

The Parents' Guide to

POST 18 OPTIONS

2021-2022 *(summary)*



Introduction

What your child chooses to do after sixth form (or college) is exciting but can be nerve-racking. There are lots of options available and understanding the pros and cons between different choices can be confusing.

It's not just about deciding whether to go to work or continue further education – although that's a good starting point. Important considerations include how long they want to continue studying, how they will finance living expenses and course fees (and whether you can afford to help them), whether they want to study in a more academic environment or in a more practical environment (such as studying whilst working).

Many qualifications can be built upon, so they may commit to one year of further

study and then decide to increase it for another year or two to get a higher qualification. This flexibility can be very useful, particularly for students who are not keen to commit to long-term studies after school, but find they enjoy it once they've got started. In the case of degrees, they will need to commit to the length of study (minimum three years) from the beginning.

This guide is designed to outline post-18 options and give a brief introduction to what's involved. If you want to delve deeper and find out more, we've included useful links to other reliable sources' and The Parents' Guide to has specialist guides for studying at university or taking apprenticeships. Simply click on the picture icons to be taken to our recommended websites.

Join us

If you're interested in regular updates about other ways you can help your teenage children, click here and join our online community.

[Sign up here](#)

Level	Qualification / educational routes				
8	Doctorate (PhD)			NVQ 8	
7	Masters degree (MA)			Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7	
6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc				
5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)			
4			Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4	
3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	BTEC (extended) diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3
2	GCSE Grades 4- 9 (C, B, A or A*)			BTEC first diploma	Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2
1	GCSE Grades 1- 3 (D,E,F or G)			Foundation diploma / entry level qualifications	Traineeship / NVQ 1
Academic route				Vocational route	Applied / work route

Levels of Education

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there are eight qualification levels (1 - 8) plus an entry level qualification for those just starting. Generally, the higher the level, the more difficult the qualification is. Levels 1-3 are typically taught in schools and colleges.

With so many different qualifications, it can be hard to know what they mean and where they might lead to next. To help you understand, we've created a summary of what the qualifications and levels mean highlighting academic, vocational and work-based routes to higher education.

University Degree

Qualification type

Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science

Length of commitment

3-4 Years

Some degrees, such as medicine are longer

Tuition Costs

£££

Students take out a “tuition fee loan” to pay course costs. No repayments are made until the student is earning £25k in the April after graduation and then only as a percentage of earnings above £25k. Payments are paused if salary drops below £25k. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 30 years.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£-£££

Students may receive a “maintenance loan” dependent on parents’ income; however, this is rarely sufficient to cover all costs and students will either need to supplement by working or have help from their parents (or both!). Accommodation costs will vary depending on where the student is living – large cities are more expensive.

Alternatives

Degree apprenticeship, Foundation Year

LOAN REPAYMENTS AREN'T BASED ON HOW MUCH YOUR CHILD BORROWED, BUT RATHER ON HOW MUCH THEY EARN LATER

More information

UCAS

The Parents' Guide to

Support articles

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you to their website*



DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS
OFFER AN EARN WHILE YOU
LEARN ROUTE TO OBTAINING A
FULL DEGREE QUALIFICATION



Degree Apprenticeships

Qualification type

Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science

Length of commitment

3-4 Years

(Some can be longer, even up to 7 years)

Tuition Costs

£0

Course costs (at university) are paid by the company and government.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£-££

A salary is paid, but parents may need to subsidise living expenses, especially if relocating to an expensive area.

Alternatives

Advanced apprenticeship, Higher apprenticeship, Foundation Year

More information

Amazing
Apprentices

Gov.UK

Support
articles

The Parents'
Guide to

Non-degree apprenticeships

Qualification type

Advanced or Higher apprenticeship

Length of commitment

6 Months – 3 Years

Tuition Costs

£0

Course costs (usually at college or by an education provider) are paid by the company and government.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£-££

A salary is paid, and shorter apprenticeships may be local so students can continue living at home, but parents may need to subsidise living expenses, especially if relocating to an expensive area for longer apprenticeships.

Alternatives

Higher education courses

IN 2019 OVER 100 000 STUDENTS UNDER 19 STARTED AN APPRENTICESHIP

More information

Amazing Apprentices

Gov.UK

Support articles

The Parents' Guide to



COLLEGE COURSES VARY
IN BOTH LENGTH OF STUDY
AND QUALIFICATION TYPE

Higher education course at college

Qualification type

Higher National Diplomas (HNDs),
Higher National Certificates (HNCs),
Foundation Courses, Diplomas,
Vocational courses

Students can apply for an “advanced learner loan” where repayments are made as a percentage of earnings above a certain threshold. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 25 years.

Length of commitment

1 – 3 Years

Some are part-time

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£

Students can often find suitable courses at colleges commutable from home, but there are still living expenses to be covered.

Tuition Costs

££

Tuition fees need to be paid but these are less expensive than university fees.

Alternatives

Non degree apprenticeships

More information

Gov.UK

National
Careers
Service

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you to their website*

The Parents' Guide to Standing out

Applying for jobs and university is incredibly competitive, often with hundreds of applicants for just a few places. So how can your child stand out from others? By demonstrating interests outside their academic studies.

In The Parents' Guide to Standing out from the crowd, we explore different things your child can do to expand their interests and find out more about subjects they might like to study in future. This includes taking up healthy habits, improving their skillset and harnessing their personal strengths.

Put them onto the path to success:

- ✓ Self-development and increasing confidence through reading, audiobooks and podcasts
- ✓ Getting work experience (including virtual placements)
- ✓ Benefits of research and how to take a different approach
- ✓ How different hobbies impact mental and physical health – and what transferable skills they develop with dedicated sections on music and sports
- ✓ Recommendations for non-curricular online courses
- ✓ Benefits of competitions



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Traineeship

Qualification type

To prepare students for work or to go on to further education.

Length of commitment

6 weeks to 6 months

Tuition Costs

£0

Training fees are paid by the government.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£-££

Not paid to work, but some expenses (such as travel) may be provided. Accommodation costs may be expensive if needing to relocate.

Alternatives

Job with training, internship or apprenticeship

More information

Gov.uk



Job with training

ON-SITE TRAINING MIGHT BE MORE ENJOYABLE THAN CLASSROOM TRAINING



Qualification type

Training usually funded by employer, but check that it is a nationally recognised qualification, such as a NVQ

Length of commitment

n/a

Tuition Costs

£0

Training funded by the employer.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£

Salary provided and jobs are usually within commutable distance from home, though travel can be expensive.

More information

Gov.uk

City Gateway

Job without training / volunteering

Qualification type

Going straight into a job offers work experience but not a qualification. However, it is possible to create a personal training plan if desired.

Length of commitment

n/a

Tuition Costs

£-££

Any training would be self-funded.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£

Salary provided (unless volunteering) and jobs are usually within commutable distance from home, though travel can be expensive.

Alternatives

Internship, traineeship, voluntary work or apprenticeship

More information

Job boards

WORKING CAN HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP KEY TRANSFERABLE SKILLS



Internship



Qualification type

None

Length of commitment

1 month to 6 months

Some might be longer.

Tuition Costs

£0

Internships are about gaining practical work experience so there are rarely any formal qualifications undertaken.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£-££

Legally interns should be paid (unless classed as a volunteer), but many aren't, although some companies may cover travel expenses. Depending on the location, living and travel expenses could be costly.

Alternatives

Traineeship, job with training

More information

Gov.uk

Personal contacts

Gap Year

Qualification type

Traditionally, this is a year spent travelling overseas, but it needn't focus exclusively on that. Volunteering and work experience can also be incorporated. This is particularly relevant if Covid continues to restrict travel through 2021/2022. A gap year can be taken while entry to university is being deferred (allowing a year between leaving school and starting university) or if university is not the next step at all.

Length of commitment

1 year

Tuition Costs

£0

There are no tuition costs unless retaking sixth form examinations.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£-£££

Gap years need not be expensive. Flights and accommodation are usually covered for overseas volunteering. Personal travel can be funded by working for part of the year.

More information

Gap Year
ideas

A GAP YEAR CAN BE SELF
FUNDED BY WORKING
PART OF THE YEAR



Start a business



Qualification type

None, but it's important to have drive, commitment and an idea of what business idea to pursue.

Length of commitment

n/a

Tuition Costs

£-££

It may be useful to take some courses to hone skills when setting up a business. The Prince's Trust, Local Enterprise Partnership, and New Enterprise Allowance offer grants and mentoring.

Accommodation Costs and living expenses

£

Lots of young people start their businesses online, which means minimal start up costs and they can continue living at home.

Alternatives

Start the business whilst working or in education

More information

Local
Enterprise
Network

Prince's Trust

Summary table

	University Degree	Degree Apprenticeship	Non-degree apprenticeship	Higher education course at College
Qualification type	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science	Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science	Advanced or Higher apprenticeship	HNDs HNCs, Foundation Courses, Diplomas Vocational course
Length of commitment	3-4 Years (Some degrees, such as medicine, are longer)	3-4 Years (Some can be longer, even up to 7 years)	6 Months – 3 Years	1 – 3 Years Some are part-time.
Tuition Costs	£££ Students take out a “tuition fee loan” to pay course costs. No repayments are made until the student is earning £25k in the April after graduation. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 30 years.	£0 Course costs (at university) are paid by the company and government.	£0 Course costs (usually at college or by an education provider) are paid by the company and government.	££ Tuition fees need to be paid but these are less expensive than university fees. Students can apply for an “advanced learner loan” where repayments are made as a percentage of earnings above a certain threshold. Any outstanding debt is wiped clear after 25 years.
Accommodation Costs and living expenses (i.e. food, book, travel, going out)	£-£££ May receive a “maintenance loan” dependent on parents’ income; however, this is rarely sufficient to cover all costs and students will either need to supplement by working or have help from their parents (or both!).	£-££ A salary is paid, but parents may need to subsidise living expenses, especially if relocating to an expensive area.	£-££ A salary is paid, and shorter apprenticeships may be local so students can continue living at home, but parents may need to subsidise living expenses, especially if relocating to an expensive area for longer apprenticeships.	£ Students can often find suitable courses at colleges commutable from home, but there are still living expenses to be covered.
Alternatives	Company sponsored degrees (they are not an employee but gain work experience from the sponsor company)	Could also consider school leaver programmes (non degree apprenticeships)	Higher education courses	Non degree apprenticeships

	Traineeship	Job with training	Job without training	Internship	Gap Year	Start a business
Qualification type	To prepare students for work or to go on to further education.	Training usually funded by employer, but check that it is a national recognised qualification, such as NVQ	Going straight into a job offers work experience but not a qualification. However, it is possible to create a personal training plan if desired.	None	Could include a year working for a charity or other employer to gain skills – not just about travelling. Can combine A level retakes in this year.	None, but it's important to have drive, commitment and an idea of what business idea to pursue.
Length of commitment	6 weeks to 6 months	n/a	n/a	1 month to 6 months But some up to a year.	1 year	n/a
Tuition Costs	£0 Training fees are paid by the government.	£0 Training funded by the employer.	£-££ Any training would be self-funded.	£0 Internships are about gaining practical work experience so there are rarely any formal qualifications undertaken.	£0 There are no tuition costs unless retaking examinations.	£-££ It may be useful to take some courses to hone skills when setting up a business. The Prince's Trust, Local Enterprise Partnership, and New Enterprise Allowance offer grants and mentoring.
Accommodation Costs and living expenses (i.e. food, book, travel, going out)	£-££ Not paid to work, but some expenses (such as travel) may be provided. Accommodation costs may be expensive if needing to relocate.	£ Salary provided and jobs are usually within commutable distance from home, though travel can be expensive.	£ Salary provided and jobs are usually within commutable distance from home, though travel can be expensive.	£-££ Legally interns should be paid although many aren't. Some companies may cover travel expenses. Depending on the location, living and travel expenses could be costly.	£-£££ Gap years need not be expensive. Flights and accommodation is usually covered for overseas volunteering. Personal travel can be funded by working for part of the year.	£ Lots of young people start their businesses online, which means minimal start up costs and they can continue living at home.
Alternatives	Job with training, internship or apprenticeship (if they have some work experience)			Traineeship, job with training		Start the business whilst working or in education



Visit **The Parents' Guide to** website for more support and resources:

Parent Guides

Our range of interactive guides provide you with easy to follow advice, hyperlinks to reliable sources and the most up-to-date information.

Support articles

Browse through our collection of online articles covering a range of topics from supporting your child with their revision to helping them apply to university through UCAS.

Parent Q&A

Almost every parent has questions about their child's education. Read through answers to commonly asked questions or ask your own.

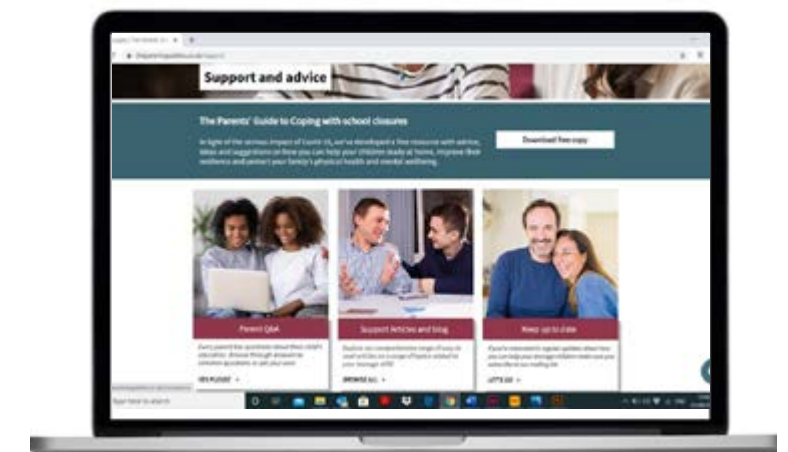
Blog

Our blog provides reliable and timely advice and support to changes taking place across UK schools and colleges.

Parent newsletter

Sign up to our parent newsletter and receive free support, advice and resources on how you can help your teenage children straight to your inbox.

All our resources are ready for immediate download

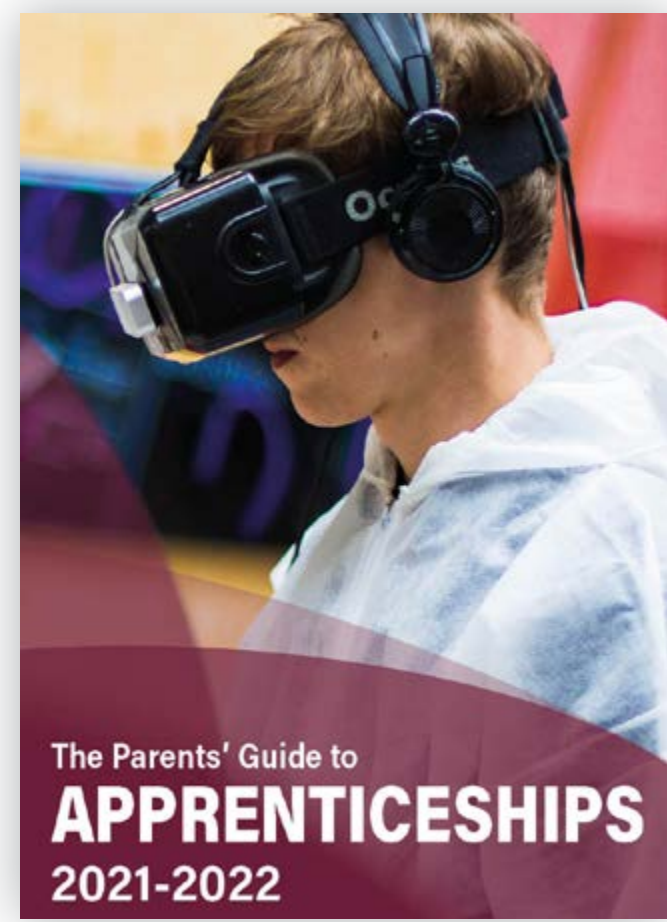
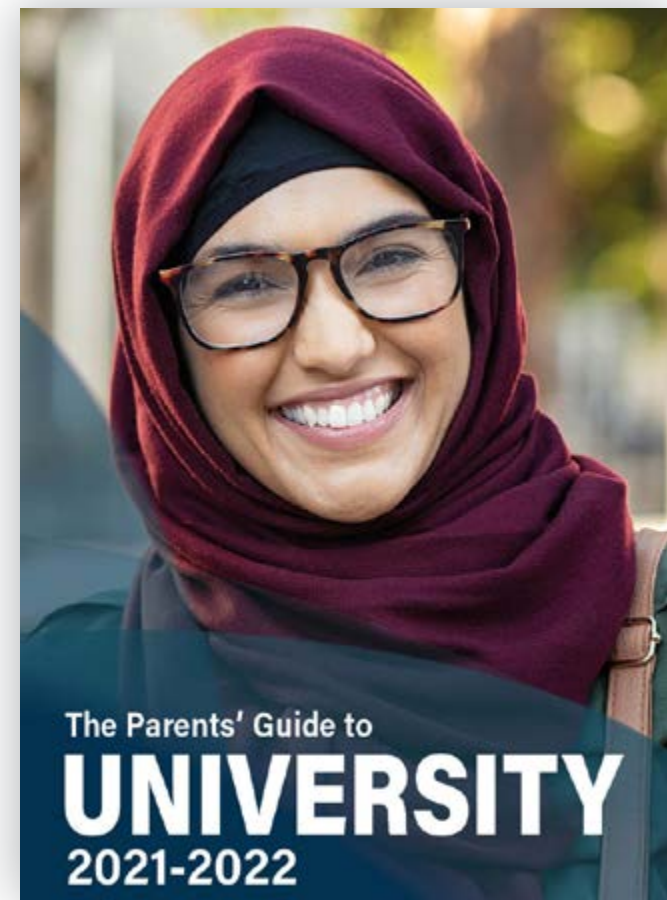


[**www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/parents**](http://www.theparentsguideto.co.uk/parents)

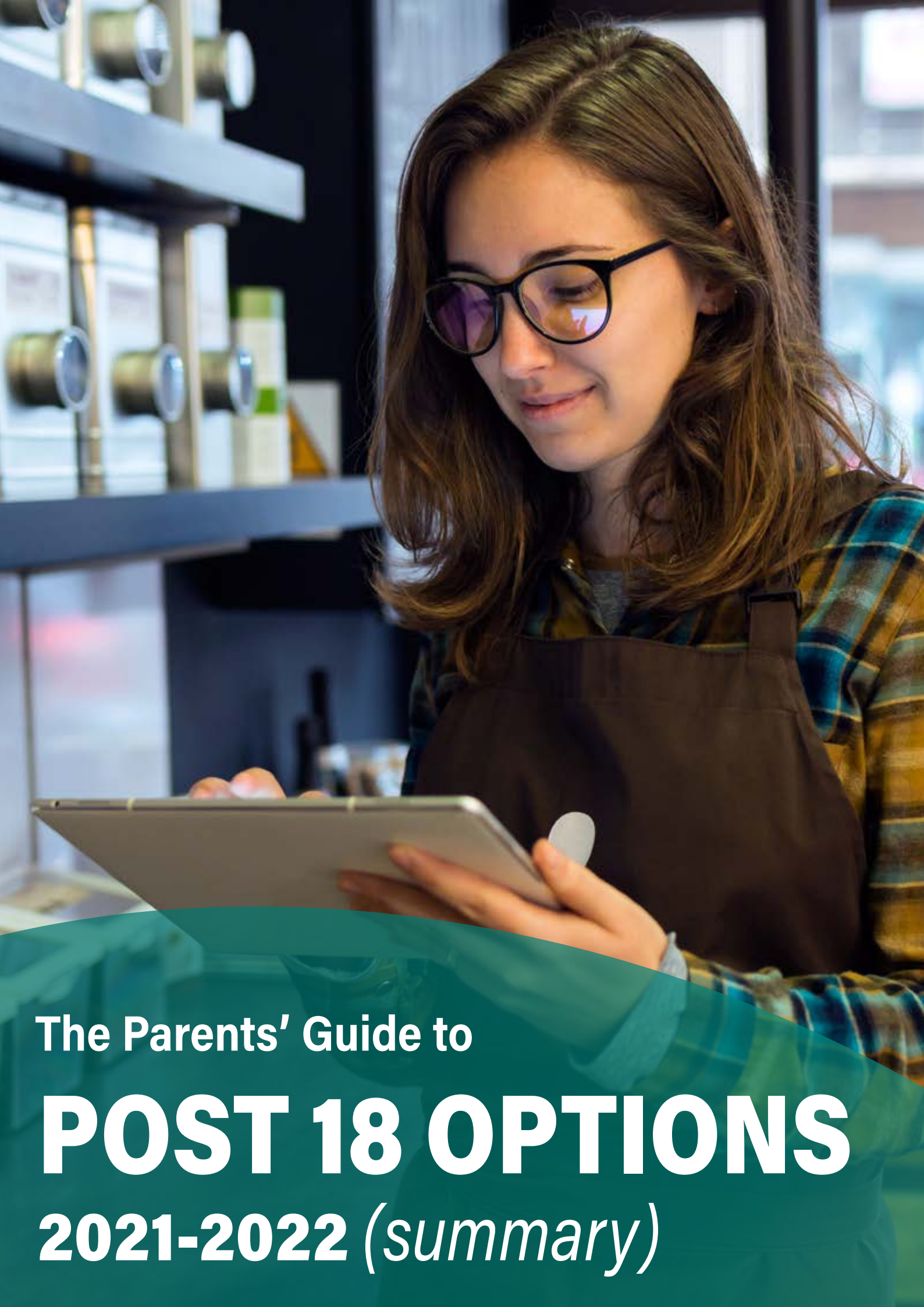
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