, think about:**

- Meeting with a careers adviser if you haven't already!

# MAY - JUNE

Course numbers are finalised, the curriculum is created and choices are confirmed. At the end of the process you should have options that you are comfortable with. If not, speak to your school staff.

# TIPS

**Being organised:**

Being organised is really going to matter during the KS4 years and a good system will be key from the start. Remember, all of what you study will matter and could appear in exams!

**Top tips:**

- Clear note-taking: this will help with understanding and, later, your revision.
- A system for you to store books, notes and written work. Folders are great!
- A clear, quiet space to study with the right equipment.
- A clear timetable for homework and, later, revision. Include breaks!

**Managing stress:**

As work gets more intense and exams loom feelings of stress can become problematic. Being able to manage your stress before that happens is key, and will help you outside of school too!

**Top tips:**

- Regular exercise. This can be a walk, yoga, playing football - anything that gets your body moving!
- Sleep on a regular schedule is crucial. Getting into a routine will help you manage your stress and your body will thank you, too!
- A healthy diet is important anyway, but even more so when we're stressed. Go for balance! Enjoy that fast food, but make sure you're drinking plenty of water and getting a balanced diet in outside of that, too.





# TRANSITIONING INTO FURTHER EDUCATION

**Here we will take you through, step by step, on what to do in the year before you move into Further Education. We will let you know what you should be doing during this time and how best to prepare.**

This resource will also explain to any parents or carers reading what you can expect and how you can support the young person in your life as they move into Further Education.

Research into your next steps from Year 11 onto College can start as early as Year 9 options. Of course, what you have picked for GCSE may impact what you study at College or Sixth Form, however it doesn't have to be restrictive.

You may look to start on a Level 2 qualification, like GCSEs, or straight onto a Level 3 qualification. You may have mostly heard of A Levels, but there are tons more. They each cater to different learning styles and preferences, so be sure to research what's on offer!

# SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER



## Students:

Now is the time to think about what subjects you are interested in. You can visit Sixth Form or College websites and download their prospectuses on any device for you to browse in your own time. You will most likely want to look at different Colleges within travel distance and visit their open days - check out the events page on our website to see when these are!

Have a think about your future career goals and consider if these institutions offer courses and qualifications that will allow you to follow your chosen pathway. You may be thinking of focusing on a subject that provides work experience as part of the course. Have a look at these opportunities – often they can be the deciding factor.

Here's some questions to guide your decision making and research:

- How far am I willing to travel?
- What am I good at?
- What am I interested in?
- What grades do I need?
- Does this course offer further opportunities to study?

## Parents and Carers:

Colleges will often host an Open Day during October or November. This will give you and your young person an opportunity to have a look around the college or sixth form campus. Besides talking to tutors and seeing the facilities, this could also be a fantastic opportunity to talk to a careers adviser from the institution to understand the pathways prospective students could be taking.

We'd also recommend looking at our pathways resources; there are so many ways for young people to achieve their goals and good research around what is on offer to them allows them to make a fully informed decision. Do you feel confident answering questions about colleges and the future, and do you know where to access advice for young people in your life? If you're unsure of either, here's some great resources to keep up to date with the current landscape that young people are navigating.

- **Parental Guidance from the Careers Writers Association**
- **Key Stage 4 Resources - Careers and Enterprise Company**
- **BBC Bitesize - Post 16: What next?**

# DECEMBER - JANUARY

## Students:

Applications will usually be open for the Autumn term until the new year. Even if the college of your choice has a longer time frame for applications, securing your place on the course you want to do is important. You'll be busy from January preparing for your GCSEs so it's best to get a place sorted so that the pressure is off. We're not advising you rush it!

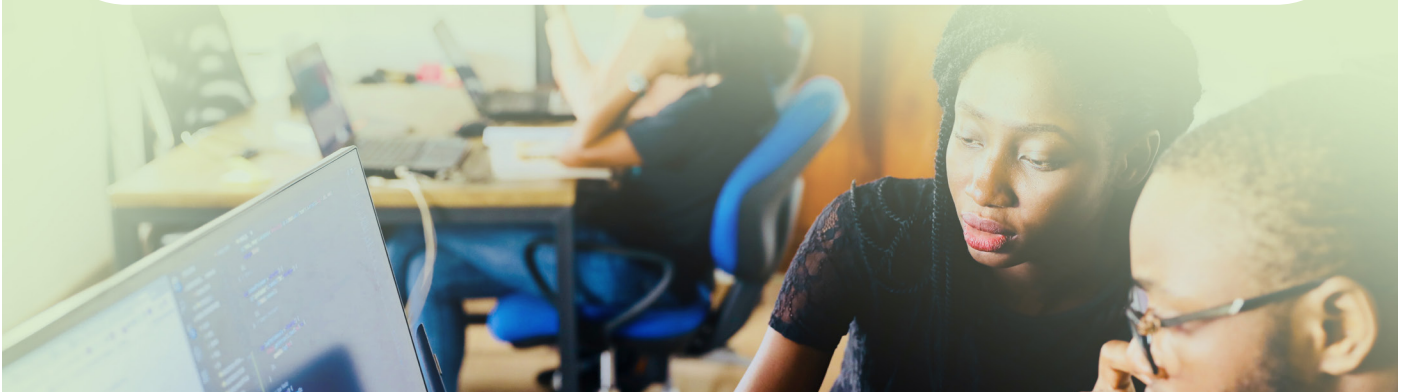
## Parents and Carers:

This can be a very stressful time and that's without even getting to Christmas! Young people will need a lot of support as they juggle potential mock exams, application deadlines and revision. Information, advice and guidance is available through Shaping Futures website, your school and the college they are applying to. Just because they are not a student at the college yet, doesn't mean that they won't help to answer your questions.

## Parents, Carers and Students:

It's important to consider any support you may need, especially if you're joining a new College or Sixth Form. Here's some questions you may want to consider together:

- Do you require additional support for disabilities, mental health concerns, being a young carer or care experienced student, financial support or similar?
- Do you require financial support for travel or equipment?
- Be sure to chat to the Sixth Form or College about your needs before you begin your studies so they can make reasonable adjustments and support you best.
- Have you looked around the college yet and tried a trial run of public transport to attend?
- Do you feel comfortable on the campus, can you see yourself studying there?



# SUMMER

When you finish your GCSE exams, it's time to relax a bit. Hopefully, the hard work is over and you can rest up before beginning your Further Education journey in Autumn. Here's a few things to keep in mind as your start date approaches:

- Do you know your date of enrolment? (Enrolment will usually take place online over the summer, so keep an eye on your email! Enrolment is **not** your starting date).
- If necessary, have you contacted the college with any Additional Learning Support you require?
- Do you know the start date for your course?
- If starting a vocational course, are there any materials you'll need to begin?
- Have you considered any financial support you may need, and spoke to the sixth form or college about it?

If any feelings of stress or anxiety arise know that you won't be alone! This is a big change for you, and it's natural to have mixed feelings around it. What's important to consider is why these feelings are there and speak to people you trust about them. Wherever you choose to go there will be a pastoral team ready to support you, even before you have officially started your course!

Use your summer break as time to recharge and enjoy yourself! You may want to visit the campus or try out your journey there and back a few times to get more comfortable, or check out some readings focused on your subject areas.

As cliché as it sounds, lots of other people will be new to the course and institution and feel the same as you! This is a great time for you to dive deeper into subjects you enjoy, experience new things and meet new people. If these feelings are overwhelming please talk to somebody you trust and get in touch with your Sixth Form or College so they can support you in tackling these feelings!

# SEPTEMBER

The year begins! Take advantage of all the opportunities available to you, and enjoy diving deeper into the subject areas you have chosen. Remember, there's plenty of support available to you in Sixth Form or College and we at Shaping Futures are here to support you, too!





# TRANSITIONING FROM FURTHER EDUCATION

This resource will walk you through what you can do throughout your time in further education to make the transition into higher education or employment less stressful. It will look at what you should be doing and when you should be doing it, as well as some guidance for parents or carers looking to support young people throughout this.

## Parents and Carers:

This can be a difficult time for learners. They have more independence as well as a bigger workload despite studying fewer subjects. Supporting them in developing good organisation skills is crucial; teachers and tutors will take a step back and expect them to get work in on time without hassle and to let them know when they need support.

This guide focuses on those timelines and what learners should be doing. We would recommend having honest conversations with them about their future goals with support from teaching staff and careers advisers, helping them research potential careers and reading through this guide so you know what is going on in their academic lives.

If you're unsure of university, student finance applications or support available within higher education we would recommend checking out these handy videos by clicking their titles or going to the **Shaping Futures youtube**:

- **Parents and Carers Q&A**
- **Student Finance Made Simple for Parents & Carers**
- **University is Supportive**

# YEAR 12

## SEPTEMBER - JANUARY

During this time you will be settling into your studies, working towards course-specific knowledge and skills. You will have chosen options that align with your career or higher education goals and be studying them in more depth than anything you have before. You will also have a lot more independence - use it for good!

### At this stage, think about:

- Your next steps after further education. Meet with a careers adviser to consider your future goals and the best way for you to achieve them.
- Extra curriculums that may benefit you. This could be a club or volunteering. Whether you're going to university or into employment you will want to build up experience.
- If you're considering higher education you should be researching courses and potential institutions. Check out our resources page for some support on researching this, or **speak to a member of our team here**.
- Take any opportunities you can to boost your CV and personal statement. There are lots of programmes, some of which have eligibility requirements, from organisations such as the **Social Mobility Foundation** and **NCS**.
- Research university outreach programmes - you may be eligible and they can offer support, visits, residentials, bursaries and so much more!

## JANUARY - JUNE

### At this stage, think about:

- Summer programmes! There are tons of programmes for you to take part in which add to your CV and personal statement and develop your skills like **NCS**.
- Universities will also be hosting residentials which let you spend time on campus and even in their accommodation, taking part in activities and meeting new people.
- Look at open days at potential universities or colleges for your higher education study. It may seem too soon, but visiting early allows you plenty of time to choose and doesn't intrude on next year's studies.
- If university is your next goal you will want to consider your personal statement, **especially if you are applying to Oxford, Cambridge or courses such as medicine, veterinary medicine or science and dentistry**. Their deadlines are earlier than other courses! Check out the **UCAS website** to check deadlines.

# YEAR 13

## SEPTEMBER – JANUARY

### Going into higher education? Read this!

Most institutions and courses require you to apply through UCAS, which includes a personal statement. Check out our personal statement guide on our resource page to get started, or chat to a member of our team.

#### Key information:

- If you are applying for Oxford, Cambridge or courses in medicine, veterinary medicine and science, or dentistry your application needs to be in around early October otherwise you will not be considered.
- Other applications have a deadline of mid-January, but getting your personal statement done early allows you to focus on your studies.
- Check the [UCAS site](#) for specific dates.

### On the fence? Read this!

We would always advise applying anyway, as you still have the support of your teaching staff and your application will be paid for by your school or college. Meet with a careers adviser and talk through your options!

#### Key information:

- There are lots of courses and lots of institutions, don't make your decision after one open day or word of mouth. Where and what you study depends on you; just because it wasn't a good fit for somebody else doesn't make it true for you.
- Consider options outside of a degree. We have lots on our website, and apprenticeships are available.

### Not going into Higher Education? Read this!

If we can't tempt you, that's okay! It's always helpful to have a higher education qualification, but they will always be there for you to come back to if you want to (they help with moving up the career ladder, so you may need one in the future!).

#### Key information:

- The apprenticeship application process is long. If you're considering this route meet with a careers adviser and get your application in as soon as you can. But, remember, you **cannot** begin them until you have finished school or college so keep an eye on starting dates.
- Your CV needs creating or brushing up! Consider volunteer opportunities, too.

# YEAR 13

## JANUARY - MAY

### Going into higher education? Read this!

Student finance time! You will have to apply through Student Finance England to ensure your tuition costs are covered and whatever maintenance loan you're entitled to is sent to you on time. If you have a disability you will also want to fill out the Disabled Student's Allowance application. If you need extra support around student finance, chat to us.

#### UCAS Applications:

You'll receive emails from UCAS telling you 'the status of your application has changed'. You need to log into UCAS Track and check what the conditions are. Sometimes you'll get an offer a week after you've submitted your form; other times you'll have to wait months.

#### Key information:

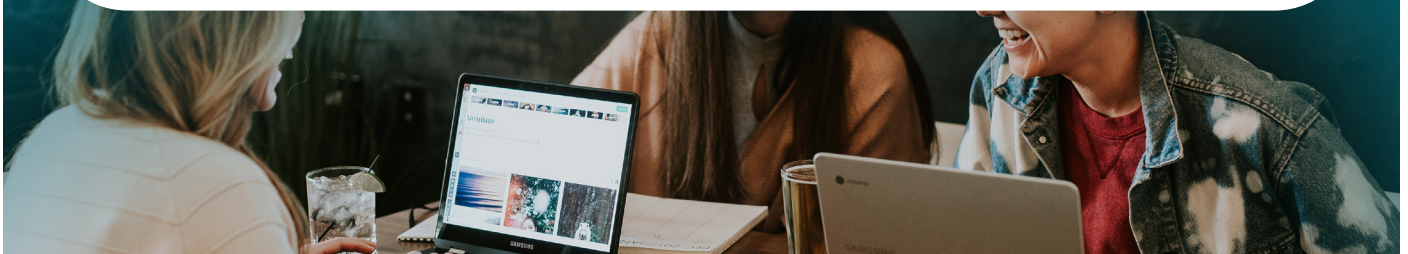
- Consider your offers! Each offer may have different entry requirements, and you will be expected to pick your firm offer (top choice) and your insurance offer (second choice). Most people will put their favourite (and highest entry requirements) as their firm.
- You can apply for accommodation through the institution once you have made them your firm offer.
- You may be invited in for an applicant day to see the campus and tutors again with less people around. This can be useful in deciding which place is best for you!

### Not going into Higher Education? Read this!

You may have put in applications or you may be firm in your decision. Whatever the answer is, here's some of our tips.

#### Key information:

- You may want to apply for college courses in areas of interest. Go to open days and speak to tutors to find the best fit for you!
- Get a good idea of the job market. Research, research, research!
- Create CVs for specific job areas. You will want to highlight different skills depending on the job role to show them you're the best fit.
- Another reminder - apprenticeships take a while to get into, so keep applying!





# YEAR 13

## MAY - JULY

It's exam time! You may have study leave or still be expected to be in school or college. Whatever it is you will be using all those revision skills to prepare and do your best in your exams.

At the beginning of July UCAS Clearing Opens. Clearing is how unis and colleges fill any places they still have on their courses. From early July to October, you can apply for a course using Clearing if you're not already holding an offer from a university or college, and the course still has places.

## AUGUST - RESULTS DAY

If your offers depend on your grades you will receive information from your institution on whether they have confirmed your place to study. Fingers crossed they are! But don't worry, if you miss out they may accept you anyway or you could get your second choice institution or even an alternative offer from the institution on a different course. It is up to you whether you accept or decline this.

### Key information:

- Clearing is still open, and all those courses with empty spots are up. You can search through clearing and decide if any are right for you, or begin calling institutions to see if they have places they haven't yet put online.
- If your place is confirmed you will be told by UCAS track and your chosen institution will send you details on what to do next.
- You may need to apply for accommodation if you haven't already or your institution has changed.



It may be helpful to join Facebook groups for your institution or course to meet new people and get in touch with people in your accommodation.

If you're moving away, make sure to buy and pack essentials (speak to your flatmates about what they're bringing, you don't need six pans) as well as things for your room i.e. bedding, decorations, electronics. Don't overpack, though! Have a look online and figure out what you need.



# SHAPING FUTURES

The Merseyside Collaborative  
Outreach Programme



## Contact us

You can contact us by  
email [admin@shaping-  
futures.info](mailto:admin@shaping-futures.info) or [www.shaping-  
futures.org.uk](http://www.shaping-futures.org.uk)

## Chat to us!

Got questions? **Click here**  
chat to one of our team,  
we are here to help.



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