PARENTS’ GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY
WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is for parents who would like to know more about the educational options available to their son or daughter after they leave school.

It is aimed particularly at parents who would like to know more about university education in New South Wales.

This book will be helpful if:
> you have a son or daughter in Years 9, 10, 11 or 12*
> your son/daughter is interested in university (or other study and/or training when they leave school) and you would like to help them make the right choice
> you don’t know much about the Australian higher education system
> you come from a non-English speaking background
> you are worried about whether you can afford to send your son/daughter to university.

* The information in this book relates specifically to the education system in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. School qualifications and university application processes are different in other states.
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PART 1

SCHOOL STUDY AND POST-SCHOOL OPTIONS
IS IT IMPORTANT TO STUDY BEYOND YEAR 10?

The more education your son or daughter can get, the better their future employment prospects will be.

Whether or not they attend university straight away, research shows that if they study beyond Year 10, young people are more likely to find employment, more likely to earn a higher salary and more likely to achieve promotions and pay rises.

If your son/daughter thinks they would like to go to university straight after Year 12, they will need to complete the Higher School Certificate (HSC) to obtain a Universities Admissions Index (UAI). [See ‘What is a UAI?’ page 36.]

MEET REBECCA

Rebecca is about to finish a UTS Bachelor of Arts in Communication (Visual Design). “My parents both left school in year 10 ... and they’ve always said to me “we regret not going and furthering our studies to Year 12 because now we’re limited in what we can earn”. It’s always been hard for them to get jobs because everyone’s more qualified than them and it’s so competitive. They didn’t push me, but they said “your education is one of the most important things ever”. They’re really proud of me.”
WHAT OPTIONS ARE THERE AFTER YEAR 10?

When your son/daughter reaches 16 years of age, they are legally permitted to leave school.

At this point they need to decide whether they want to continue their education. If they do, there are a number of options. They can:

> complete the HSC (Years 11 and 12) at school or at TAFE (See ‘Vocational Education and Training (VET)’, page 9)
> take some TAFE subjects as part of the HSC while still enrolled at school
> leave school to begin vocational education, for example at TAFE or a private college
> leave school to take a New Apprenticeship or cadetship (see page 9)
> leave school to begin work.

Making this decision can be time-consuming. As early as Years 9 and 10, encourage your son/daughter to start thinking about what they will do when they leave school.

Even if your son/daughter is planning to complete Years 11 and 12, exploring their options earlier will help them choose HSC subjects and prepare for leaving school.
WHAT OPTIONS ARE THERE AFTER YEAR 12?

UNIVERSITY STUDY
University degrees are internationally recognised professional qualifications. First-level university degrees are known as ‘undergraduate degrees’, ‘bachelor’s degrees’, ‘degree programs’ or simply ‘courses’.

Different universities offer different courses, and each university has its own way of teaching and its own specialist areas.

The entry requirements for an undergraduate degree are:
> completion of Year 12 HSC with a UAI above a specified level (see ‘What is a UAI?’ page 36), or
> completion of a pre-university pathway course or diploma, for example through TAFE or a private college, or
> several years of relevant work experience.

If you would like to see what courses are available, your local library and your son/daughter’s school will have copies of university guides and prospectuses.

The benefits of a degree include:
> access to professions which require a degree, for example teaching, science, architecture, medicine, law or some branches of engineering
> the opportunity to work overseas, because university degrees are internationally recognised
> better opportunities and pay in professions where a degree is an advantage, for example journalism, IT, nursing, creative arts, business, accounting
> better employment prospects from developing skills such as leadership, teamwork, research and communication which are very attractive to employers
> the opportunity to pursue a career as a researcher or university academic
> the opportunity to study overseas; most universities offer exchange schemes or international programs, such as International Studies at UTS which involves overseas study in another language.
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)
Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses are offered by TAFE and some private colleges. These courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications.

The entry requirement for TAFE Certificate and Diploma courses is:
> completion of the School Certificate (Year 10), or
> completion of the HSC (Year 12), or
> relevant work experience.

If you would like to see what qualifications TAFE offers, pick up a TAFE prospectus from your local library, from your son/daughter’s school or from any TAFE college.

You can also view courses and other useful information online at www.tafensw.edu.au

The benefits of vocational qualifications are:
> improved employment opportunities and pay in any career path
> practical, hands-on skills and knowledge
> national certification in a wide range of areas, such as workplace training and assessment, hairdressing, nursing, building trades, agriculture, accountancy
> flexibility and affordability – courses can be shorter and less expensive than university degrees.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND CADETSHIPS
Your son/daughter might also consider an apprenticeship, which combines practical work experience with a nationally recognised qualification (often through TAFE). Apprenticeships are advertised in newspaper and online job listings and through Centrelink offices.

Many national organisations and large companies offer cadetships (combined employment and training programs) to school leavers, for example:
> the defence forces
> police and emergency services
> law firms
> accounting firms
> airlines.
WHAT DO STUDENTS DO WHEN THEY LEAVE SCHOOL?

Research about school students has shown that straight after finishing the HSC, approximately:

- 30 out of 100 will go to university
- 18 out of 100 will go to work part-time or casually
- 14 out of 100 will take a VET Certificate IV or higher
- 12 out of 100 will go to work full time
- 9 out of 100 will take a VET Certificate III or lower
- 7 out of 100 will become apprentices
- 5 out of 100 will become trainees, and
- 5 out of 100 will become unemployed.

Reference: A survey of 6000 New South Wales students conducted by the University of Melbourne Department of Education 2004.
HOW CAN I HELP MY SON/DAUGHTER CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION?

The options your son/daughter will pursue after school are likely to be based on what jobs and careers they are considering, which in turn should be guided by the things they are interested in and good at.

For example, if your son/daughter is interested in chemistry and likes to help people, pharmacy might be a good career option. They may consider doing work experience in the local pharmacy, a TAFE Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy, and/or a degree in Pharmacology or Pharmacy.

Students do not need to have a career in mind when they finish school. Many people switch between different fields of study, different jobs and even a range of careers throughout life.

Here are some ways you can help your son/daughter to choose:

> Encourage them to keep an open mind – particularly when they are looking at jobs which may once have been considered suitable only for men, or only for women. Today, there are plenty of male nurses, and plenty of female engineers!

> Encourage them to talk to you and other people about what they might like to do, and support them in the choices they make.

> Suggest that they make a list of the study areas and activities they are interested in and good at, both at school and outside school.

> Encourage them to explore what jobs and careers connect with their interests and abilities (see ‘Where to find more information’ on page 18 for useful guides).

> Encourage them to seek work experience or undertake volunteer work in areas they are interested in. You can help by contacting friends and family about work experience their employers might offer.

> Suggest they discuss the jobs and careers they are interested in with the school Careers Adviser and with friends or relatives in those careers or jobs.

> Suggest they look at the job ads in newspapers to see what qualifications are required for the jobs that they are interested in.

> Suggest that they look at the courses offered in the study areas they are interested in (the UAC Guide will help with this search, particularly the online database www.uac.edu.au).
WHICH HSC SUBJECTS SHOULD MY SON/DAUGHTER STUDY?

When your son or daughter is choosing HSC subjects it’s important that they choose subjects they enjoy and can succeed in. This will help them achieve the highest UAI they can (see ‘What is a UAI?’ page 36).

Some TAFE courses can also be studied as part of the HSC and can count towards your son/daughter’s UAI.

WHICH SUBJECTS WILL PREPARE THEM FOR UNIVERSITY?

Most universities will recommend which HSC subjects your son/daughter should take to help them understand their chosen course better. They may also need to study a specific HSC subject to be considered for a place in some courses. These subjects are called ‘pre-requisites’ or ‘assumed knowledge’.

University handbooks and course guides will list what subjects are recommended for each course.

Some universities also offer UAI ‘bonus points’ to students who have performed well in subjects related to a specific degree.

Your son/daughter may still be able to get into the course without the recommended subjects, but may have to work harder to catch up.

HELP ON HSC SUBJECTS FOR UNIVERSITY

Read University Entry Requirements – Year 10 booklet, published by the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC). This publication is available through your son/daughter’s school, direct from UAC or through the UAC website: www.uac.edu.au
CAN MY SON/DAUGHTER GAIN SEVERAL QUALIFICATIONS?

Yes. Many people hold more than one qualification from more than one education provider. Some qualifications provide general skills; others are more specialised, practical or advanced.

Having a range of qualifications makes your son/daughter eligible to apply for more jobs. When they enter the workforce, their career and salary prospects will also be improved if they keep their skills up-to-date by taking short courses.

Some TAFE qualifications are also recognised as ‘prior learning’ by universities. In other words, if your son/daughter completes a TAFE qualification before applying to university, they will not need to study university subjects that are similar to subjects they have already passed at TAFE. This will shorten their degree and reduce the cost of university study.

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION: www.year12whatnext.gov.au and publications from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (formerly the Department of Education, Science and Training)
TAFE: www.tafensw.edu.au or your local TAFE campus
UNIVERSITIES: www.uac.edu.au or the UAC Guide and university prospectuses (from the library or school)
APPRENTICESHIPS: www.newapprenticeships.gov.au or your local Centrelink office
MEET FRANK

Frank is a UTS student who chose to go to TAFE before university. After successfully completing junior high school, Frank lost motivation in Years 11 and 12 and got bored with studying. He got a lower UAI than he wanted, but he kept his options open by applying directly to TAFE as well as applying for university through UAC. He’d always been interested in computers, so he listed IT courses as his preferences. Frank was accepted into a Certificate II in IT at TAFE. After successfully completing one semester he transferred to a different TAFE closer to the city to complete his Certificate IV. He eventually earned a TAFE Diploma, which granted him entry into the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology at UTS. During his degree he was able to specialise in his areas of interest: computer networking and internetworking. Frank is now working for an international communications and IT company.
IS IT POSSIBLE TO WORK AND STUDY AT THE SAME TIME?

Yes. Students may not need to be in the classroom all day every day, even if they are studying full-time.

Research shows that about two-thirds of TAFE students work full-time and almost half of all university students work part-time.

Many university and TAFE courses have flexible timetables or are offered as evening classes, so your son/daughter can work while studying.

Working – either as a paid employee or a volunteer – before or during study will improve your son/daughter’s career prospects by:

> building their confidence
> helping them develop basic or specialist work skills
> providing experiences that will help them make career decisions
> helping them get employer references and work experience to list on their resumé.
CAN MY SON/DAUGHTER RETURN TO EDUCATION LATER?

Yes. Many students have a break for a year or two after leaving school and then go on to study at university or TAFE (see Vocational Education and Training (VET), page 9).

Many people continue to work part-time when they return to study. In fact if your son/daughter is unsure about what direction to take after school, joining the workforce for a few years can be a positive step.

Getting a job can benefit your son/daughter by:
> helping them find out what they want to do and, just as importantly, rule out what they don’t want to do
> helping them to mature and become independent
> allowing them to save some money to pay for further study.
MEET JO

Jo left school half way through Year 11. She did retail and secretarial work for a few years and then returned to college to study art. She dropped out after one term and went back to work for another year, then went back to college and completed a Diploma in graphic design. Jo decided she’d like to go to university, but without high school qualifications she wasn’t eligible. She completed a university pathway course and was accepted into an English literature degree. She graduated with honours and went on to complete a Master’s degree. Jo has worked for the last six years as a successful freelance writer and editor and has recently updated her skills with a Certificate in Editing and Publishing at UTS. Jo wrote this book.
The following government publications can help you discuss career options with your son/daughter:

> Parents help with careers: future directions
> Parents talking career choices
> Job guide
> I can do that too!

You can get these publications from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (formerly the Department of Education, Science and Training www.dest.gov.au), from your son/daughter’s school or from your local library.

Centrelink has an information service to help school leavers with planning future study and career paths. Centrelink also produces a publication called Finding the right direction – career planning factsheet. Visit your local Centrelink office for more information.

Some useful websites:

> www.centrelink.gov.au
> www.yourcareerguide.com.au
> www.myfuture.gov.au
> www.year12whatnext.gov.au
> www.tafensw.edu.au
> www.uac.edu.au
PART 2

THINKING ABOUT UNIVERSITY STUDY
MY SON/DAUGHTER WANTS TO GO TO UNIVERSITY. WHERE DO WE START?

Choosing the right course and university can seem very daunting at first. Your son/daughter will find that they can simplify the search by:
> identifying the universities they would most like to attend
> identifying a range of courses that meet their interests and career goals.

Your son/daughter might make their decision based solely on which course they want to study, as some courses are only offered by one or two universities. They do not have to decide on one course only – the UAC application has space for up to nine course preferences.

UNIVERSITY GUIDES AND PUBLICATIONS
Find out as much as you can about universities and the courses they offer by looking at:
> The Good Universities Guide. This is the most comprehensive listing of all courses and providers available in Australia (including vocational courses).

It is published every year and is available in libraries, some bookshops, and online at www.thegoodguides.com.au

> The UAC Guide. This lists all the university courses available in NSW and the ACT with Commonwealth Supported Places. The printed UAC Guide is available from August each year in newsagents. It costs around $20, and for an additional $7–$8 UAC will mail you a copy. It is also available free to schools, and online at www.uac.edu.au

> University prospectuses, course guides and websites. These contain detailed information on individual universities, their courses and campuses, and are published free of charge by the universities themselves.

Your local library or the school Careers Adviser will have copies of university prospectuses, the UAC Guide and the Good Universities Guide.

TIP
Encourage your son/daughter to start researching before Year 12 so they won’t need to research universities and tackle the HSC at the same time.
MEET EUNICE

Eunice is about to complete a UTS Bachelor of Primary Education.

‘[Mum] got a big surprise when I said “I want to go to uni, I want to be a teacher.” She always knew I wanted to be a teacher, but she didn’t think I’d get into it and now she’s so happy about it. She loves telling people that I’m at uni.’
GOING TO OPEN DAYS
All universities run open days, when anyone can visit the university campus and look around. At open days, university lecturers, staff and current students are there to answer your questions, and there are guided tours of the campus and teaching facilities.

Attending open days can help students decide how comfortable they might feel at each university.

You can help your son/daughter by going with them and encouraging them to get the information they need. Before you go, help them write a list of questions they want to ask, the people they want to talk to and the information they need to collect.

You can find out the dates of university open days on the UAC website www.uac.edu.au and in university undergraduate guides.

NARROWING DOWN THE SEARCH
Encourage your son/daughter to keep a notebook to record their research, so that they can compare courses and unis and make a shortlist of which ones they prefer. Here are some things to consider:

> If your son/daughter plans to continue living at home, they will need to choose a university that they can get to easily.

> If your son/daughter wants to move out of home, accommodation will be a factor in their choice. www.gettingout.info is a helpful website.

> They might find it useful to ask for advice from people who have been to particular universities or who are already working in the career area they are interested in.

> They should consider which university and which course ‘feels’ right. Instinct can be a very useful guide!

DID YOU KNOW?
Many universities also run ‘experience’ or ‘taster’ days where your son/daughter can experience what it’s like to spend a day at uni. For example, UTS runs ‘U@UTS Day’ for students attending Priority Funded Schools, and a ‘Women in Engineering Day’ for girls who are interested in engineering.
Choosing a degree course and university is your son or daughter’s decision. They will be much more likely to succeed if they are studying something they find interesting and relevant.

The university or course which most impresses you as a parent might not be the one your son/daughter feels most comfortable with.

If you disagree with their decision, it’s important to try to discuss the reasons for your disagreement. You may want to ask your son/daughter for their views on how the course will benefit them.

If you are concerned about job prospects, you can find out where graduates go by visiting the Graduate Careers Australia GradsOnline website www.gradsonline.com.au This is a searchable database with information on the career paths of graduates who have completed study in specific areas.

Ultimately, you may have to accept that what you want for them may not be what they want.

If you really feel your son/daughter is rushing into the wrong decision, you may want to remind them that taking a year off after school could help them make sure their decision is the right one. They can do this after they have made their UAC application, without losing their place at uni (see ‘Accepting or deferring the offer’ page 38).

If your son/daughter wants or needs to move out of home to attend university, the best place to start is with the housing service run by the university. Information will be available in the university prospectus and on the university website [visit www.housing.uts.edu.au to find out about accommodation at UTS]. The two main options are to rent private accommodation or live in university accommodation. Both can be found close to campus, and if your son/daughter is receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY, they might be eligible for rent allowance (check with Centrelink www.centrelink.gov.au)
WHAT IF MY SON/DAUGHTER CAN’T DECIDE?
If your son/daughter can’t decide between universities or courses, they should make sure their favourite options are listed first in their UAC preferences. The decision might become easier after they find out which course they have been accepted into, so it’s important that the courses they really want are listed as their first preferences.

If they still can’t decide or they have a long list of courses covering vastly different subject areas, it may be a sign that they are not ready to go to university. They may be better off deferring their entry for a year (see ‘Accepting or deferring the offer’, page 38).

If your son/daughter wants to start even though they’re not sure where or what they want to study, remind them that it is possible to transfer between courses, and even between universities, after completing one year with good grades.

DID YOU KNOW?
If your son/daughter does not have a specific career path in mind, taking a general degree in a field that interests them (for example, science or communications) will give them skills that are valued by employers and will improve their job prospects.
HOW MUCH DOES A UNIVERSITY COURSE COST?

How much university costs will depend on:
> the course your son or daughter wants to take
> what Centrelink benefits they are eligible for (see ‘Centrelink benefits’ page 30)
> what scholarships they are eligible for (see ‘What is a scholarship?’ page 29)
> whether they are considered a local or international student.

The cost of a degree will pay off in your son/daughter’s future earning potential. In 2007 university graduates had an average starting salary of $43,000, which is within the top 20% of average earnings in Australia*.

TUITION FEES
All universities charge course fees, known as tuition fees. How much a student will be charged depends on the course they take, the university they attend and their residency status.

Every university lists its current tuition fees on its website, or will send out fee information by post. Most students defer payment using the government loan scheme, HELP (see ‘How can we pay tuition fees?’ page 28).

Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP)
If your son/daughter is a citizen or permanent resident of Australia or a citizen of New Zealand, they can study at undergraduate level in a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) at university.

On a CSP, the federal government pays part of the tuition fees and the student pays the rest. The part paid by the student is known as the ‘student contribution.’

*Australian Graduate Survey. The 2007 average graduate starting salary of $43,000 was 80.1% of national average earnings.
The amount of the student contribution will depend on the course your son/daughter takes and the university they go to. At UTS the fees for a full-time student in a CSP place range from approximately $4000 up to $8000 per year and most students defer payment using the government loan scheme, HELP (see ‘How can we pay tuition fees?’ page 28).

**Full Fee Paying Place (DFEE)**

The Federal Government will phase out Full Fee Paying Places in universities from 2009. However, non-university higher education providers such as private colleges may continue to offer Full Fee Paying Places. The government FEE-HELP loan is available to defer the cost of some of these.

**CHECK YOUR RESIDENCY STATUS!**

If your son/daughter is classed as an international student, their tuition fees will be higher and they will not be eligible for many scholarships or the government HELP scheme.

Before your son/daughter applies to university it is important to check their residency status. If your children were born in Australia they will have taken the residency status you had at the time of their birth. To be classed as a local student, your son/daughter must be:

- an Australian or New Zealand citizen (including joint citizenship), or
- an Australian permanent resident.

You can check your son/daughter’s residency status through the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship on 131 881 or at [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)
HOW CAN WE PAY TUITION FEES?

Most students defer the cost of tuition with the government’s Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP). This loan does not have to be repaid until your son/daughter is earning over $39,824 (2007–8 figure. See [www.goingtouni.gov.au](http://www.goingtouni.gov.au) for the current earning threshold).

At the start of each semester, students receive an invoice for the subjects they have enrolled in. They will be asked to pay in one of three ways:

> defer the full amount using the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)
> pay the full amount (which attracts a 20% discount on the total cost of CSP fees)
> pay some of the amount now and defer the rest using HELP.

**HECS-HELP**

If your son/daughter is an Australian citizen or a permanent resident on a humanitarian visa, they can apply to borrow the amount of their student contribution from the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP).

They will not be asked to repay the loan until their salary reaches the threshold for repayment, set by the government each year based on the rate of indexation. (Indexation is a calculation made annually by the government which reflects the cost of living.)

Once your son/daughter earns more than the threshold, they are required to make compulsory repayments to the Australian Taxation Office either directly or through salary deductions through their employer. The repayments will be between 4% and 8% of their taxable income. For example if your son/daughter earns $40,000 they will only need to pay $1600 (4%) in that financial year (2007-8 figures).

There are no loan fees, and there is no interest on the loan, however the amount your son/daughter owes will increase each year based on the rate of indexation.

Your son/daughter will need to provide a Tax File Number (TFN) when they apply for HECS-HELP. A TFN application form can be obtained from the Australian Tax Office on 1300 720 092 or online at [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au).
WHAT IS A SCHOLARSHIP?

A scholarship is a payment made to students which can cover all or part of their tuition fees, and sometimes other expenses such as accommodation. Scholarships are not loans and do not have to be repaid.

The UAC Guide and university prospectuses contain details of scholarships. UTS has a searchable online database of scholarships at www.uts.edu.au/study/scholarships

Scholarships fall into two broad categories: equity scholarships and merit scholarships. Equity scholarships are available to students with a low-income or other disadvantages. Merit scholarships are available to students who show high achievement in academic study or sport.

There are two main types of equity scholarship at UTS:
> Commonwealth Scholarships
> UTS Diversity Access Scholarships

Your son/daughter can apply for these if they can show that they have financial hardship.

Other circumstances may also be taken into account, for example if you live in regional or rural Australia, if you are Indigenous, or if your son/daughter has a disability/ongoing medical condition or has English language difficulties, or is a sole carer.

IMPORTANT!
HELP loans are not available to international students, New Zealand citizens or Australian residents. New Zealand citizens or Australian residents must pay the full student contribution up-front, and do not receive a 20% discount on the payment.
COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIPS
Commonwealth Scholarships are only available to students in a CSP. There are two types: one for general education costs and the other for accommodation costs. Your son/daughter can apply through UAC for both types of scholarship.

- The Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship is worth approximately $2000 per year for up to four years.
- The Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarship is for students moving from regional areas and is worth approximately $4000 per year for up to four years.

Commonwealth Scholarships do not count as personal income, so they do not affect Centrelink payments.

DIVERSITY ACCESS SCHOLARSHIPS
The UTS Diversity Access Scholarships are available to students who can show that they have financial hardship.

The scholarship is a one-off payment worth between $500 and $2000, and it will count as personal income. Your son/daughter can find out from Centrelink how this might affect their benefit payments.

OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS
Most university faculties also offer their own scholarships and prizes.

At UTS, for example, the Faculty of Engineering offers one full equity scholarship place each year, and the Faculties of Business and IT each offer a full scholarship course for potential leaders: the Bachelor of Accounting and the Bachelor of IT.

Other scholarships are available to students who are academic or sporting high-achievers.

CENTRELINK BENEFITS
Many students receive Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY payments.

Encourage your son/daughter to find out what they’re entitled to receive from Centrelink by:

- visiting a Centrelink office
- calling the toll-free number: for Youth Allowance and Austudy call 13 24 90; and for ABSTUDY call 13 22 17.
- looking at www.centrelink.gov.au
- talking to the UTS Financial Assistance Service.
**MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR UNIVERSITY**

| Financial planning | www.understandingmoney.gov.au  
|                    |  > Money@Uni booklet available from the  
|                    |  > UTS Equity & Diversity Unit  
|                    |  www.equity.uts.edu.au/help_student/study  
| Centrelink | www.centrelink.gov.au  
| Information on Fees, HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP, Commonwealth Scholarships | www.goingtouni.gov.au  
|                    |  > The UAC Guide and the Equity Scholarships  
|                    |  booklet available from UAC  
|                    |  www.uac.edu.au  
| UTS information on general scholarships and Equity scholarships | www.uts.edu.au/study/scholarships/  
|                    |  > www.uts.edu.au/study/heas.html  
| UTS Union: information on sports scholarships | www.utsunion.uts.edu.au

**DID YOU KNOW?**
Centrelink considers young people to be financially independent if they earn a certain amount in any 18 month period after leaving school (the amount for 2008 was $18,850). If your son/daughter earns more than this, their Youth Allowance will not be means-tested against your income.
This book is for parents who would like to know more about the educational options available to their son or daughter after they leave school. In particular, it is aimed at parents who would like to know more about university education in New South Wales. This book will be helpful if:

> you have a son/daughter in years 9, 10, 11 or 12
> your child is interested in university (or other study and/or training when they leave school) and you would like to help them make the right choice
> you don’t know much about the Australian higher education system
> you come from a non-English speaking background
> you are worried about whether you can afford to send your child to university.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

PART 3

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY
HOW SHOULD MY SON/DAUGHTER APPLY TO UNIVERSITY?

The Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) administers applications to most universities in NSW and the ACT. *

Your son/daughter can make nine course choices, known as ‘preferences’, in one UAC application (see ‘How do UAC preferences work’ page 36).

As well as filling out the UAC application, they may need to go through additional processes to apply for any of the courses they have chosen. For example, they may need to submit a portfolio of artwork, attend an interview or audition, or fill out a university questionnaire. The UAC Guide and university prospectus will contain this information.

APPLYING THROUGH UAC

* Applications to private higher education providers should be made direct to the institution. These are not listed in the UAC Guide, but can be found in Hobson’s Good Universities Guides www.thegoodguides.com.au

There are two ways to apply through UAC. There is an application fee of $23 (2008 figure) for either method.

Online
Applicants can log on to the website and begin their application at any time, save it and return to it later.

The application fee can be paid by credit card, PayPal, BPay or at Australia Post offices.

By phone
Apply-By-Telephone is an interactive system where applicants use the telephone keypad to enter their application information. They should write the information down first on the form in the UAC Guide so that they don’t make a mistake.

The application fee will appear on your telephone bill.

DID YOU KNOW?
Your son/daughter can apply to university and TAFE at the same time. This can give them more options if they are concerned that they won’t get offered a place at uni.
**Being on time**

It’s important that applications are submitted before the September closing date, as there is an additional fee (up to $125 in 2008) for late applications.

Even if your son/daughter isn’t quite sure of their preferences, they can still make an application – they will have the option of changing their preferences (for no extra fee) after they have applied.

**EDUCATIONAL ACCESS SCHEMES**

Educational Access Schemes (EAS) help students who may have difficulty getting into university due to financial, physical or other disadvantages.

Your son/daughter should check to see if they are eligible to apply to university through an EAS, especially if their UAI is likely to be low due to ill health, disability, financial hardship or other circumstances beyond their control.

EAS application forms are available online or in the UAC publication Educational Access Schemes, which is available from your son/daughter’s school. Application forms should be submitted to UAC.

Some universities accept ‘alternative entry’ applications which your son/daughter can submit directly to the university. For instance at UTS, Indigenous students may apply for admission through the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning www.jumbunna.uts.edu.au Also at UTS, students on humanitarian visas may apply for places that include a scholarship.

Students should contact the universities they are interested in attending to find out whether they are eligible for any other access or scholarship schemes.
HOW DO UAC PREFERENCES WORK?

Your son/daughter can list up to nine courses on their UAC form. They can change their preferences anytime until the last ‘change of preferences date’, which is usually in early January – after they have received their HSC results and UAI.

Does the order of preferences matter?
Yes. Applicants should enter the courses in order of preference, starting with the course they would most like to do as their first preference. They should not order their preferences based on the UAI they think they will get.

During the selection process, applicants are considered for each course in turn.

Your son/daughter is likely to be offered a place in the first course for which they meet the UAI cut-off. For example if they don’t have the required UAI for their first preference but they have the UAI needed for the second preference, they are likely receive an offer for their second preference.

WHAT IS A UAI?
The UAI (Universities Admission Index) is a ranking measure of a student’s overall achievement in the HSC. Each student’s UAI is a number between 0.00 and 100.00, representing their rank among all students who did the HSC in the same year. (UAC has produced a useful publication called You and your UAI, which can be downloaded from the ‘Publications’ section of their website www.uac.edu.au or obtained through a school Careers Advisor).

Universities use the UAI to select students for their courses. Most university courses specify the minimum UAI ranking students require to gain entry to the course. This is known as the ‘UAI cut-off’.

The UAI cut-off is adjusted every year, and the course guides always state the cut-off for the previous year.

DID YOU KNOW?
A high UAI cut-off does not necessarily mean the course is better. It might mean that the course is more academically demanding, but it might also mean that the course is more popular.
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE HSC RESULTS COME OUT?

The HSC results, and your son/daughter’s UAI, are released in mid-December.

Whether your son/daughter gets a higher or a lower UAI than expected, it’s important to help them keep the result in perspective – it’s not going to ruin their life, nor does it mean that life will now be easier. Leaving school and moving into adult work or study is a challenge, and they’ll need your support (even if they won’t admit it!)

A higher-than-expected UAI

If your son/daughter’s UAI is above the UAI cut-off of their first choice, they are very likely to be offered a place.

Sometimes, students want to take a course with a high UAI cut-off, but decide not to include that course in their list of preferences because they believe that they won’t get in.

If your son/daughter was in this situation, and then got a higher UAI than expected, they should add the desired course to their list of preferences anytime until early January by lodging a ‘change of preference’ with UAC.

A lower-than-expected UAI

If your son/daughter gets a lower UAI than expected and misses out on their first preference, they may still be offered a place in another course on their list of preferences.

If they applied through an Educational Access Scheme they may be offered a place in one of their preferred courses even if their UAI is lower than the standard UAI cut-off for that course.

If they don’t get offered a place in any of their preferred courses, they can reapply to university in subsequent years – perhaps after gaining some work experience or completing other post-school qualifications.
WHEN ARE THE UNIVERSITY OFFERS MADE?

Most offers are made in the Main Round in mid-January; Late Round offers are made at the beginning of February; and Final Round offers are made a week later.

Applicants will be notified by post if they are successful in receiving an offer of a university place. The offers can also be viewed on the UAC website (www.uac.edu.au) and are published in newspapers.

If your son/daughter does not get a Main Round offer, they will be automatically considered again in the Late and Final Rounds (provided there are still places available in the courses they have listed). They may also be offered a place in a course which is not their first choice.

ACCEPTING OR DEFERRING THE OFFER

When your son/daughter receives an offer letter, there will be instructions in the envelope telling them how to accept the place.

If your son or daughter decides they need more time before starting university, they can ask the university to ‘hold’ their place for a year. This is called ‘deferring’. There will be instructions in the envelope telling them how to defer their place.

If your son/daughter doesn’t accept or defer one of the offers by the date stated in the offer letter, they will lose any places offered.

DID YOU KNOW?

If your son/daughter gets a Main Round offer, they can accept that offer and then change their preferences in time for the Late Round. The new set of preferences will then be considered, and they may get a second offer. If your son/daughter does get two offers, they will need to withdraw from one to accept the other.
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

When your son/daughter has accepted a place, the university will send them a letter confirming their place. The university will also send information to help them prepare for starting university.

The information sent by the university will contain important details such as the date that they should attend university to enrol (usually just before the start of semester) and the date first semester begins (when formal classes start).

UTS sends Enrolment and Orientation Week information to new students. Specific course information is provided at the beginning of the teaching period. Other universities may send different information.
WHAT IF MY SON/DAUGHTER IS NOT OFFERED A PLACE?

MY SON/DAUGHTER DIDN’T GET AN OFFER FOR THEIR FIRST PREFERENCE. SHOULD THEY TAKE ANOTHER OFFER?
Many students fear that they will ‘lose momentum’ if they don’t start uni straight after school. If your son/daughter is keen to start uni straight away, they can take the place they have been offered. They may choose either to continue in that course, or to re-apply for their first choice (through UAC) after first year.

MY SON/DAUGHTER DIDN’T GET A PLACE AT UNI AND SEEMS NOT TO KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT. HOW CAN I HELP?
Your support and encouragement will help them get through this disappointment. It could be useful to sit down together and go through all their options. Will they go out to work? Will they try to enrol in TAFE or a different university course? Will they apply for university again next year?

CAN MY SON/DAUGHTER APPLY AGAIN NEXT YEAR?
Yes. They will be classed as a non-school leaver, and their UAC application will take into account any work experience and further study they may have done since leaving school, as well as taking into account their HSC results from the previous year. Universities provide information about what kind of qualifications should be included in the UAC application.

If your son/daughter doesn’t work or gain other qualifications before applying to university again, they will still be considered on the basis of their HSC results. Since the UAI cut-off for some courses may be lower the following year, your son/daughter might even be offered a place in a course that they didn’t get into the first time they applied.

Universities don’t have age limits – your son/daughter can apply or re-apply at any age. Years of work experience may increase their chances of being offered a place.
PART 4

STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY
WHAT IS UNIVERSITY LIFE LIKE?

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE UNIVERSITY YEAR?
Teaching usually begins at the end of February or the beginning of March. Two or three weeks before teaching starts, students will be invited to attend Orientation. At Orientation they will:
> enrol in their course
> choose their subjects for first year
> get to know the university campus
> be encouraged to meet their lecturers and other students
> have the opportunity to sign up for student societies or sports clubs
> be invited to attend informative lectures on topics such as managing money and seeking study assistance
> find out about free and discounted support services available at university and learn how to access the services they need.

HOW IS UNIVERSITY DIFFERENT FROM SCHOOL?
Your son/daughter will find university very different from school. Most universities are much bigger than schools – some campuses are so large they are like small towns!
Your son/daughter may not be in class all day, every day. Most undergraduate timetables have gaps in them, which students use for studying, socialising or working.
University staff will treat your son/daughter as an adult, and will expect them to take responsibility for their own study, their social life and their behaviour. You will notice that this will encourage greater independence.
Students will have to manage their own time to attend timetabled classes, study outside of class and produce written assignments or study for exams. The university will not chase them for late assignments or for non-attendance.
It may take a while for your son/daughter to get used to this, but by second year most students become proficient at managing their own time.
MEET CHRIS

Chris’s son Michael graduated from a UTS Bachelor of Science in 2007.

‘Uni’s a different environment from school, it’s a different social network ... just having the inputs from different cultural groups has expanded his thinking. He’s become more independent ... he’s still the same Michael, but he’s become more his own person. Able to look after himself. I was happy that he made the choice that he wanted to do, I just tried to facilitate the process.’
WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY WANT TO DROP OUT OR CHANGE COURSES?
In the early weeks of university, many students feel overwhelmed. First year is often the hardest, and you should encourage your son/daughter to stick with it.

If your son/daughter is still unhappy, encourage them to find alternatives – such as moving to another university or course (through UAC), enrolling in TAFE, or finding a job – so they won’t feel directionless when they leave university.

They may also take ‘leave of absence’ from their course for up to a year. This allows students some time off to explore other options while their university place is reserved for them. When they return to university the following year, they simply resume their studies.

If your son/daughter chooses not to continue with their uni course, or if they want to drop a subject, it’s very important that they withdraw before the semester census date in late March (for Autumn semester) or late August (for Spring semester). If they don’t make a formal withdrawal, they will have to pay the fees for all subjects in which they are enrolled, even if they do not complete them.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SON/DAUGHTER FAILS A SUBJECT?
Students who have failed a subject may be encouraged to repeat the subject in the following year. If they failed because they had difficulty with the subject, they may be able to get tutoring from the university.

Some universities have a network of experienced students who work as ‘peer tutors’, providing one-to-one tuition to students who need academic support.

Encourage your son/daughter to talk about their options with their tutor or the university counsellor. Nobody likes to fail, but it’s not the end of the world!
WHAT SUPPORT IS THERE AT UNIVERSITY?
Universities genuinely want their students to complete their courses and succeed in their studies. All universities offer services and programs to support their students.

For example, at UTS the services provided for students include:

> Health (medical doctors)
> Counselling (psychologists)
> Special needs assistance for students with disabilities
> Study skills workshops to help with English language, IT, research and general academic skills
> Childcare facilities
> Learning and community support for Indigenous students (www.jumbunna.uts.edu.au)
> Financial advice
> Career advice (including job noticeboards)
> Second hand book stores, newsagents, print and copy services
> Multi-faith chaplaincy.
WHAT SUPPORT CAN I OFFER ONCE MY SON/DAUGHTER HAS STARTED UNIVERSITY?
If you think your son/daughter is struggling, talk to them directly before approaching anyone else.

The best way you can help is to:
> Listen to your son/daughter if and when they need to talk. You don’t have to offer solutions, but you can suggest they seek help from university services.
> Encourage your son/daughter to use university services such as careers advice, counselling, academic support and skills workshops.
> Take a positive interest in their life – particularly in the progress of their studies and their sporting and social achievements.
> Try not to interfere or offer unwanted advice – this is a period when they need to manage many situations independently.

> Be prepared to make fewer demands on your son/daughter (e.g. housework, family events etc.) during exam time or when assignment are due. Keep in mind that university study can be more demanding and time-consuming than the HSC.
> Celebrate your son/daughter’s successes. If they’re unhappy with something they have done, it’s better to remind them of their successes and help them put their disappointment behind them so that they can move on with a positive attitude.
> If your son/daughter is having problems, encourage them to talk about them with their tutor or the university counsellor – especially if they won’t talk to you!
MEET DENNIS

Dennis’s daughter Jennifer graduated from a Bachelor of Science in Forensic Biology in 2007.

‘Jennifer knows what she wants, so we let her choose what she wants. As long as she is improving herself, I want her to have a better life and a good education. And we tried to support her all the way in what she wants to do. We want to give [our children] a good education, as good as possible. It’s best to help them.’
**THE FUTURE ...**

University is a life-changing experience for students and their families.

You will see your son/daughter take on more adult responsibilities, begin to take control of their own life and follow their own goals.

There are always ups and downs, but few students regret going to university.

When the course of study is completed there will be a graduation ceremony at which you, your family and your son/daughter can celebrate the achievement.

We hope to see you at UTS someday!
PART 5
WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION
WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

The best way to find printed information is through your son/daughter’s school, or by visiting your local library, where the librarian will be able to help you find what you need, and where you can use the public computers to browse the web.

The following are some of the most useful publications and websites for you and your son/daughter to read. Good luck!

**The HSC**

*You and Your UAI* published by the Universities Admissions Centre.

*UAC ‘how to’ guide for HSC students* published by the Universities Admissions Centre.

[www.hsc.csu.edu.au](http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au) – HSC Online has a parent’s section in 10 community languages.

[www.boredofstudies.org](http://www.boredofstudies.org) – Bored of Studies is an online community reference for HSC students.

**Jobs and Careers**


*Job Guide* published by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and also available online from [www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au)

*Job Guide – NSW/ACT* published each year by Hobson’s Guides.

*Finding the right direction – career planning fact sheet* available from Centrelink offices or online at [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)


[www.year12whatnext.gov.au](http://www.year12whatnext.gov.au) – government site for Year 10–12 students about what options they have after school.

The best way to find out the facts about university is to ask the universities themselves at open days, or through their information email or telephone contacts. *University Entry Requirements – Year 10 booklet*, published by the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC). *The Good Universities Guide*, published each year by Hobson’s Guides. *Educational Access Schemes*, published by the Universities Admissions Centre. *The UAC Undergraduate Guide*, published by the Universities Admissions Centre. 

**www.uac.edu.au** – Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) website.

**www.thegoodguides.com.au** – comprehensive list of all further education courses and providers in Australia.

**www.goingtouni.gov.au** – government website giving information on universities, HECS-HELP, fees and scholarships.

**www.tafensw.edu.au** – NSW TAFE website offering career advice and vocational courses.

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### Financial Advice

*Money@uni*, published by the Equity & Diversity Unit of the University of Technology, Sydney

**www.understandingmoney.gov.au** – the government’s financial advice site.

**www.centrelink.gov.au** – or visit your local Centrelink office.
GLOSSARY

**ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY** A different way of getting to uni (not straight from school).

**BACHELOR DEGREE** A first-level degree, usually 3 to 5 years. Degree titles are often abbreviated to: BA (Bachelor of Arts); BSc (Bachelor of Science), BEng (Bachelor of Engineering) etc.

**COMMONWEALTH SUPPORTED PLACE (CSP)** The kind of university place your son/daughter is most likely to study in, during their first undergraduate degree. The government pays part of the course fees, and your son/daughter pays a student contribution, which they can defer using HECS-HELP.

**COMBINED DEGREE** A degree in two areas. It can take 4–6 years, and graduates earn two degrees. For example, your son/daughter might combine Sports Science/Business if they’d like to run a gym, Arts/Law if they’re interested in being a lawyer in the performing arts, or International Studies/Nursing if they’re interested in nursing in a non-English speaking country.

**EDUCATIONAL ACCESS SCHEME (EAS)** An alternative entry to uni which takes into account disadvantages that might have affected your son/daughter’s academic achievements.

**FEE-HELP** The government loan scheme that allows your son/daughter to defer their course fees if they enrol in a Domestic Fee-Paying place (e.g. if they study at a private college or undertake a pathway course).

**FACULTY** A university division e.g. Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of IT, Faculty of Business.

**GRADUATE** A student who has completed a university degree.

**HECS-HELP** The government loan scheme that allows your son/daughter to defer their student contribution if they study on a Commonwealth Supported Place.

**HONOURS** An additional period of study – usually a year – during which your son/daughter takes additional subjects (often research-based). Abbreviated to ‘Hons’, e.g. BA (Hons).
GLOSSARY

PATHWAY COURSE A course designed to help your son/daughter get a place in a university degree, particularly if they did not complete the HSC or need to improve their English language skills. See www.insearch.edu.au for more information about the UTS pathway provider, INSEARCH.

POSTGRADUATE A student who is studying a second, higher-level degree such as a Master’s or Doctorate, or any level of study beyond Bachelor’s degree. Abbreviation: PG, post-grad.

SPECIAL ENTRY SCHEME See Educational Access Scheme.

SUBJECT Part of a degree. If your son/daughter studies full-time, they will normally do 4 subjects each semester. Each subject is worth a certain number of credit points which count towards their degree.

TERTIARY EDUCATION Any study beyond secondary school.

TVET TAFE courses your son/daughter can take as part of their HSC. Some count towards their UAI.

UAC Universities Admissions Centre. UAC processes all undergraduate admissions for all universities in NSW and the ACT. Website: www.uac.edu.au

UAI Universities Admissions Index. Your son/daughter’s UAI score ranks their HSC performance against other students in NSW for that year. Universities set a minimum UAI cut-off for entry into each course. These cut-offs change each year.

UNDERGRADUATE A student studying at university for the first time, or Bachelor’s degree level study. Abbreviation: UG, undergrad.

VET Vocational Education and Training. Most VET courses (also known as vocational courses) are offered through TAFE.