

# Parents' Guide to University Study

Whether your child is the first in the family to go to university or you've been here before, this little guide will help you understand some of the mysteries of higher education.



**Creative  
thinkers  
made here.**

How do you choose a university?  
How do you choose a course?  
How can you get into university?

How will they be supported?  
How do they apply?  
Where will they study?



# Welcome to our parents' guide

Your son or daughter is about to enter a whole new world.

And they won't be the same person when they get to the other side!

University study is life changing.

Yes, they'll go from, "I have no idea what I want to do with my life" to "I've now got a degree in something and a new direction in mind."

But it's way more than that.

It's all the opportunities, experiences and new people they'll meet during their time at university.

However, university is not a finishing school.

It's the start of your child's journey into the future, equipped with useful tools, like the ability to think creatively, to help them navigate the world.

And it's where they start to understand who they really are and what might be possible.

It's why our university's overall purpose is 'to transform lives and enrich society'.



# Let's start with the basics

We'll assume you know very little about universities.

So, if you only read one thing in this guide, make it this article.

It covers a lot of things, such as important university dates and how semesters work.

Some of the points we cover are expanded elsewhere in this guide, e.g. the legendary student support we offer.

p.s. we hope you read more than this :)



At ECU, we recognise and respect the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' communities, cultures and histories.

We also acknowledge and respect the Noongar people as the traditional custodians of the land on which our campuses are located.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/about-ecu/indigenous-matters](https://ecu.edu.au/about-ecu/indigenous-matters)

# 20 things parents should know about university study

If your child is the first in your family to start higher education, you've probably been grappling with the mysteries of universities. Here are 20 things to help you find your way.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-university-study-tips/20-things-parents-should-know-about-university-study](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-university-study-tips/20-things-parents-should-know-about-university-study)





## How do you choose a university?

**Your teen might already know where they want to go to university. This can be based on different things like, "it's close to home", or (deep breath) "everyone else is going there".**

If a university offers a course that others don't - and it's the career direction they genuinely want to pursue - it's a relatively easy decision.

**But courses or locations aren't always the best way to choose a university.**

These short articles will help you think about other factors that are important to your teen's overall student experience.

**Choose the culture and the course in deciding a university**

Helping your daughter or son choose a university course can be tricky. Especially when multiple unis offer the same courses. The answer is to look at what else is being offered.

→ Read more — [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/course-finder/choose-the-culture-and-the-course-in-deciding-a-university](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/course-finder/choose-the-culture-and-the-course-in-deciding-a-university)

## Why study at ECU?

Of course we'd love your teen to study at ECU, and here are some great reasons why!



**Getting career ready while they study**

During their studies, we help students build their personal brand to prepare them for a new career.



**Learning how to be a creative thinker**

Creative thinking is a skill that's highly valued by employers worldwide and we help all students make it their superpower.



**Travel overseas as part of their studies**

In lots of courses, students have opportunities like study exchanges with other unis, study tours and more.



**A proven 5-star teaching experience**

Our lecturers and tutors help students get the best out of themselves and will introduce them to new networks and potential employers.



**Know they'll be supported**

We help students adjust to their new life at uni, whatever their study or personal challenges.



**Industry partnerships open doors**

Exciting internship or prac placements are available through our partnerships with IBM, West Coast Eagles, state-wide schools, hospitals and more.



**Practical experience outside the classroom**

Students quickly turn theory into practice with work experience opportunities like internships, practicums and more.



**Building their own degree**

For many courses, students can choose major subjects and electives to tailor their studies to their passions.

## How to decide which university to choose

**The answer depends on what you're looking for both career-wise and personally. Here are some things you may not have thought about.**

→ Read more — [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/why-choose-ecu/inclusion-and-equity/how-to-decide-which-university-to-choose](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/why-choose-ecu/inclusion-and-equity/how-to-decide-which-university-to-choose)





# How do you choose a university course?



## Look beyond the lectures when choosing uni courses

Been trawling uni websites wondering how to choose between courses with similar names? Here's an idea. Choose a university where studying a degree involves more than lectures and assignments.

This article has advice on what to look for in university courses that will best prepare your child for employment post-graduation. Hint: It's more than being a subject expert.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/course-finder/look-beyond-the-lectures-when-choosing-uni-courses](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/course-finder/look-beyond-the-lectures-when-choosing-uni-courses)

## How to avoid choosing the 'wrong' university course

There are no 'wrong' courses. If a student decides they're not going in the direction they thought would be right for them, there are options to change things, preferably before the university census date around 4 weeks after a semester starts.

Also, some courses allow you to dabble in different subjects in the first year, before asking you to specialise for the final years.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/course-finder/how-to-avoid-choosing-the-wrong-university-course](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/course-finder/how-to-avoid-choosing-the-wrong-university-course)

## Career personas can lead to courses

If your teen has no idea what career they'd like to pursue, we've developed a 5-minute quiz that's based on them discovering their 'career persona' that might help. It also recommends some courses.



### Try our 5-minute Career Finder quiz

This quiz might surprise you with a suggested career direction and courses that take you there.

→ Take the quiz – [ecu.edu.au/study/career-finder](https://ecu.edu.au/study/career-finder)



# How do you get into a university course?

**The short answer is there are now many pathways to university.**

And while we always recommend that school leavers try to get their ATAR to broaden their study options, it's not the only way in.

## How to find your path to university

University entry isn't limited to ATAR scores for school leavers. If your son or daughter has chosen not to study for an ATAR, or they got a lower ATAR than expected, they still have pathway options into university courses.

This short article explains the range of pathways into undergraduate courses.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/entry-pathways/how-to-find-your-path-to-university](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/entry-pathways/how-to-find-your-path-to-university)

## How to get back into studying as a uni student

If your son or daughter has had a few years in the workforce and is wondering about how they'd cope with studying again, you may find this article useful.

Many people come back to uni as 'mature age' students every year and universities like ours knows how to help them adjust to it.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/entry-pathways/how-to-get-back-into-studying-as-a-uni-student](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/preparing-for-uni/entry-pathways/how-to-get-back-into-studying-as-a-uni-student)





# What support can your teen expect?

## As a parent with a student at ECU, the answer is a lot!

We're serious about ensuring every student has the best possible experience when they study with us.

It's something that sets ECU apart from many other universities. In fact, we're one of the best in Australia based on rankings from our graduates.

This article is about ways your child can get involved in activities outside their studies to meet new people and build both their confidence and a network.

## How to have a great uni experience

Life as a uni student is not all lectures, assignments, and trips to the library. University is like a whole new world where you get to define your place in it. It's way more than studying!

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/why-choose-ecu/inclusion-and-equity/how-to-have-a-great-uni-experience](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/why-choose-ecu/inclusion-and-equity/how-to-have-a-great-uni-experience)

## What our university's name really means to students

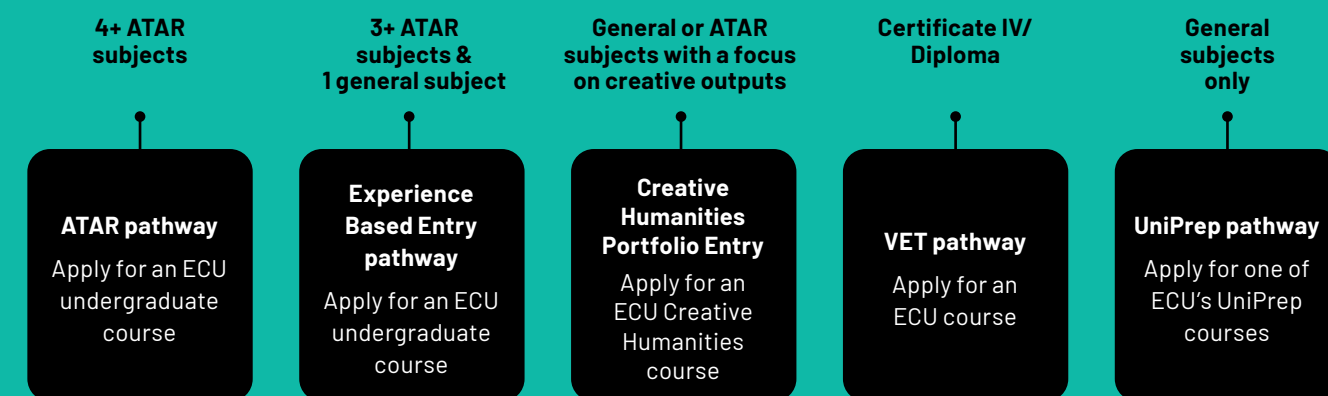
ECU is the only university in Australia named after a woman. And what a woman she was! Edith Cowan achieved much in her life, and in a world that didn't pay attention to the opinions of women. But we didn't just adopt Edith's name – we took her values and made them our own.

This article is about why and how we're passionate about equity and inclusion at ECU.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/why-choose-ecu/inclusion-and-equity/what-our-universitys-name-really-means-to-students](https://ecu.edu.au/study/extra/articles/why-choose-ecu/inclusion-and-equity/what-our-universitys-name-really-means-to-students)

# What are they studying this year?

Subjects and pathways for Year 12s



- Notes**
1. All Year 12 students applying for ECU courses need to apply via TISC, meet English competency requirements and achieve WACE.
  2. Depending on your current school, you may qualify for an adjustment to your ATAR (higher). Ask us about this.
  3. For WAAPA courses or for the Secondary Education course (Music Education specialisation), please apply direct to ECU.

## Support when they need it

Finally, this web page (below) is part of our introductory website for new students called 'My Uni Start'.

We've included it here because it covers the specific kinds of support we offer all students, like career advice, a counselling service, health services and more.

We even have a safe and inclusive space called 'The Living Room' where students can drop in for a relaxed chat with a trained peer who will understand their student journey.

→ Read more – [ecu.edu.au/my-uni-start/preparing/support-when-you-need-it](https://ecu.edu.au/my-uni-start/preparing/support-when-you-need-it)





# How to apply

## Become an ECU student in 6 steps

- 1 Choose your course**  
Consider having a back-up course in case you've applied for a popular course, and it's oversubscribed. You can apply for up to 3 courses at once.
- 2 Check course entry requirements**  
Some courses have special admission or 'inherent' requirements so check these too.
- 3 Check the application date**  
Don't miss the deadline for your chosen course/s.
- 4 Apply for a scholarship**  
These are awarded to all kinds of people, not just high achievers. You can do this when you apply for a course.
- 5 Have your paperwork ready and go online**  
You'll need scanned copies of other qualifications, your résumé or other required paperwork ready to upload.
- 6 Accept your offer**  
If you're successful, we'll send you an offer of a place. We hope you accept it and become an ECU student!

## Applying is not the same as enrolling

### Getting into a university course is a two-stage process.

#### Stage 1

They apply for one or more courses (see step 1 opposite) and if they're successful with their application, they accept the official ECU offer (an email from us with lots of information in it).

#### Stage 2

They enrol in their accepted course, choosing study units for the first teaching period (usually a semester). There can be competition for units, as well as for specific days and times of lectures, so they should enrol early!

**This is especially important if your new uni student has part-time or casual work to fit their study around.**



## Apply for a scholarship

This includes people who've had a challenging life without the same opportunities as others. A scholarship can help you realise your ambitions by paying for fees, textbooks and living expenses.

You can apply for a scholarship when you apply for an ECU course.

**Our scholarships are awarded to students from all kinds of backgrounds and for all kinds of reasons. It's not just the academically brilliant ones.**

→ Find out more – [ecu.edu.au/scholarships](https://ecu.edu.au/scholarships)





## What campus will they attend?

### These are exciting times to be an ECU student.

Our brand-new university campus – ECU City – will open to students from early 2026.

This will coincide with the closing of our Mount Lawley Campus and the move of some studies to Joondalup Campus.

### Starting uni in 2025

Depending on what course they choose, the likely campus will be:

**Joondalup** for business, law, engineering, nursing, health sciences, general science including computing, and psychology and social sciences.

**Mount Lawley** for teacher education, creative arts, humanities, performing arts and production (WAAPA).

**South West** (Bunbury) for specific courses in business, nursing, teaching, environmental science, health science and social work.

### Starting uni in 2026

While there may be variations before ECU City opens in Semester 1, we currently expect likely campuses to be:

**ECU City** for business, law, creative humanities, performing arts and production (WAAPA) and selected technology courses.

**Joondalup** for engineering, nursing, health sciences, teacher education, psychology and social sciences and some science studies.

**South West** (Bunbury) for specific courses in business, nursing, teaching, environmental science, health science and social work.

## A university campus like no other

### ECU City will redefine higher education in Western Australia.

The campus will be located in the heart of Perth, between the business, entertainment and cultural precincts, and connected by rail and bus across the city and beyond. It will activate the CBD with the energy of 10,000 students and staff and engage with the community in a way that defies traditional expectations.



# Unispeak: a quick guide to some common university terms

## Semesters

University courses usually run for two semesters per year, or six semesters over a typical 3-year degree with full-time study. School leavers usually start new courses from Semester 1 in late February but have the option to start in Semester 2 in late July. Each semester runs for around 15 weeks, with a 2-week break in the middle and a 2-week exam period at the end.

## Full-time vs part-time study

Students enrolled in 3 or more units in a semester are considered full-time. To complete most 3-year degrees studying full-time they need to complete 4 units per semester, i.e. 24 units over 3 years. Part-time students are enrolled in 1 or 2 units maximum per semester.

## Undergraduate degrees

Undergraduates are students undertaking their first university (bachelor's) degree.

## Majors and minors

A major (or unit set), is your chosen area of in-depth study in many but not all undergraduate courses. It usually involves 8 units of study, or one-third of the units in a 3-year degree. Minors include between 4 and 6 study units in a specific discipline. Not all courses require students to complete a minor.

## Core units vs elective units

Core units are compulsory units that students must successfully complete as part of a course. An elective unit isn't compulsory but still counts towards a degree. Sometimes we may approve an elective unit as a replacement for a compulsory one.

## Practicum placements

Many courses require students to graduate with recognised working or practical experience. They do this by completing a practicum placement in a workplace experience where they're expected to meet the same work conditions as a normal member of staff. It's a great way to add to their CV and to build networks, and it can lead to employment after they graduate.

## Orientation

Orientation is a free program of activities to help students get ready to study as a new ECU student. Orientation helps them find their way around university, meet new friends and discover important course information. Orientation is the week before semester starts and is highly recommended!

## HECS-HELP

This is a loan from the Australian Government, which pays university tuition fees for students enrolled in most undergraduate courses and who are either Australian or eligible New Zealand citizens, or holders of a Permanent Humanitarian Visa. The Australian Tax Office records this debt against a student's Tax File Number, and they repay the loan through the taxation system, once they're earning over a certain income.

## Census date

This is one month after semesters start. It's when a student enrolment is deemed to be finalised and a charge applies to their course. This starts accumulating a HECS-HELP debt. Important to withdraw from a unit without incurring costs for that unit by the census date!

## Credit and recognition of prior learning

If a student has previous formal learning, e.g. a diploma or a degree, or has prior work experience and professional development or other training while employed, they may be eligible for a credit that allows them to reduce the number of units they'll need to study for their course.

## Student email account

Student email accounts are used extensively to contact students, providing updates and information about enrolment, fees, exams, semester results and important dates. It's the only email address the university will use to contact students, so it should be checked often!

## Student Guild

The Student Guild is run by uni students for uni students who automatically become a member of the Guild when they enrol – and it's free. The Guild ensures that the University Administration is aware of student concerns and issues, such as protecting student rights. It also runs social and cultural events on campus and much more.

## Student ID Card



An ECU student ID card acts as photo identification for students, is a print credit card for printing and photocopying and a Transperth SmartRider travel concession card (optional, for full-time students). Keep it safe!









# Creative thinkers made here.



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-  ECU.EDU.AU

#### Find us at

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