



PARENTS'/CARERS'

GUIDE TO HE

Affordable university level courses at your local college

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New to Higher Education?

With so many changes in university level study it is sometimes difficult for parents to keep up to date with what is happening. If your child is thinking of going to university, this guide is intended to help you through the maze of information, especially if this is your first contact with Higher Education. We can help you navigate the different pathways of study available including Higher National Certificates and Foundation Degrees as well as informing you about fees, and what financial support is available.

What is university level study?

University level study or Higher Education (HE for short) is most education studied after school which is above Level 3, for example, Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas, Foundation Degrees or Degrees. Generally, HE is undertaken by 19+ year-olds.

The versatility of HE means that whether your child chooses a pathway in the academic, vocational or apprenticeship field, their needs will be more than adequately catered for.

Those who successfully complete a university level programme usually go on to further study or into employment.

Keywords

The world of higher education is littered with titles, phrases and terminology that can often seem like another language. To try and make things a bit easier for you we've created a jargon buster to explain some of the terms used in this booklet.

HE (Higher Education) or University level

Education undertaken above A Levels or Level 3, such as a degree or foundation degree.

Undergraduate

Undergraduate degrees are sometimes known as 'ordinary' or 'first' degrees. Students follow a course of academic study leading to a qualification such as a bachelor of arts (BA) or bachelor of science (BSc).

Postgraduate

Education above degree level. There are two basic types of postgraduate course: taught courses and research opportunities. Examples are master's degrees and doctoral degrees.

Foundation degree

A university level course that combines academic study with workplace learning. It is broadly equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree.

Higher national certificate (HNC)/ Higher national diploma (HND)

HNCs/HNDs are job-related programmes of study. An HNC is usually studied part-time. An HND is broadly equivalent to the first two years of a degree course and students often progress on to the third year of an undergraduate degree. HNDs are usually studied full-time.

UCAS

Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) is the central organisation that processes applications for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges. (Please note though that applications to Vision West Notts should come directly to the college).

Top-up

It's possible to 'top up' a foundation degree to an honours degree. This usually involves an extra year studying full-time (or the part-time equivalent).

HE in FE

Further education colleges can offer higher education courses. HE in FE is Higher Education (HE) delivered in a further education (FE) college.

To find out more what Vision West Notts can offer your child please see page 10.

Why university level study should be a serious option in today's world

University level education allows choice and flexibility for your child's future. It provides the knowledge they need to progress in their chosen career.

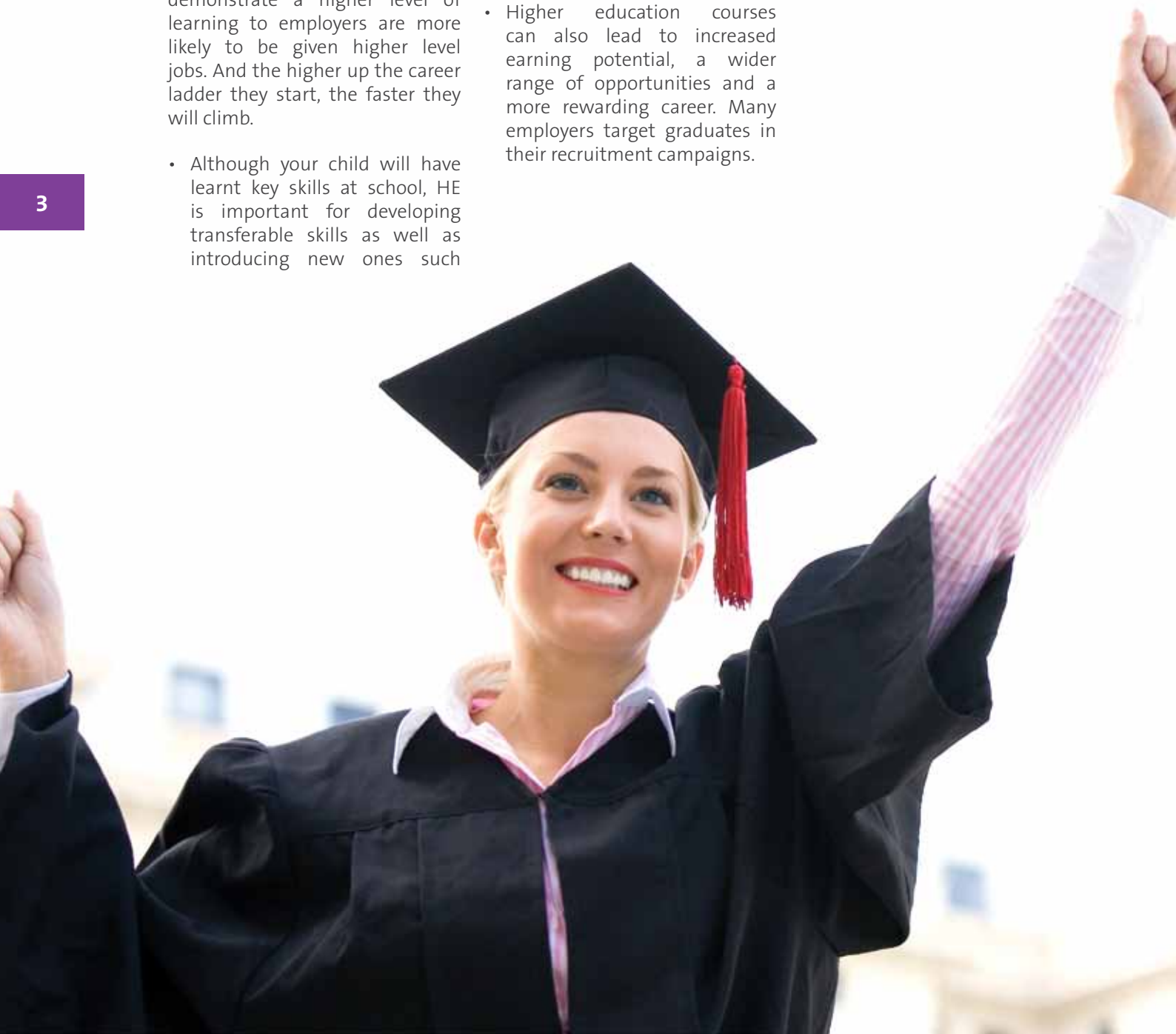
The higher the level of study, the higher the starting salary tends to be in a first job. Those able to demonstrate a higher level of learning to employers are more likely to be given higher level jobs. And the higher up the career ladder they start, the faster they will climb.

- Although your child will have learnt key skills at school, HE is important for developing transferable skills as well as introducing new ones such

as report writing, teamwork, leadership and problem solving.

- Achieving a university level qualification will notably improve your child's prospects in a job market where employers are increasingly demanding higher level skills from their employees.
- Higher education courses can also lead to increased earning potential, a wider range of opportunities and a more rewarding career. Many employers target graduates in their recruitment campaigns.

- On average, graduates tend to earn substantially more than people with A Levels who did not go to university. Projected over a working lifetime, the difference is something like £415,320 according to Labour Force Survey figures. *Source: www.grb.uk.com*



Courses explained

The table below explains what our courses involve and the level of study.

Course	Level	What does it involve?
BA (Hons) Honours Degree (Top-up)	Level 6	Combining work and study, this one year programme allows students to top-up to a full honours degree from HND or Foundation Degree.
Foundation Degree (FdA/FdSc)	Level 5	Two years full-time or three years part-time. Combining work and study, these programmes enhance employability by developing specialist knowledge.
Higher National Diploma (HND)	Level 5	Two years full-time or three years part-time. These practical programmes are highly regarded by employers.
Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Level 4	One year full-time or two years part-time. Students develop high level specialist skills and knowledge.

Entry requirements

For some higher education courses you need to have studied specific subjects beforehand so your child needs to check this in the prospectus or website of their chosen institution or on the UCAS website. Your child's teacher or careers advisor should also be able to provide advice about this. Some universities ask that grades and subjects are achieved at one sitting. This means that "re-sits" (re-taking courses) will not be accepted. Again, your child will need to check this with the individual university.

Our entry requirements

All applicants to Vision West Notts will be invited to an interview. If they have substantial, relevant work experience rather than qualifications, we will take

this into consideration. Entry requirements are reviewed each year so students are advised to check on application.

HNCs/HNDs

Entry requirements vary from course to course but typical requirements for both HNCs and HNDs are appropriate A Levels. Literacy at Level 2 is an essential requirement and numeracy at Level 2 is desirable in most cases. Alternative entry requirements include NVQ Level 3 in a related subject, BTEC National Certificate /Diploma in a related subject or other appropriate Level 3 qualification.

Foundation Degrees

Entry requirements vary from course to course but typical requirements include literacy and numeracy at Level 2. Applicants

should have at least one of the following:

- Appropriate A Levels and GCSEs at grade C or equivalent
- NVQ Level 3 in a related subject
- BTEC National Diploma in a related subject
- Other appropriate Level 3 qualification

BA (Hons) Degree (Top-up)

Entry requirements may vary but typical requirements include a minimum of a merit profile at HND or at least an average of 50% from Level 5 study on an appropriate foundation degree. Other equivalent qualifications will also be considered. Qualifications at Level 5 in related subjects and evidence of literacy and numeracy skills at Level 2 are essential.

Do your homework

If your child is going to spend two or three years at a university or college it's best that they find out as much as they can about the institution before they commit themselves. It's only by visiting a university or college in person that they will get a feel for the atmosphere and the environment.

Universities across the UK are already reporting a huge increase in the number of prospective students attending open days – up by more than 75 per cent in some places – and, in particular, in parents accompanying their children. (Source: The Guardian 1/11/11).

University versus college

Once your child has decided what they want to study it's worth exploring whether they will be better suited to a college or a university. Further education colleges offer similar courses to universities but they won't have the same number of social clubs and activities.

Things to consider include location, size, accommodation, transport costs and academic support.

One of the main differences is cost. It's often much cheaper to study at a college.

Class sizes tend to be much smaller (approximately 15-20

students) at a college and lectures tend to be more interactive and are delivered in an informal classroom environment. At college your child will have a personal tutor to arrange one to one tutorials.

Courses tend to be more vocational at college with modules focussing on employability skills and the use of a wide range of assessment methods such as live briefs from employers, showcase events, group presentations and poster displays.

To find out more what Vision West Notts can offer your child please see page 10.

Open days and tours

For parents of prospective students, we encourage you to attend one of our open evenings. Throughout the year we open the doors of our main campuses to parents and students who are thinking of attending Vision West Notts. You'll have the opportunity to speak with tutors from a diverse range of subject areas who can explain the type of courses we offer and the career prospects they can lead on to.

You'll also be able to talk to existing students who attend the events. They can provide an insight into the college lifestyle and the expectations we have of our students.

For details of open evenings please see page 12.

Guided tours

If you'd rather take a look around yourself, we can offer guided tours with a member of staff who'd be happy to show you around the range of facilities and resources we offer our students. We also offer a range of Virtual Tours available on our website at www.wnc.ac.uk

Helping your child to apply

Most applications for full-time courses are processed online through UCAS at www.ucas.com. Here you'll find information about universities and colleges and the courses that they offer. A maximum of five choices is available. Some students make just one choice at a local university; others go for two different courses; the majority of students pick the same subject at five different places.

If applying for a course at Vision West Notts, either full-time or part-time, your child should apply directly to the college. A personal statement will be required so please ensure that your child has allowed enough time to write this. Guidance on writing personal statements can be found on the UCAS website and it's a good idea to have a look at this with your child before they write their statement.

To find out more what Vision West Notts can offer your child please see page 10

How to apply to Vision West Notts

Visit our website at [**www.wnc.ac.uk**](http://www.wnc.ac.uk) – your child should find the programme they're interested in using our course search and click on the 'apply online' button or send an email request to heteam@wnc.ac.uk for a hard copy of the application form.

Five steps to HE

- 1** Apply for a course
- 2** Attend an Applicants' Event
- 3** Sign up for the Summer School – designed to prepare students for HE study. Call the HE team on 01623 627191 ext 8092 to register
- 4** Attend the pre-course activities
- 5** Enrol

Sorting out the finance

It's important to remember that if your child is entering Higher Education in 2012 they won't have to pay for the cost of their tuition up front.

Those students starting Higher Education in September 2012 can apply for student finance at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

Once your child has successfully applied for a loan they will receive funding immediately after the start of their course.

Tuition Fees for 2012-13

Vision West Notts is committed to offering the most affordable fees possible to allow our local community greater access to university level courses.

The fee to be paid depends on the status of the course studied:

- Full-time status: £5,500
- Part-time status: £3,000

Students on part-time courses may opt to pay by module, but in this case, the total fee for the year is due at enrolment. For 2012-13, the fee per module is £1,000.

Other costs

Students may also be asked to pay other costs such as materials costs, residential fees and library fines in line with their course and college policy. However, there are loans and non-repayable grants available to help meet these costs.

Payment of fees

Students do not have to pay their fees up front on enrolment, if:

- they produce a letter from Student Finance England to evidence that tuition fees are being met
- they produce a letter from their employer confirming that they will pay fees
- they make arrangements to pay by direct debit instalments

Please note that the college does not offer fee remission for any of its HE courses, and that by enrolling on the course, students are accepting personal responsibility for payment of fees.

Government loans

The Government will provide the money for any eligible student in England who secures a place in Higher Education. Your child then takes out a tuition fee loan which they start to repay when they are working and earning more than £21,000 a year. Loans are then repaid at 9% of any income above £21,000 until the loan is repaid. Any outstanding balance is written off after 30 years. Part-time students will also be entitled to apply for government loans.

Financial support for part-time students

Eligible part-time students in England who start their course in 2012 can now apply for a tuition fee loan. Part-time students who earn over £21,000 a year have to start paying back their loans after three years even if their course hasn't finished. Part-time students will not generally be entitled to a loan or grant to cover living costs. Extra financial help is available to part-time students who have a disability via the Disabled Students' Allowance.

Maintenance grants

The amount of support your child will receive will depend on household income. If that income is £25,000 or less, your child will be eligible for a full grant worth £3,250. Over a 3 year course, that's £9,750 which they won't have to repay. Partial grants will be available for those with a household income of between £25,001 and £42,600.

Maintenance loan

As well as the loans available to cover fees, there are loans available to help with living costs (called 'Maintenance Loan'). How much your child can access depends on where they live and study, as well as their household income.

If a student is studying at Vision West Notts and living away from their parents' home, the maximum

Maintenance Loan they can receive is £5,500 per year. If they are studying with us and living with their parents, the maximum Maintenance Loan they can get is £4,375.

Information has been provided by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

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Household income	Living away from home and studying outside London Package of support for 2012/2013		
	Living cost loan	Non-repayable grant	Total
£25,000 or less	£3,875	£3,250	£7,125
£30,000	£4,330	£2,341	£6,671
£35,000	£4,784	£1,432	£6,216
£40,000	£5,239	£523	£5,762
£42,600	£5,475	£50 (minimum grant)	£5,525
£42,875	£5,500 (maximum loan)	£0	£5,500
£45,000	£5,288	£0	£5,288
£50,000	£4,788	£0	£4,788
£55,000	£4,288	£0	£4,288
£60,000	£3,788	£0	£3,788
Over £62,125	£3,575	£0	£3,575

National Scholarship Programme (NSP)

The National Scholarship Programme helps students whose families' income is £25,000 a year or less. NSP awards don't affect any other student finance your child might apply for, apart from the Tuition Fee Loan.

The money from the NSP is paid for by Vision West Notts and your child has to apply for the scholarship directly to the college. They can apply once they have got an offer for a place from the college.

Scholarships are limited and students will need to apply individually. The following scholarships are available from Vision West Notts for 2012:

11 x full-time scholarships:
£3,000

11 x part-time scholarships:
£1,500

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Disabled Students' Allowances provide extra financial help for disabled students. To apply for DSAs, both the student and their course must meet certain conditions. Please check these before your child applies.

Our Additional Learning Support team can also help with DSA applications and provide guidance on support available in the college.

For the latest information on maintenance loans or grants, visit www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

To receive payment in September, applications for funding should be submitted to Student Finance England before 31st May.

Why Vision West Notts could be a serious option for your child

The college environment is the perfect stepping stone for those who want to study a higher level course but don't want to go away to university. At college your child will be given a sense of freedom and responsibility that mirrors life at university and prepares them for independent living, decision-making and studying.

What's more our tuition fees for 2012/13 are just £5,500 full-time and £3,000 part-time per year compared with £9,000 for some universities.

We offer:

- a comprehensive range of university level courses that are validated by our partner universities – the University of Derby and Leeds Metropolitan University
- affordable tuition fees
- small, friendly class sizes
- a dedicated HE team to offer advice and guidance
- pre-course activities to get to know staff
- summer school programme to prepare students for university level study
- a personal tutor to arrange one to one tutorials
- a 'Complete HE Package' induction pack

- a dedicated HE study skills coach who offers generic study skills workshops and one to one study support

Student safety

We take the safety of all our students and visitors very seriously. The college has a dedicated health and safety team who work with all staff to make sure that our college is as safe as it can possibly be for all our students.

In addition we have a health and wellbeing team who offer advice and guidance to students on a range of issues, from personal safety to healthy eating and alcohol awareness.

All of this creates a safe and welcoming college for anyone choosing to study here. Time and time again our students feedback on how they feel accepted for who they are and how supportive all the staff are in the college.

Be part of our success

Vision West Notts is one of the best-performing providers in the UK. We work hard to attain the highest standards and offer the best provision in the region.

We are extremely proud of our recent achievements and our ability to achieve high success rates year after year.

Integrated Quality Enhancement Review

In 2011, the college received its final Integrated Quality Enhancement Review (IQER) report from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education, the independent body responsible for maintaining high quality and standards. The college received the highest grade possible in each of the three assessment areas which were the management of academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and the quality of public information.

The college was also awarded with four areas of good practice which include:

- High quality of support for students, especially during the application and induction processes and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- High quality of information, advice and guidance for prospective and new students such as the information packs provided at the applicant events and the welcome packs given out at induction
- A strategy to establish a higher education ethos and learning experience through its management of learning resources
- Strong leadership in the management of higher education which involves delivery and support staff in the process

Audit of collaborative provision

Early this year the college was delighted that the QAA's audit of collaborative provision at the

University of Derby, one of the college's HE partners, highlighted the strong and constructive relationships between the university and its partners as an area of good practice.

Ofsted

In May 2008, the college was inspected by Ofsted and graded 'outstanding' in all categories, a superb result that was unmatched throughout our region.

We were judged on the effectiveness of our provision, capacity to improve, achievements and standards, quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity. In the following report, the Ofsted inspectors highlighted our key strengths:

- High success rates
- Highly effective employer engagement
- Imaginative and highly effective approach to educational and social inclusion



- Outstanding support and guidance
- Excellent leadership
- Outstanding response to equality and diversity
- Excellent partnership arrangements which help meet national priorities and local needs
- Outstanding governance and financial management

Beacon status

In January 2009, we were awarded the 'Oscar' of education when we were the first college in Nottinghamshire to gain Learning and Skills Beacon status, which recognises excellence and innovation within the Further Education and skills sector.

The only colleges that are eligible for beacon status are those that achieved Grade 1 (outstanding) for Leadership and Management in their Ofsted report and no less than Grade 2 (good) in all other inspection areas, coupled with strong financial health.

National Student Survey 2011

This annual survey is undertaken by those students in their final year of study. Vision West Notts was above the sector average in assessment and feedback,

academic support, organisation and management of courses and personal development.

Our scores were in the top quartile for assessment and feedback, and for academic support. Overall, satisfaction with our HE courses went up by 7% to 80% which is 2% above the national benchmark for further education colleges.

Almost 70% of our HE students were employed in a graduate job after graduation.

Find out more

For more details about our university level courses order a copy of the 'Creating Futures' university level course guide by calling the HE team on **01623 627191 ext 8092** or visit our website at **www.wnc.ac.uk**

Open evenings

Our friendly HE team and tutors will be on hand to give advice on full and part-time study, finance and funding.

All our HE open evenings are held at the Derby Road campus, (NG18 5BH) from 6-8pm.

- **Wednesday 7 December 2011**
- **Tuesday 31 January 2012**
- **Thursday 8 March 2012**

Call free on **0808 100 3626**

Email: **heteam@wnc.ac.uk**

www.wnc.ac.uk



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Mansfield
Nottinghamshire
NG18 5BH

**For more information on courses, start dates, costs
and how to enrol, please call us on:**

Tel: **01623 627191**

Freephone: **0808 100 3626**

Email: **HEteam@wnc.ac.uk**

Web: **www.wnc.ac.uk/University-Level**



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