

GET AHEAD



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Note from the Editors

We are back again with the third edition of our magazine, Get Ahead! Young people have faced many challenges over the past year and we're very proud of the hard work and resilience we have seen from students and staff alike. Aimhigher want you to know that we are here to support you throughout your educational and career journey.

This edition will look at building confidence, student sustainability, mental health support at university and a variety of career paths. We also share information on our fantastic Aimhigher alumni, interview tips and volunteering.

If there are specific ways we can support you, we encourage your teachers, parents and carers to get in touch to let us know.

At the time of writing this (March 2022), our team can support activities in-person and virtually. We are flexible and can adapt to meet your needs.

We are available to answer any questions or concerns about careers, education and your future via our website. Contact our amazing team of friendly advisers today at www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk/ask

Best wishes,
Aimhigher Team
aimhigher@contacts.bham.ac.uk

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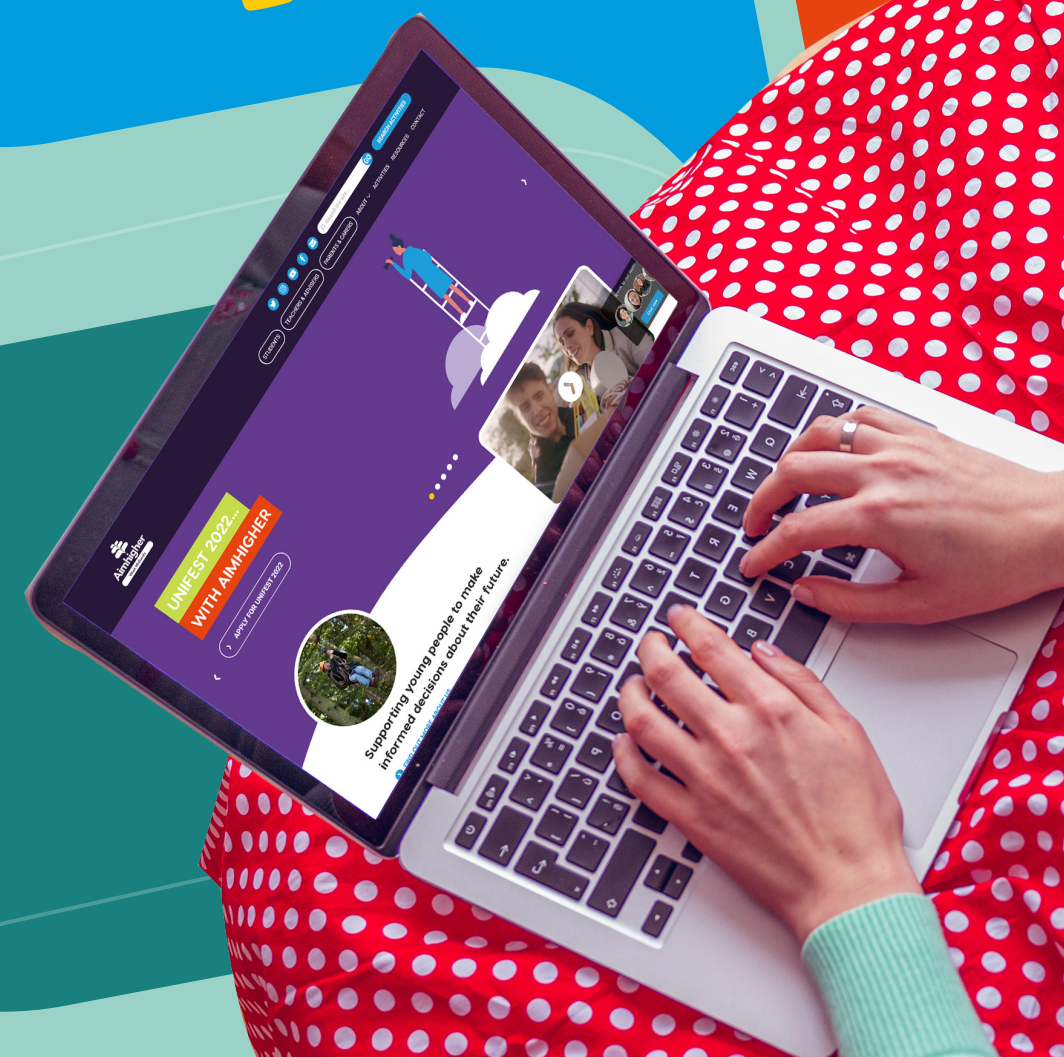
Have you visited our website yet?

Check it out at aimhigherwm.ac.uk and chat to us online, browse our resources or simply have a look around. We have a wide range of information and guidance for students, parents and carers and teachers and advisers.

Follow us

Stay connected and see what we're up to on our social media platforms.

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INTRODUCING...

NEXT STEPS

SUPPORTING YOUR
TRANSITION INTO
FURTHER EDUCATION

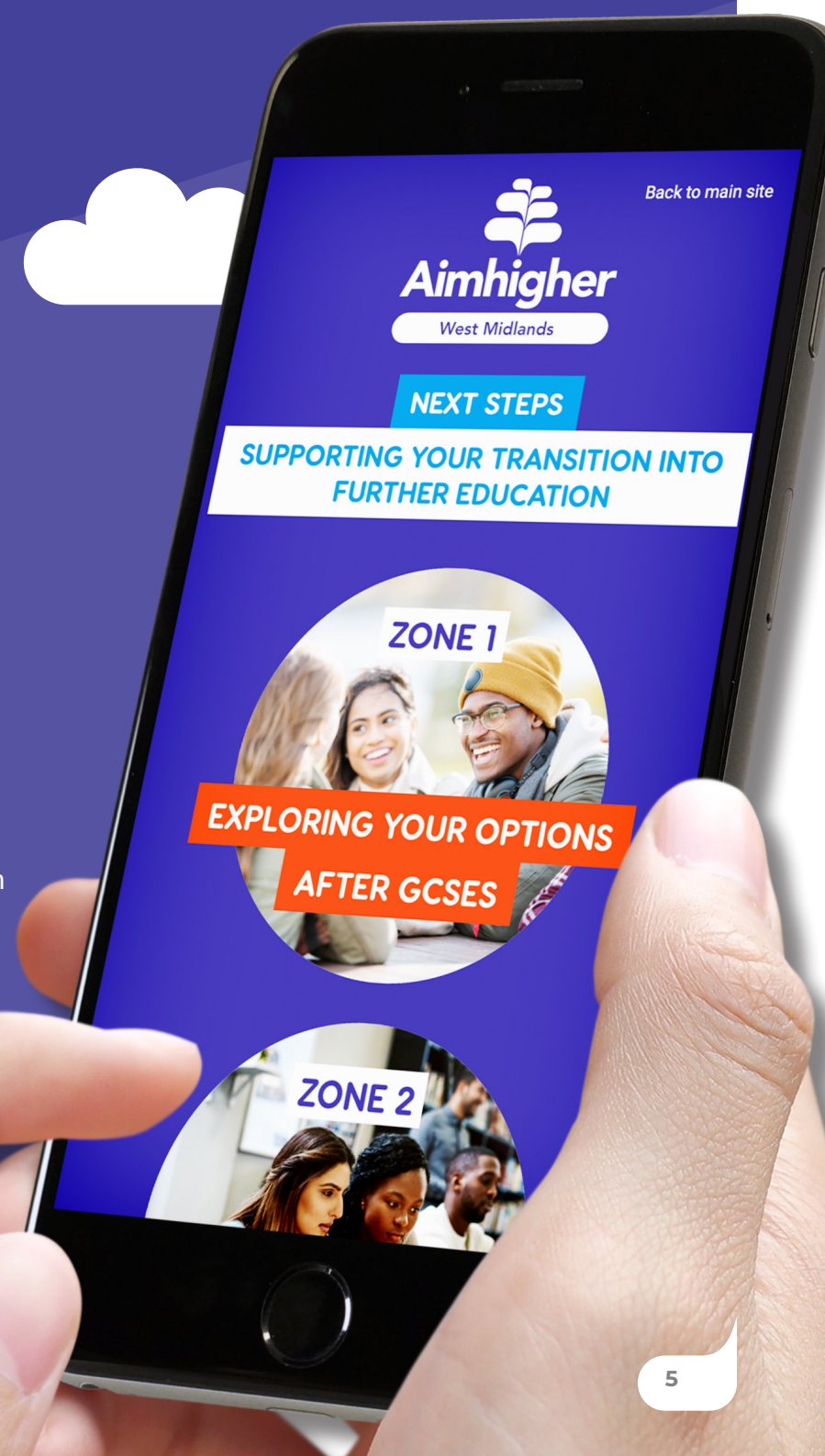


Here at Aimhigher West Midlands, we aim to support students through each stage of their education journey, providing them with advice and guidance to make informed decisions about their future. Through working with sixth forms and colleges, we identified a gap in our online resources for year 11 learners taking their 'next steps' to transition from school into further education. To bridge this gap, we recently launched a new interactive online platform, Next Steps!

Next Steps is an exciting online platform specifically for learners who are transitioning from school into further education where you can access important information and advice regarding your next steps.

Divided into five zones, you can find support in your options after GCSEs, understanding further education levels and where they can lead to, as well as helpful tips on applying to college or sixth form. As you explore Next Steps, you can also discover further options after GCSEs, including Apprenticeships and T Levels, as well as important skills for the future which will best equip you as a young adult.

By identifying how your decisions after your GCSEs will impact your progression into higher education or work, you can reach your full potential! Join us as we empower year 11s to make aspirational choices by visiting Next Steps at nextsteps.aimhigherwm.ac.uk and explore the fantastic activities and content we have created.





T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

T Levels (Technical Levels) are a brand-new set of courses that are available once you have finished your GCSEs. These qualifications are equivalent to 3 A Levels and were first launched in September 2020. There's no fee for these courses as long as you are under 19 when you start.

T Level courses last for two years and have been designed with industries in mind. They have been created with the help of businesses and employers to ensure that students are set up for the working world and prepared for further training or ready to study at a higher level.

They are a mixture of classroom-based learning, as well as 'on the job training' during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approx. 45 days).

The key difference between T Levels and Apprenticeships are that apprentices will spend most of their time on placement, whereas T Level students will spend most of their time in the classroom. As a guide, studying a T Level means 80% of your time will be classroom-based and 20% will be on placement (the opposite of an apprenticeship where it is 80% of time in the workplace, and 20% in the classroom). T Levels are great for those who want to continue their studies primarily in a classroom environment but also want industry-based learning – the skills and knowledge you will gain in the classroom can be implemented on your placement, and vice versa.

The industry placement itself is focused on developing the practical and technical skills required for a job and lasts approximately 45 days, although this can be longer. Employers can offer these placements in a consecutive block, day release or a mixture of the two, and can also discuss sharing part of the placement with another employer if deemed necessary.

T Levels are being rolled out across the UK. Currently, not all Further Education providers offer T Levels so be sure to do your research and find out which one is most suited to you!

It's also worth noting that T Levels are not available in every subject. The following T Levels are currently available:

- Building Services Engineering for Construction
- Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction
- Digital Business Services
- Digital Production, Design and Development
- Digital Support Services
- Education and Childcare
- Health
- Healthcare Science
- Onsite Construction
- Science

The following T Levels will be made available in 2022 & 2023:

- Accounting (2022)
- Design and Development for Engineering and Manufacturing (2022)
- Engineering, Manufacturing, Processing and Control (2022)
- Finance (2022)
- Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing (2022)
- Management and Administration (2022)
- Agriculture, Land Management and Production (2023)
- Animal Care and Management (2023)
- Catering (2023)
- Craft and Design (2023)
- Hairdressing, Barbering and Beauty Therapy (2023)
- Media, Broadcast and Production (2023)
- Legal Services (2023)

Find out more about T Levels and find your nearest provider on the T Levels website: www.tlevels.gov.uk/students/find

VOLUNTEERING

HOW HELPING OTHERS CAN HELP YOU

It's important to try and volunteer if you can for many reasons. By volunteering, you are providing essential help to worthwhile causes and people in need, enabling you to help others in a selfless way. Doing voluntary work can also make UCAS and job applications stand out. It shows you're driven and focused by giving up your time to support a charity or other organisation. It's a great opportunity to build skills, such as dedication and commitment, which are essential for your future.

There are lots of different kinds of volunteering. You could volunteer in your community, doing things such as litter picking or helping to deliver meals and gifts to patients at a local hospital. Thinking of something bigger? There are larger scale operations such as animal conservation or building schools in a different country. No matter what type of volunteering you do, you will be helping someone in need. Many charities are dependent on the kindness of others and need as many volunteers as possible, so there are many opportunities to get out there and get stuck in!

How to volunteer

If you already know of a charity or organisation that you'd like to volunteer for, contact them directly to find out what opportunities are available. If you're unsure where you'd like to volunteer, then websites such as www.doit.life/volunteer and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) have search functions to help you find volunteering opportunities that you're interested in. Your school may also have a list of organisations that are looking for volunteers, so try asking your teachers as well.

Benefits of volunteering

- You can make a difference and improve the lives of others who need your help.
- You learn new skills such as teamwork, commitment and problem solving. These are valuable skills that will enhance your CV and applications for higher education.
- You gain experience in a potential career. Volunteering can allow you to explore a field of work that you might be interested in studying or working in when you're older. For example, if you are interested in studying nursing, you might volunteer at a hospital.
- You meet new people and make new friends! You'll be working with like-minded people which makes it easier to find common interests and make new connections.
- It can improve your mental health. Helping others makes us feel good, while also creating a sense of purpose. Also, having another network of people you can chat to and spend time with can reduce feelings of loneliness.

CAREERS

Job roles in Law

- Barrister
- Police Officer
- Solicitor
- Paralegal
- Data Analyst
- Judicial Assistant
- Academic e.g. Lecturer
- Human Resources Officer
- Detective
- Stockbroker
- Licensed Conveyancer

SCAN THE QR CODE
TO CHAT TO US
ABOUT LAW NOW!



WHY STUDY... LAW?

A Law degree is a fantastic degree to choose to study. It's a diverse and broad subject which can lead to many different careers. This is due to the flexibility of the degree! You study 7 core subjects, such as Contract and Criminal Law, and then choose more niche areas of the law to study as your optional modules.

These can be anything from Human Rights, Family or Biomedical Law. You can tailor the degree to what

interests you which brings a personal experience to your learning. You can further tailor your Law degree by doing a Joint Honours. This is where you study two subjects instead of one, for example Law with Criminology. A popular choice is to study Law with Languages because you get the opportunity to study abroad for a year.

WORDS FROM CHLOE

Chloe is an Aimhigher Plus Progression Ambassador. She studied at the University of Leicester and is a Law with Criminology graduate

Why did you choose to study Law?

Deciding to study Law was not an easy choice! I've always been interested in the way that people behave and interact in society, considering what is right or wrong. However, I was unsure whether I wanted to become a lawyer or pursue another career. After attending a summer school at the University of Birmingham, I was reassured that studying Law can lead to many different careers. The many transferable skills you gain whilst studying Law, such as public speaking, conflict resolution and analytical thinking, all made doing a Law degree worthwhile and prepared me for the world of work.

What did you enjoy about studying Law?

One of my favourite things about studying Law was the different ways in which I was taught. There were some days where I did 'mooting', which is where you practise defending a client in a case in a mock courtroom. Other days, I would write essays and draft legal documents. Being able to combine the legal theory with practise made for some exciting days and provided me with lots of practical skills.

What did you find challenging?

Doing a law degree is not easy; one of the hardest things was the workload. Every week I would be expected to have read multiple chapters from textbooks on top of my assignments. It was essential that I planned my time well and had a study plan so that I didn't feel overwhelmed. Luckily, I had Wednesdays off where I could study in the library and catch up on work.



Spotlight On Ecology

Did you know? There are a range of areas in which ecologists might specialise such as freshwater, marine, terrestrial or even individual species.

Ecologists look at the relationships between organisms and ecosystems, helping to protect and restore the natural environment. An ecologist conducts surveys on an area of land to identify the species and habitats present.

They can be involved in ecological and environmental impact assessments to highlight how a particular plan or project might impact an area. They also often work alongside other professions including engineers and town planners.

Ecologists can also be involved in habitat management, restoration or even the creation of new areas completely!

A FEW WORDS FROM ANDREA

"I completed a Biological Sciences degree at the University of Birmingham and went on to work as an ecologist for 7 years before joining the Aimhigher team. Ecology is a broad field, and I was keen to work in a job with sustainability and protecting the natural world as a focus. My favourite thing about the job was the site work and the variety

you could be in a woodland looking for bats one day, and then in a river focusing on identifying signs of otter and water vole the next. No two days were the same! I found that my degree in Biological Sciences was a great platform to go into a variety of jobs and this, combined with my career in ecology, left me with a wide range of transferable skills for the future."

JOB ROLES IN BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

- Ecologist
- Environmental Scientist
- Research Scientist
- Marine Biologist
- Microbiologist
- Nanotechnologist
- Nature Conservation Officer
- Pharmacologist
- Soil Scientist
- Environmental Education Officer

Want more careers advice? Come and chat to our friendly advisers on our website! www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk/ask

FAMOUS SCIENCE GRADUATES



DAVID ATTENBOROUGH
JOB TITLE: BROADCASTER
DEGREE: NATURAL SCIENCES



CHRIS PACKHAM
JOB TITLE: TV PRESENTER
DEGREE: ZOOLOGY



LISA KUDROW
JOB TITLE: ACTRESS
DEGREE: BIOLOGY

STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY

Following the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, last year, sustainability is more important than ever. Whether you are in a gardening club, are thinking of studying Environmental Sciences, or just want to do your bit, you might want to know how to help care for the planet. Making sustainable switches can also help you save money too, which is a great skill to have as a young adult. Here are some student-friendly sustainability tips you can try!

Meatless and Dairy-Free Days

The meat and dairy industry create more greenhouse emissions than the world's transport emissions put together. Eating a vegan diet is one of the most sustainable actions an individual can make, but it's not for everyone.

Instead, cut down your meat and dairy consumption by doing things such as 'Meatless Mondays'. Meat and dairy products are expensive too, so cutting down your usage and doing a few swaps saves a few pennies while helping the planet.

There are loads of options out there for you to try. Why not try supermarket own branded items, such as plant-based milks or convenience foods? You could swap out meat in easy meals like spaghetti bolognaise and replace with lentils, which are cheap and healthy too!

Why better for the planet:

Less greenhouse emissions from the meat and dairy industries

Why better for your pocket:

Meat and dairy options can be cheaper

Reducing Plastic Waste

To help lower plastic waste, you can simply opt for food (like fruit and veggies) without plastic packaging at your local supermarket and put them in a reusable bag instead.

Also, using a travel cup when you buy a hot drink, or carrying a water bottle to re-fill is a great, easy way to reduce plastic waste. Coffee shops sometimes reduce the price when you use your own cup too!

Why better for the planet:

Less single use plastic waste

Why better for your pocket:

Can be cheaper as you aren't paying for packaging

Unplug and Turn Off

Turning your electric appliances completely off, and not on standby, will stop energy from being wasted which reduces your environmental footprint. Make sure you turn off or unplug lights, laptops, phone chargers and heating when you aren't using them.

Why better for the planet:

Stops wasting energy resources

Why better for your pocket:

Saves money on energy bills

Walk When You Can

Walking is not only free but it's also great for your physical and mental wellbeing. Try walking when you can, whether that's walking to school or to a friend's house. It's great for your body as it releases endorphins and keeps you fit, it's cheaper than getting taxis or buses, and it's great for the planet as you aren't contributing to any fuel emissions!

Remember! If you can't walk somewhere, using public transport is better for the planet than travelling by car.

Why better for the planet:

Less fuel emissions

Why better for your pocket:

Walking is free and public transport costs less than a car

Mending and Looking After Your Clothes

Having a few handy items like a darning needle and a de-bobbler can help you restore old clothes. Looking after your clothes, like not over-washing them and repairing them, will mean they last longer and won't need to be thrown away and end up in landfill.

When you do need to buy clothes, try going to charity shops, swapping clothes with friends or using apps like Depop and Vinted. This helps reuse and recycle old clothes and keep them out of landfill. You might grab yourself a bargain too! If you have clothes that you don't want or wear, why not do the same and donate them to charity, swap with friends or sell them online. And if they can't be donated, reuse the material for cleaning rags or a creative project.

Why better for the planet:

Less fast fashion in landfill

Why better for your pocket:

You won't have to buy new clothes as often, saving you money

REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE

To find more tips on living sustainably, head over to the University Insider's YouTube channel!

www.youtube.com/c/UniversityInsiders



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Recently, we caught up with individuals who received support from Aimhigher while they were at school or college. We asked them how we helped them on their educational journey and what they're up to now!

Name:
Tacena

Age:
21

Pronouns:
She/Her

What school/college did you attend and what did you study?

I attended Turves Green Girls' School and South and City College Birmingham (Bournville). For my GCSEs, my options were Food Technology, French, History and BTEC Level 2 Health and Social Care.

Was it an easy decision to decide what to study after leaving school?

At GCSE, I found choosing my options easy as I chose the subjects I was doing well in and enjoyed most. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do after school so I thought about the subjects that might benefit me when I chose what I wanted to do at college.

How did you find school/college?

I enjoyed school as I did well and I made some amazing friends who I am still close to. The thing I found challenging was studying for my GCSEs and year 10 and 11 exams. When you're studying hard, try your best and ask for help as this will help you achieve the grades you want.

How did Aimhigher help you at school/college?

During college, I took part in peer-mentor training through Aimhigher which was a good programme as I met a lot of people in different jobs, for example, Midwives and Nurses.

I received a lot of help from Aimhigher staff with my personal statement which helped me secure multiple interviews with universities. I also received a lot of advice and support from Aimhigher which was very beneficial to me.

I didn't get interviews with some of my top choices of universities, but Aimhigher helped me realise that there are many other universities that do the same course and have similar teaching styles. The university I now go to wasn't even one of my original choices! I'm very grateful to the Aimhigher staff who supported me and helped me get into university.

What are you doing now?

I am currently studying a Bachelor's Degree in Children's Nursing (Paediatric) at university. I'm very happy I chose this course as I'm passionate about caring for people and enjoy working with children. I didn't realise the different avenues I could peruse with my degree for example, I could become a school nurse, work within the community and even on a maternity ward in hospital. It's important to choose a degree that you want to do and can help you get a job that you'll enjoy.

At university, I like the support I receive from my personal tutor and the advice from the staff in the hospital I'm training at. I get a lot of support with my assignments and I know who to contact if I'm stuck with work or need additional help, like mental health support.

Do you have any advice for current students?

I would say just try your best. Even though you might not be sure what you want to do after school/ college, always aim higher and go for the top grades. If you work hard now and realise what you want to do later, you'll already have a good baseline of grades to give you more choice at further or higher education. Believe in yourself!

Name:
Adam

Age:
19

Pronouns:
He/Him

What school/college did you attend and what did you study?

I went to South and City College Birmingham (Longbridge) after I left school and I studied BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Mechanical Engineering.

Was it an easy decision to decide what to study after leaving school?

I've always wanted to do engineering since I was a kid and so I found it pretty easy to decide what course I wanted to do.

How did you find school/college?

I suffer badly with anxiety and so any change in environment, friends, teachers and learning methods was a lot to take in. Eventually, I found my footing and settled in well.

How did Aimhigher help you at school/college?

I received one-to-one support from Aimhigher staff during my time at college. They helped me to consider different career paths during a difficult time at college where I felt as if engineering wasn't the sector I belonged in. The assistance I received was what helped me to push myself into the unknown and decide to apply to an Electrical Engineering higher education course.

Aimhigher taught me the most effective ways to work and helped me integrate the methods in a way I was comfortable with, meaning I could adapt well if I was struggling. I appreciated how understanding and patient Aimhigher staff were with me, even if I missed some of our one-to-one sessions or if I hit a roadblock in my studies – they were always there to give me advice.

What are you doing now?

Foundation Degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. I plan study hard to achieve the grades I need to apply to the University of Birmingham to complete my final Degree year at Level 6.

While the challenges I face at higher education can be daunting and stressful, I have some great friends who I can rely on to help get me through those tough times. There's lots of support offered by fellow students.

Do you have any advice for current students?

Never be afraid to ask for help. Whether it's from a friend, a tutor or member of staff, help is always available. It's okay if you find university a daunting option to think about, it's a big decision to make! But make sure you evaluate all your options fully.

STUDY SKILLS

HOW YOU CAN MAKE REVISION WORK FOR YOU

Everyone revises differently. What helps you might not help someone else! Therefore, it's helpful to find revision techniques that work for you as soon as possible so you can start using these to prepare for exams and assessments while at school. We're going to provide some examples of different revision techniques to help you find something that will help you get those top grades!

1. POMODORO TECHNIQUE

Preparing to revise in a 2-hour block can be daunting and put you off starting. However, if you chunk it into a more manageable 25-minute block, with short breaks between, it'll be easier to maintain concentration as you include time for rewards or breaks.

Try the Pomodoro Technique, which is when you complete 25 minutes study + 5 minutes break.

The brain retains short chunks of information more easily. Try to stick to 2-4 pomodoro sessions in a row, then take a 30-minute break to avoid burning yourself out.

Always start with the subject you find most challenging first, and end with a subject you enjoy. This will help you feel positive at the end of a revision session.

3. USING APPS

Not a fan of writing things out and using paper flashcards? Using apps could be the technique for you! There are lots of useful apps that can help you revise in a variety of ways. Here's some you can try:

Quizlet – Makes simple learning tools such as flashcards and games that let you study anything.

Gojimo - Access over 40,000 practice questions for free, covering 28 GCSE subjects, 20 A Level subjects and more. You can track your progress, record strengths and weaknesses and check off each topic as you revise.

Brainscape – Flashcards app to help you find, create, and study "smart notecards" on any device.

BBC Bitesize – Find the key information you need for core subjects like Maths, English and Science and many more, broken down into bite-sized chunks.

Memrise – Supports your Languages studies with games, chatbots and over 30,000 native speaker videos.

GetRevising by The Student Room – Access the GetRevising website to find smart revision tools proven to boost your grades such as a revision timetable creator, interactive revision cards, games, and a shared resource library created by members.

25:
ENGLISH
LITERATURE

5: Moan about
revising on social
media

25:
PSYCHOLOGY

5: Stare out of the
window for a bit

25:
HISTORY

5: Dance around
your room
(or maybe just chat
with your friends)

2. REVISION TIMETABLE

Feb 2022						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
This is an example revision timetable to help you with making your own. Make sure you put in all your exams and other commitments first, then you can plan your revision around them.		1	2	3	4	5
				School	Football Practice	Maths
				History Section A	History Section A	History Section A
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Maths	School	School	School	School	School	Football Practice
Relax	Maths	Maths past paper	History Recap Maths			Football Practice
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
History Recap	School	School	School	School	School	Football Practice
Relax	History Recap	History Recap	History Recap	History Recap	History Recap	History Recap
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Grandmas's Birthday Party	Relax	School	School	School	School	Football Practice
	History Recap	History Recap	History Past paper	Relax	History Recap	Relax
27	28	1	2	3	4	5
Half Term	Half Term	Half Term	Half Term	Half Term	Half Term	Half Term

A revision timetable is like a calendar, but instead of having things like birthdays and appointments on it, it has subjects and topics you need to revise on specific days.

You can make revision timetables by hand using paper, electronically on a word document or even on an app/online tool like Google Calendar. It's totally up to you!

Having a revision timetable will help you to keep focused and organised whilst revising, meaning you can maximise your available study time.

It will also help you to break down your revision into smaller and more manageable chunks, which is much less scary! You can make sure you dedicate time to cover each of your subjects before your exams.

TOP TIPS

CHECKLIST

Spend 10 minutes at the start of the day writing a list of everything you'd like to achieve. Ticking things off releases dopamine, known as the "pleasure chemical", into your body making you feel happy!

TUNE OUT

Listening to music or white noise can help keep distraction at bay. Studies suggest that instrumental/ unfamiliar songs may be more beneficial (and prevent you from getting carried away by singing along!)

BE BRAVE

It's tempting to avoid your worst subjects and do others first... however, if you start with the hard stuff, you can relax knowing it can only get easier afterwards.

BRING SNACKS

There's no point trying to focus when you're hungry! Keep a stock of healthy snacks near your desk so that you don't have to stop 'mid flow' to hunt for a Kit-Kat.

RELOCATE

Suddenly feeling the urge to deep clean your bedroom? A change of scenery can help keep you focused. Head to a local library or go to a friend's house to study.

GO OFFLINE

We know... this is a hard one! Your phone can be a major distraction when it comes to revising, so try putting it on Do Not Disturb and hide it out of sight. You don't have to be cut off all day – 5 minutes online could be a reward for completing 25 minutes of revision.

HOW TO ACE YOUR INTERVIEW

So you've applied for a part-time job, apprenticeship or training centre and been offered an interview. What kinds of questions might you be asked and how can you prepare?

Here are a few examples of the types of questions you may be asked:

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
- What are your interests?
- What subjects are you studying at school/what did you study at school?
- What is/was your favourite subject?
- Do you have or have you held any positions of responsibility?
- What achievements are you most proud of?

Competency Based Questions

Many interviewers use competency-based questions to assess candidates' ability to fulfil a role.

These types of questions invite you to describe a situation or scenario. The interviewer may ask what you needed to do in the example, what happened and how you achieved it.

Here are a few examples of competency-based questions:

1. Provide an example of when you have worked as part of a team.
2. Tell us about a time when you have solved a problem.
3. Tell us about a time when you had to meet a tight deadline.
4. Provide an example of when you have taken the lead in an activity or project.
5. Tell us about a time where you developed your communication skills.

It's a good idea to have a list of example answers ready in your mind so that you can draw on these and apply them to the questions you are asked. These could include situations you have come across at school or college, in work or in your social life.

You can also use the **STAR** technique to help answer this type of question:

1. **Situation** – describe the event or situation
2. **Task** – explain the task you had to complete
3. **Action** – describe the specific action you took to complete the task
4. **Result** – finish with the results of your input with examples of any key achievements

At the end of an interview, the interviewer will usually ask if you have any questions for them. Consider if there's anything you'd like to know more about the role or company and have a few questions prepared. This shows that you are interested in the role and are keen to learn more! It's fine to ask about details such as working hours and uniform, however, try to ask questions about salary only if you are offered the role.



Need extra help?

If you are attending school or college, ask your Careers Lead or a teacher for support.

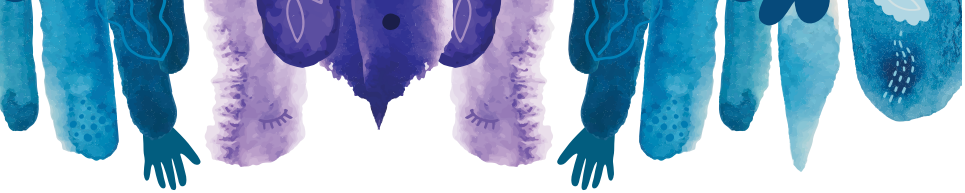
If you are NEET (not in education, employment or training), aged 16 – 19 (up to 25 if you have a learning disability or difficulty), and live in Birmingham, you can contact Birmingham Careers Service for lots of free, professional and friendly advice:

birminghamcareersservice.co.uk

Live outside of Birmingham?

Contact your local authority and find out what support services are provided in your area. Good luck!

BIRMINGHAM CAREERS SERVICE
guiding young people



Mental Health Support at University

Prioritising your mental health and knowing where to find support is really important. My name's Remy, BA (Hons) Drama and Performance graduate from the University of Worcester. While I was at university, I sought help myself whilst studying, and here I'll be sharing with you what mental health support is available at university if you need it.



When applying to university, you have the choice to disclose any mental health difficulties on your UCAS application. This ensures students can access the support they are entitled to.

Many people worry that if they disclose a mental health difficulty, it will negatively affect their application. However, Equality Act legislation makes it illegal for staff to discriminate against you. The decision of whether you are offered a place on a course must be purely down to academic suitability. Some courses such as nursing, teaching, or social work additionally require a fitness-to-practice assessment.

University Support

Universities offer a range of activities to support their students from when they begin their studies. This can be anything from coffee mornings, 1-to-1 counselling or even yoga sessions. All universities will vary with what they offer, so it's good to ask questions about this at open days and on campus visits. At my university, there was a weekly event called 'Fancy a Cuppa'. This was an event held in a common area at the university where staff and students could meet with like-minded people and take a break from the rush of university life. It was a great chance to chat to people about how you were feeling and sometimes they even had therapy puppies!

Other Services Available to You

There are also a number of other services available to you outside of university if you need additional support:

YoungMinds

YoungMinds are a mental health charity for children, young people and their parents. They have a Crisis Messenger service which provides free crisis support every day of the week, at any time day or night. You just need to text YM to 85258. All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors, and texts are free from most mobile networks. They also have lots of useful information on their website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Samaritans

Samaritans is a charity aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide. If you need someone to talk to, they will listen, and won't judge or tell you what to do. Whatever you're going through, you can call Samaritans any time, from any phone for free on 116 123, or email at jo@samaritans.org

Beat

The charity Beat provide information to help young people who may be struggling with issues around eating, including an eating disorder. They provide advice, links to local support and one-to-one webchats. You can call their dedicated helplines: Youthline on 0808 801 0711 (for anyone under 18) or Studentline on 0808 801 0811 (for students).

Papyrus

Papyrus (Prevention of Young Suicide) provides advice and support for young people who are experiencing thoughts about taking their own life, and all their advice is confidential. You can call their helpline, HOPELineUK, on 0800 068 41 41 or text them on 07786 209 687.

If you'd like to more tips and information on mental health support at university, head over to the Aimhigher YouTube channel to check out our videos: www.youtube.com/c/AimhigherWM

Phone Call Support

If you'd prefer to have support in a more confidential environment and don't particularly like the idea of meeting someone in person, don't worry! Universities offer support over the phone, perhaps with a counsellor or a current student. Some universities offer a scheme where students run a hotline to support with things such as exam stress or feeling home sick. This is all completely confidential and a great way to seek support without having to leave your house.

Mitigating Circumstances

'Mitigating Circumstances' are events that are sudden, significantly disruptive and beyond your control. These events could be something such as a family bereavement, or difficulty with physical or mental health. You can request to be granted mitigating circumstances if you think your studies will be impacted by your circumstance. Each university will offer mitigating circumstances and, whilst it may differ amongst different institutions, the overall principle is the same. Universities can grant you extensions on deadlines for coursework or exams. Universities want to support you as best they can so they will offer flexibility so you can continue with your studies. The best thing to do in these situations is report it to your lecturer or academic tutor right away and do your best to keep them in the loop.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Confidence is a great trait to have as you progress through education. For example, making friends can become easier, new environments become less scary and it's also a skill that employers really value!

Here, we have some tips which can get you started on building your confidence.

1. DAILY HABITS – These can include drinking plenty of water, exercising, reading, or waking up and going to sleep at the same time. What you do on a regular basis becomes a part of your identity. It improves your self-discipline and as a result makes you more likely to achieve and develop confidence.

2. GOAL SETTING - Doing this gives us the power to imagine our ideal future. Setting clear goals gives you structure and something to aim for, so you know what you are working towards. They keep you focused, motivated and give a sense of satisfaction when you achieve them, giving you more self-belief and confidence!

3. KNOWING YOUR MORALS AND VALUES – Taking some time to establish your morals and values can help us when making decisions and taking action. By keeping your key values in mind, you can stay focused on the life you want to live, and that includes a life with confidence.

4. DO SOMETHING WHICH IS OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE – To do this, you could seek out more opportunities at school to practice something that scares you. Perhaps you fear speaking in front of the class – the only way to overcome this is to do it! It's also okay to fail and try again. Identifying your fears and learning to overcome them will improve your confidence.

5. MANAGING EMOTIONS - Everyone experiences a wide range of emotions, but if you let them control you and your decisions, they will dictate your life and hold you back. You could try journaling or labelling your emotions in your mind to help you recognise them and respond to them, rather than react. Remember, you are in charge of your emotions – by being in control of your feelings, you will feel more confident.

6. MINDSET - "Whatever you hold in your mind on a consistent basis is exactly what you will experience in your life. If you go into a situation knowing that you can handle

it, then that's exactly what you'll do. This is what it means to have a 'growth' mindset. When you view your challenges as opportunities to learn something new, you're able to approach them with confidence. You begin to view setbacks as progress.

7. DISCOVER WHAT YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT – Brainstorm some of the activities you find fulfilling and meaningful. This could include hobbies, interests, particular school subjects or anything else that makes you happy. Pay attention to activities that make you lose track of time since that usually means you're enjoying them. Alternatively, you could explore the things you've always wanted to try!

8. BE KIND TO YOURSELF - Being kind to yourself promotes happiness and confidence as we allow ourselves to be imperfect and human. Nobody is perfect! Self-acceptance and self-compassion can be tricky, but if you wouldn't speak unkindly to a friend, then you shouldn't be speaking to yourself unkindly, either.



Aimhigher West Midlands is a partnership of universities, schools and colleges who work together to help young people to:

- **Become motivated and confident about their learning and career progression**
- **Explore the world of higher education and what it might mean for them**
- **Make informed decisions about their future.**

Higher education changes the life chances of students, strengthens our economy and enriches our society. We want to ensure that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education has the opportunity to do so.



If you require more information,
go to www.aimhigherwm.ac.uk
or contact Aimhigher at
aimhigher@contacts.bham.ac.uk

