

Changing or leaving your course – your questions answered

No two people's circumstances are the same. It's important that you know how to access the right support and advice. These commonly asked questions should provide you with the direction you need and help you to identify the best people to speak with.

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Some important considerations

- [Does my tutor need to know that I'm thinking about changing or leaving my course?](#)
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Does my tutor need to know that I'm thinking about changing or leaving my course?

A conversation that you have with any member of staff in the Careers Service or Student Services is not disclosed to academic staff. We offer a [confidential service](#) (PDF: 26KB) to all students. It can be beneficial, however, to share your concerns with your tutor. They may be able to advise and direct you to relevant sources of support or reassure you about future course content. You may want to talk to a [careers adviser](#) about how to approach the subject with your tutor. It can, however, only be your decision to discuss your current circumstances with your tutor.

What will employers think if I change or leave my course?

Don't assume employers will view your choice negatively. Employers will respond to your situation based on the information they have available. It is therefore sensible to present your change of course in a positive way. How you do this will depend on your own circumstances, but you could show an understanding of self-awareness, responsibility, research skills and decision-making ability in presenting how you took this choice.

You may want to discuss how you present this information to an employer with a careers adviser.

Will I get any qualifications for the time I've spent studying?

This depends on how long you have been studying. If you completed a full year, passing 120 credits, and were due to progress to stage 2, you will be eligible for a Higher Education Certificate (CertHE). If you have completed 2 years of study, passing 240 credits, you would be eligible for a Higher Education Diploma (DipHE).

Contact [Student Progress](#) for further advice on this.

What will an employer think of the new subject I am planning to study?

Employers value both your subject knowledge and the skills and experience you gain as a student. Many employers will recruit students from any degree course, placing emphasis on how you have used your initiative and time at university. They want you to demonstrate the appropriate attitudes and transferable skills relevant to the opportunities advertised.

The Prospects website section [What can I do with my degree?](#) can help you to identify those skills and think about career options where your degree would be useful.

Changing your course

- [How do I research other courses to apply for?](#)
- [If I change course, how can I ensure I make the best choice?](#)
- [What should I say when contacting an admissions tutor for a course I am interested in studying?](#)
- [How do I go about changing course at Newcastle?](#)
- [Can I go straight into the 2nd year?](#)
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- [I like some aspects of my course – can I change to Combined Honours?](#)

How do I research other courses to apply for?

If you are keen to study an alternative course at university, the [UCAS website - What to study](#) offers useful advice, including an easy-to-use [course search tool](#). If you need a more flexible study option, then [hotcourses](#) allows you to search for part-time and evening courses in both further and higher education.

If you know where you want to study, most universities and colleges will have an online prospectus or details of courses on their website. A [degree apprenticeship](#) could be another option to consider, allowing you to study while in paid employment.

If I change course, how can I ensure I make the best choice?

The UCAS website has useful advice in its [What to study](#) section. Examining the course content, assessment methods and skills developed from the course are just some of the things to consider. Talking ideas through with an impartial [careers adviser](#) can help you examine the implications of any course change and help you to feel more confident about your decisions.

What should I say when contacting an admissions tutor for a course I am interested in studying?

It is essential that you are able to explain positively your decision to change course. An admissions tutor will want to talk with you about why you now feel this is the best course for you. Focus on issues such as what interests you about the course and why you will be successful at it, rather than what is wrong with your current course. It can be useful to first discuss how you might approach this discussion with a careers adviser.

How do I go about changing course at Newcastle?

Speak to the Degree Programme Director (DPD) of the course you wish to transfer to and the DPD of your current course. If in agreement, the respective DPDs then sign the appropriate transfer forms and manage the process on your behalf.

[Student Progress](#), located on Level 2 of King's Gate, can support you with further advice on this process.

Can I go straight into the 2nd year?

Much will depend on whether the course you are transferring to is similar in nature to your current course. If there are no similarities you will be required to start in stage 1. To move into the 2nd year you will be expected to have passed an appropriate number of credits from the previous year. We recommend that you discuss what is expected of you with the tutor for the course you want to move to.

Do I need to sit and/or pass my exams to change course?

This will depend on your circumstances and the course and stage you are moving to. If you are looking to start a new subject from the first year, this is less likely to be a requirement. If you are transferring to a similar subject, you might be expected to show your success in exams. If you are progressing to the next year of a similar course, you will be expected to have passed the appropriate number of credits from your previous year.

We recommend that you discuss what is expected of you with the tutor for the course you want to move to.

How late in the academic year can I change course?

In theory you can change course at any time, but you may have to wait for the start of a new academic year to change to a different subject. It depends on how similar your new course is to your current one and whether you want to stay within the same year or start again.

You may need to consider the financial implications of staying on or leaving your course:

- if you withdraw or suspend during term 1, you will be charged 25% of the total academic year's fee
- if you withdraw or suspend during term 2, you will be charged 50% of the total academic year's fee
- if you withdraw or suspend during term 3, you will be charged 100% of the total academic year's fee

Visit Student Wellbeing for more info on the [financial implications of withdrawing from your course](#).

Should I consider studying part-time?

Studying part-time could be a consideration, but which mode of study you adopt will, in part, depend on your own circumstances and what institutions have available. You will find that many institutions and some disciplines find it difficult to accommodate part-time study, so it is important that you are realistic when you research this option.

If you are looking to transfer your studies at Newcastle from full-time to part-time, you need to seek approval and permission from your Degree Programme Director who will be required to inform [Student Progress](#).

Part-time courses are studied over a longer period of time than their full-time equivalents; students spend fewer hours per week in a classroom allowing time to balance part-time employment or other commitments.

Will I be able to transfer to another course at Newcastle as a PARTNERS student?

If you joined the university through the PARTNERS scheme, you will continue to be considered a PARTNERS student by the University, even if you move to another course at Newcastle. However, if you are looking to change course, it is at the discretion of the Degree Programme Director for the course you want to join, to decide what grades are required. On the whole, academics view PARTNERS students favourably but they may look at your marks or general university progress when making a decision.

For more advice on changing course as a PARTNERS student, contact the [Student Recruitment Team](#).

I like some aspects of my course – can I change to Combined Honours?

There is a finite list of subjects that can be studied as a [combined honours](#) programme; it is not possible to study a combination outside of that list. Studying a combined programme is a challenging alternative, but it could be possible to transfer if you can demonstrate commitment and some current academic success at university.

Students need to pass 40 credits of study in an academic subject to progress to stage 2 in that subject, so those transferring after some time at university in single honours are likely to have to start the new subject(s) at stage 1.

You will find it helpful to visit the [Combined Honours Centre's](#) website and read the information before discussing your interest further with the [Director of the Combined Honours Centre](#).

If this option appeals to you, it is important that you are able to demonstrate why you feel a combined programme is a more appropriate choice for you.

Leaving or suspending your course

- [What should I do if I want to leave the university?](#)
- [How do I suspend or postpone my studies?](#)
- [Can the Careers Service support me to appeal having to leave my course?](#)

What should I do if I want to leave the university?

You are advised to speak with a [careers adviser](#) who will be able to discuss with you alternative options to studying at Newcastle. You must also speak to your personal tutor who will ask you to complete a withdrawal questionnaire which is then sent to [Student Progress](#).

How do I suspend or postpone my studies?

Refer back to your student handbook and use your personal tutor as the starting point – they will be able to advise you about the various University procedures. It can be confusing, as there are different procedures depending on your particular circumstances. Your school will guide you in the right direction.

Can the Careers Service support me to appeal having to leave my course?

If you are unhappy about the university's decision to ask you to leave your course then you should seek further advice from the [Student Advice Centre](#), in the Students' Union. The Careers Service can help you examine alternative options to your current studies.

UCAS applications

- [Can I apply for another course at Newcastle without going through UCAS?](#)
- [Do I have to apply through UCAS if I want to study at another university?](#)
- [How do I apply through UCAS if I am a current university student?](#)
- [Do I need a reference? Who should write the reference?](#)

Can I apply for another course at Newcastle without going through UCAS?

A programme transfer often happens without going through UCAS. You will need to speak to your personal tutor or Degree Programme Director (DPD), as well as a tutor or DPD for the course you want to move to.

Do I have to apply through UCAS if I want to study at another university?

Yes. It is usual to make an application via [UCAS](#) if you want to change university. However, we would recommend making contact with the admissions tutor for the course(s) you are interested in first, to discuss your suitability, demonstrate your interest and clarify how they want you to apply. If you decide to change university during the summer, you should contact the institution directly as the UCAS application process for the academic year will have closed.

How do I apply through UCAS if I am a current university student?

If you decide to reapply, you'll need to submit a new application – you can't reuse your previous one. You can choose to apply either as an individual or as an applicant from Newcastle University. If you apply as a Newcastle University applicant, you will need to use the University's 'buzzword' and your referee will need to be a member of University staff. You can find out the current 'buzzword' from Careers Service staff or [Dawn Bell](#), Senior Undergraduate Admissions Manager. If you want to use a referee from outside the University, you should apply as an individual.

Do I need a reference? Who should write the reference?

You will need a reference unless you contact all of the universities you are applying to and all agree that no reference is required. Your referee should be someone who knows you academically. As a current or recent student, that is likely to be a tutor from your course or a teacher from your school or college. Who you choose will depend on how long you have been a university student and who can best comment on your academic ability. You may want to discuss your choice of referee with an admissions tutor for the course(s) you are applying to or with a [careers adviser](#).

For further information, see [advice on references](#) on the UCAS website.

If your referee is a Newcastle University staff member who is not registered to use the UCAS system, they should contact [Dawn Bell](#), Senior Undergraduate Admissions Manager.

Finance, fees and funding

- [At what point can I leave and receive a refund on my fees?](#)
- [What fees will I have to pay if I transfer to another course?](#)
- [If I repeat a year, what fees will I pay and what financial support am I entitled to?](#)
- [If I leave my course, when do I start paying off my student loan?](#)
- [What happens to any bursary or scholarship I have received?](#)

At what point can I leave and receive a refund on my fees?

If you decide that you wish to withdraw from your programme of study at Newcastle, the amount of tuition fees you will be liable to pay will depend on the term in which you withdraw or suspend.

Visit Student Wellbeing for more information on the [financial implications of withdrawing from your course](#).

What fees will I have to pay if I transfer to another course?

It depends on whether you remain at this University or move to another one. Visit Student Wellbeing for more information on the [financial implications of transferring course](#).

If I repeat a year, what fees will I pay and what financial support am I entitled to?

Each student's entitlement will vary depending on their individual circumstances. We recommend that you make an appointment to discuss your situation with a [Student Finance Adviser](#) in Student Services or seek advice from the [Student Advice Centre](#). See more information on the [financial implications of repeating a year or part of a year](#).

If I leave my course, when do I start paying off my student loan?

HMRC will look at your tax records and see if your income has reached the current level for repayment (£21,000 or more for students from England and Wales). If it has, you will then be liable to start paying off your loan.

If you withdraw from your course you will need to notify your assessment authority, eg Student Finance England. They will calculate what loan and grant you were eligible to receive based on your attendance. If you withdraw part way through the year, you may find that you have been overpaid some of the grant and/or loan. If an overpayment occurs, then you will usually be asked to repay this straight away. You will repay any student loan you received in the normal way, ie in the April after you have left the course and when you are earning above the threshold. See more information on the [financial implications of withdrawing from your course](#).

What happens to any bursary or scholarship I have received?

If you leave your course, you will usually have to pay back some of the money given to you through awards and bursaries that are not considered a loan. This will usually be based on the length of time you were expected to study and the amount of time you actually spent as a student at the University. Each grant-awarding body will have their own rules on this, so find out from your bursary or scholarship provider what their policy is, eg your Newcastle University Bursary or Achievement Bursary will be cancelled if you withdraw before these bursaries have been paid. If you withdraw after these bursaries have been paid, you will not be asked to repay either of these bursaries. [Visit Student Wellbeing](#) for more information on the financial implications of leaving your course.

Accommodation

- [If I leave my course, what happens with my university accommodation?](#)
- [Are there any circumstances in which I can stay in my university accommodation until the end of the year?](#)
- [Can I still live in privately rented accommodation with other students, after I have left?](#)

If I leave my course, what happens with my university accommodation?

The [Accommodation Service](#) is available to advise you on all aspects of your accommodation.

If you withdraw from the University, you will be charged the full rent on your room for the term. You will only be released from this if the room is re-let to another student (a 'successor'), who is not already committed to University accommodation. Under the terms of your contract, responsibility for finding a suitable replacement tenant lies with you. The Accommodation Service will make every effort to help you find a replacement tenant and reduce your liability; however, this cannot be guaranteed.

Please note it is your responsibility to inform the [Accommodation Service](#) of your intention to withdraw. Neither your school nor Student Progress would automatically notify the Accommodation Service should your circumstances change.

Are there any circumstances in which I can stay in my university accommodation until the end of the year?

Everybody's circumstances will be different. It is therefore important that you talk directly with the [Accommodation Service](#).

Can I still live in privately rented accommodation with other students, after I have left?

For advice on your rights as a private tenant, you can book an appointment with a Housing Adviser at the [Student Advice Centre](#). The [Accommodation Service](#) at Level 2, King's Gate can also support you with information about rented accommodation.

Employment

- [How should I present changing or leaving my course on my CV?](#)
- [Should I mention it in my cover letter?](#)
- [What opportunities are available if I don't have a degree?](#)

How should I present changing or leaving my course on my CV?

Employers will often spot gaps in education or employment on a CV, so it is usually wise to account for that time. Use dates to clarify when you were studying at a specific institution. Highlight the skills you acquired or the relevant knowledge you developed as part of any course or module you studied. Describing your reasons for changing or leaving a course may be more appropriate for a cover letter than a CV. You can speak to a [member of the Careers Service](#) about how you could present this positively.

Should I mention it in my cover letter?

A cover letter can be used to effectively outline your reasons for changing or leaving your course, giving you more opportunity to explain your decision than a CV does. Aim to present your decision in a positive way, perhaps highlighting your decision-making and research skills, as well as your self-awareness. It can be positive to demonstrate that you can recognise a dilemma, weigh up your options and take a decision, rather than pretend the problem isn't there and carry on regardless. Aim to show what you have gained from taking responsibility and addressing this issue. You can [speak to a member of the Careers Service](#) about how you could present this in your covering letter.

What opportunities are available if I don't have a degree?

The [National Careers Service](#) offers impartial information, advice and guidance to help you make decisions on learning, training and work opportunities.

Apprenticeships are a great way to train on the job and gain qualifications with a partner university or college while getting paid. You can apply for degree apprenticeships at level 6 (bachelors) and level 7 (masters). [Gov.uk](#), and [notgoingtouni.co.uk](#) have details of advertised positions and it may also be worthwhile researching employers as some vacancies may appear on the employers own website.

[Volunteering](#) is also a great way to learn more about an organisation, prove your capabilities and make useful contacts to assist you in your job search.