



STUDENT PROGRAMME GUIDE

**REALISING
OPPORTUNITIES**

Working Together | Supporting Talent



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REALISING OPPORTUNITIES

Working Together | Supporting Talent

Welcome

Congratulations for achieving a place on the Realising Opportunities (RO) programme! RO students are amongst the most academically able and highest achieving students in the country, and have the potential to succeed at research intensive universities (RIUs).



The RO Central Team delivers the RO programme on behalf of the RO Partner universities. You will hear lots from them during your time on the programme!



This guide

This guide has been produced to help you understand the different elements of RO and what you will be doing while taking part in the programme. The sections in this guide will help you to check your own development and progression through RO, as well as provide information on the help and support available to you during your time on the programme. You should refer back to this guide regularly throughout your time on the RO programme to make sure you are on track.

What to do now

Reading through this guide will help you understand the different elements of the RO programme.



RO programme summary

The RO programme is a structured, interactive programme that will help you to develop your academic skills, improve your awareness of RIUs, and knowledge of how to apply to university. Taking part in the programme will also give you increased access to the universities involved in RO.

The programme aims to:

- Increase your knowledge about RIUs and what they can offer you.
- Give you access to the RO Partner universities.
- Develop your understanding and confidence in higher education skills, such as academic note taking, critical thinking, researching and referencing.
- Increase your understanding of how to apply through UCAS.
- Give you online support from current university students, and enhance your understanding of university life.
- Provide real-life insights in to different career paths, and encourage you to think about your options.

How will RO help you?

Taking part in RO will give you:

- Alternative Offer(s) - All RO Partner universities give alternative RO offers which are typically two A level grades (or equivalent) lower than the standard offer. Make sure you read the RO Recognition Guide for more details and to check for any exemptions.
- Additional consideration - All RO Partner universities will give additional consideration to your UCAS application.
- The opportunity to develop your skills - You will develop a range of skills that will help you with your current studies and once you're studying at university.
- Tools to make informed choices - You will receive support and guidance about choosing your course and where you want to study, so you can make informed decisions about your future.
- Insights into graduate careers - You will have the chance to explore different career pathways through real-life graduate stories.

Your RO checklist

- ☐ Attend two RO events/activities with RO Partner universities which should include the Launch and the National Student Conference
- ☐ Complete the skills4uni challenge and quiz
- ☐ Complete the Academic Skills Module



What's a host university?

Your host university is the RO Partner university which gave you a place on the RO programme. They will support you throughout your time on RO. However RO is about more than your connection with your host university! Through RO you have access to all the RO Partner universities through events, Q&As and much more!



Launch event

What is the Launch event?

This event kick starts the RO programme. You can find out about the different steps of the programme, and meet other RO students as well as staff from your host university (the university which gave you a place on the RO programme).

What will you do?

You will be introduced to the core elements of the programme by university staff. You may also have the opportunity to meet current university students and hear more about your host university.

How will it help you?

By the end of the Launch event you will:

- Have a good understanding of the RO programme.
- Know what you will need to do to complete RO.
- Have met staff from your host university and other RO students on the programme.
- Know about the support available to you.



skills4uni

As part of RO, you will work through an online study skills challenge and complete a multiple choice quiz based on what you have learned. This will help you to develop valuable skills to use now and later at university.

What is skills4uni?

skills4uni is an online challenge which will help you to develop practical study skills to use now and later at university. The challenge includes interactive tasks, videos and information from real university students. You can start working through the skills4uni challenge after you have attended the Launch event.

What do you have to do?

- Work through sections 1-7 of the online challenge (module 6 is optional)
- Complete the interactive tasks
- Complete the reflective activities which you can then review on your skills4uni notepad
- Take the skills4uni multiple choice quiz on the RO student hub once you have worked through the online challenge.

Taking the multiple choice quiz

You can access the multiple choice quiz on the RO student hub. You will receive an email from the RO Central Team explaining how to access the RO student hub and take the quiz.

How will it help you?

By completing the skills4uni challenge and quiz you will:

- Increase your confidence in working on research-based projects.
- Develop transferable higher education skills that will help you in your current studies and once you're studying at university.
- Have a greater understanding of what studying at university is like.

Complete the skills4uni challenge and quiz by 31 July 2022 and you will be entered in to a prize draw. Completing skills4uni earlier in the programme will help you with your current studies and the RO Academic Skills Module.

Don't worry if you don't pass the quiz on your first attempt, you will be provided with tailored feedback and you will be able to retake it!

Introducing the RO student hub

Throughout your time on RO you can log in to the RO student hub at realisingopportunities.co.uk/students to check your progress, access the skills4uni quiz and much more. At the start of the programme, you will receive more information about how you can use the RO student hub during your time on RO.



National Student Conference

All of the students taking part in RO will come together to attend the RO virtual National Student Conference.

What is the National Student Conference?

The National Student Conference (NSC) is an important event in the RO calendar that RO students from across the country attend.

- Attend an exhibition where you will have access to representatives from all of the RO Partner universities.
- Have access to information about careers from well-known employer organisations.



At the virtual National Student Conference you will:

- Join the event via a bespoke platform made for RO students.
- Meet other students from around the country who are taking part in RO.
- Hear from current university students at the RO Partner universities.
- Attend sessions on research at research intensive universities and student life.

The details

The NSC will take place online on a Saturday in March 2022. You will be given information about the NSC in the email confirming your place on the RO programme. Your host university will also talk to you about the NSC at the Launch.





The Academic Skills Module

As a RO student you will take the RO Academic Skills Module (ASM) which has been developed to give you an authentic experience of academic work at university.

The ASM will be delivered by your host university and then followed by a self-guided online component. Read below to find out more!

The ASM events

As well as having a subject specific element, the ASM will focus on developing transferable skills for Higher Education and your current studies.

During the events you will be supported by a team of current undergraduate students who are there to ensure you're making the most out of the ASM and to offer their unique perspective on university life. The ASM sessions are interactive and include:

- Academic note taking - to equip you with the skills to be able to take useful notes in lectures/seminars.
- Research skills - to show you how to choose academic sources and how to avoid plagiarism.
- 1st year level undergraduate lecture - to put your newly acquired academic note taking skills into practice. Delivered by an academic at your host university to provide

an authentic experience with an opportunity at the end to take part in a Q&A session so you can find out more about your broad subject area of interest.

The ASM events may be run as one session or two shorter sessions – your host university will let you know what has been planned for you.

The ASM is compulsory and does not count towards the two events and activities you take part in as a RO student. You will get more information about the date and time of the event from your host university in due course.



I really enjoyed learning from experts in their field during the academic lecture and I felt that the note taking and referencing sessions really helped me to gain a better insight into techniques that we will need for university.

The self-guided online component

The self-guided online component, which you can complete at home or at school, will give you the opportunity to reflect on the skills you learnt during the ASM.

Written reflective piece

You will complete a 500-word piece of work reflecting on the skills you learned during the ASM. Academics will provide feedback on your submission to help you perfect your reflection skills.



Remember!

The ASM is nothing to be worried about. It has been developed to help you become the best student you can be and to help you prepare for Higher Education!

Your host university will let you know when your ASM is being held and full guidance on the events and the self-guided online component will be sent to you nearer the time. Your host university may deliver their ASM in-person or virtually and will support you to either attend their on-campus event or join online.

Your host university will get in touch with you about the ASM after the NSC (March 2022).

Events and activities

The RO Partner universities put on a wide range of other events and activities that you can attend - in addition to the Launch, the National Student Conference and the RO Academic Skills Module. We want you to get as much out of RO as possible, and the range of events and activities at the RO Partner universities will help you to do this.

What events and activities can you attend?

A full list of events and activities is available on our website at www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk/events - this list is updated frequently so make sure you check it regularly.

The type of events on offer include:

- Subject taster sessions and master classes.
- Campus tours and open days.
- Summer schools.
- Skills development sessions including academic and study skills.
- Information, advice and guidance sessions on topics such as student finance.
- Personal statement support.

What do you have to do?

As an RO student you will attend the Launch, National Student Conference and the ASM events. We would encourage you to attend at least one other event or activity hosted by one of the RO Partner universities.

You can attend as many events and activities as you wish, and you can use this opportunity to experience a university which is not your host university.

How will they help you?

Attending events and activities allows you to:

- Learn about the universities you may want to apply to. This will help you make informed decisions when you come to submit your university applications through UCAS.
- Identify and develop the skills necessary to be successful at a research intensive university.
- Learn more about specific subject areas, accommodation options and facilities at universities.
- Find out what it is like to be a student at university by meeting current students.
- Receive support with your university application.
- Find out more about graduate employability and how university can help you in the future.
- Some events, particularly open days, are great for parents/carers to attend too!

How do you book a place?

Visit www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk/ events to see the events and activities available now and follow the booking instructions included with each event.

Key points to remember are:

- Make sure the date doesn't clash with any important exams or deadlines.
- Let your school or college know that you are attending an RO event.
- Let the university know if you have any specific requirements which they should know about.
- Follow any information in the event listing about registering your attendance at the event.
- Check the RO website - only events listed on the website will count as RO events.

RO Travel Scheme

During your time on the RO programme, you can access funds to cover the cost of attending one event or activity at a RO Partner university outside your immediate geographical area via the RO Travel Scheme.

The RO Travel Scheme exists to encourage you to visit a RO Partner university outside your immediate geographical area*. Realising Opportunities believes this allows you to personalise your RO experience and supports you in making informed choices about your future.

The travel scheme will cover the cost of a return journey to attend one event/activity at a RO Partner university - but you **must follow the steps** set out below to make your claim.

The steps to claiming funds to cover your travel costs are:

- Check the RO website for an event/activity that you are interested in that is taking place at a RO Partner university outside your immediate geographical area.
- Contact the RO Partner university to request your RO Travel Scheme funds – a named contact and email address will be provided on the RO website in the event details section. You should do this in advance of the event so the support can be put in place for you ahead of the event.
- The RO Partner university will reply to you to confirm your travel arrangements or arrange payment of the funds. Attend and enjoy the event/activity!

Although the RO Travel Scheme covers **one return journey per student**, there may be other support available for attending additional RO events and activities if you have already claimed funds. You should get in touch with the university organising the RO event to enquire about additional support in advance of the event.

*Normally a university outside your geographical area would be a RO Partner university that is not your host university (see page 5 for more info on host universities). If you're unsure whether a university is outside your geographical area contact the Partner university running the event/activity to enquire.



Online support

While you are taking part in the RO programme you will have the opportunity to access online support from a variety of sources which all aim to support you to make an informed decision about your future.

Monthly emails

You will hear from the RO Central Team by email each month with information on monthly topics which will support you at key points in the RO programme, during your current studies and as you consider university and course choices.

RO Ambassador

During your first year of the programme you will be supported by the RO Ambassador who is a current RO university student. They will also contact you by email with useful information, resources and activities.

The RO Ambassador will explore these topics with you over your first year on the programme:

- Making the most of the RO programme
- Thinking about careers and Study skills
- University and course research

- Studying near home or away
- UCAS and personal statements
- Reflecting on the past year

Live Q&As

Each month throughout the RO programme you will have the opportunity to put your questions to the RO Central Team and staff at the Partner universities. Live Q&As are your chance to get quick answers to your questions – the support is personalised and answers are prompt. Live Q&A topics vary from study skills to UCAS and personal statements and much more! Each month you will be sent details of how to join the live Q&As.



“Being the first person from my family to go university online support gives me an insight into how to prepare and what life is like as a uni student.”

RO student, 2020

RO Relaunch

The RO Relaunch takes place in September 2022 when you start back at school or college after the summer break. It is a week of online activity to help you get back into RO and help you consider universities, courses and what it's like to be a student at one of the RO Partner universities. There will be blog articles with lots of useful information and guidance, live Q&As with staff at all of the RO Partner universities and current students. It's a great opportunity to get back on track with RO and look ahead to your steps over Year 13/second year of college.

The RO Relaunch was extremely useful to me. It provided lots of insight into what to expect when applying to uni and student life.






RO student, 2020



RO Online Community

The RO Online Community is a space for you to have conversations with and put your questions to our RIU (research intensive university) Ambassadors who are current students at the RO Partner universities. It's an opportunity for you to get support with planning your future, choosing courses and unis, making an application, preparing for exams, making decisions and getting yourself uni-ready. Best of all – the people supporting you have recently been in your shoes and understand what you are going through.

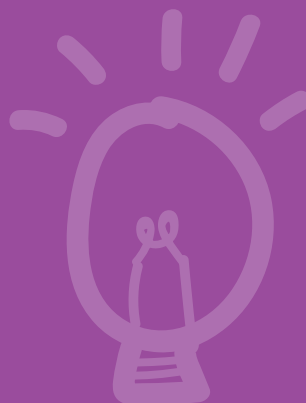
More information about the RO Online Community will be provided when you come to the end of your first year on the programme.

-  **RO Central Team emails each month:** January 2022 - August 2023
-  **Live Q&As:** February 2022 - August 2023
-  **RO Ambassador emails:** February 2022 - October 2022
-  **RO Relaunch:** September 2022
-  **RO Online Community:** September 2022 - July 2023

How will online support help you?

Online support will give you:

- A better understanding of applying to higher education and the UCAS process.
 - Insights into what it's like to study a subject area in which you are interested.
 - Guidance with applying through UCAS and writing your personal statement.
 - Tips for staying calm in exam periods and advice on revision and exam techniques.
 - A chance to ask questions about what it is like to be a student at a research intensive university.
 - Guidance about student finance, choosing a course and university.
-



Access to professions

Realising Opportunities aims to give you enhanced access to information and advice about accessing different professions.

You will be able to access information in the following ways:

The National Student Conference

- Professionals from employer organisations will be present to tell you about career opportunities within their sector.

Ask the Graduate

- A new professional is regularly showcased on the RO blog.
- You can read their profile and ask questions about their job and what pathway they took to get there.
- The professionals will answer your questions and the responses will be posted on the RO blog.



The conference helped me realise the different courses I can do and the variety of careers that each course can lead to.

RO student, 2020

Applying to university: an overview

Throughout your involvement in RO, you will receive advice and guidance about applying to university from the RO Partner universities and via online support.

There are two main stages of applying to university. See the flow chart below for a simple overview of the process.

Step A: Research

The first thing you need to do when applying to higher education is to think about which course you want to apply for and which university is right for you.

1. Start researching courses and universities - look at university websites and online prospectuses to get started.
2. Take part in an open day, either in person or online, to help make your decision. Attending open days is a good way of doing this - check the RO website for details of events and activities hosted by the RO Partner universities.
3. Take any admissions test that your course choices require (for example some medicine courses require applicants to sit the UCAT and BMAT). Check the requirements for any courses that you're interested in and, if needed, make sure you book these in.

Now follow step B

Step B: The Application Process

Once you have done your research and made your choices, you can apply to university by completing your UCAS form online which includes a personal statement. You should do this in conjunction with your school/college.

4. Complete your UCAS application form and personal statement. You will receive instructions on how include your participation in RO on your UCAS application closer to the time.
5. Attend any interviews (if applicable).
6. Receive application decisions and offers.
7. Choose a firm and insurance choice or additional choices through UCAS Extra.
8. If applicable attend post-offer visit days in person or online (watch out for invitations to these from the universities you are holding offers with!).
9. Receive exam/course results and confirmation of your university place or Clearing options.

10. Start University! ★



Research Intensive Universities

Throughout this guide you may have noticed the term **research intensive universities** or **RIUs** being used. By taking part in RO, you will learn more about these kind of universities, and you can also find some information on this page.

What are RIUs?

Research intensive universities (RIUs) focus on performing research alongside teaching their students. RIUs produce high quality research which makes new discoveries possible, and contributes to increased knowledge for the good of society; RIUs seek to address global problems with cutting edge research. As such, teaching is research-led in a vibrant environment which makes for an exceptional student learning experience.

What are the benefits of attending an RIU?

All of the RO Partner universities are RIUs; as an RO student you have access to them and will get to know more about RIUs during your time on the programme. You can see examples of the research undertaken by RO Partner universities on their websites.

Here are some of the benefits of attending an RIU broken down:

- Leading academics and tutors, who are experts in their field.
- Vibrant learning environments where new discoveries are being made and problems are solved.
- Cutting edge facilities thanks to the investment associated with research.

- Top careers guidance and strong links with business.
- World-renowned reputations which are highly valued by employers.

Applying to study at an RIU can often be competitive, due to the wide range of benefits these institutions can offer students. However, by taking part in the RO programme you will develop skills and gain knowledge that will help you to submit a strong and well-informed university application.

As an RO student, if you apply to RO Partner universities, you may be eligible for an alternative offer which is typically two A level grades (or equivalent) lower than the standard offer; this is reliant on your successful completion of the programme. Read the RO Recognition Guide on the RO website for full information



Useful websites

Here are some websites which may help you during your time on RO and researching your university options.

Choosing a university

What Uni

www.whatuni.com

Provides university reviews written by students.

Discover Uni

www.discoveruni.org.uk

Offers official data on universities and allows you to compare different institutions and courses.

QAA: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

www.qaa.ac.uk

The QAA undertakes assessment of all universities in the UK on the quality of their teaching.

The Complete University Guide

www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk

Provides information about all aspects of university.

Advice on Higher Education

National Union of Students

www.nus.org.uk

The confederation of students' unions which represents university students.

The Student Room

www.thestudentroom.co.uk

The UK's biggest student community sharing tips for applying to university, careers information and lots more.

Push

<https://www.push.co.uk/students.html>

An independent guide to UK universities, student life, gap years, open days and student finance.

Studential

www.studential.com

Information and advice about options at school, university and beyond.

UCAS Hub

www.ucas.com/account/login

A good way to get started with exploring university applications. Create an account and you'll find it's a one stop shop for searching for unis, courses, open days, calculating your UCAS tariff points and getting started with your personal statement.

Student finance

Student finance

www.gov.uk/student-finance

Information on the financial help available to students.

Careers

Prospects

www.prospects.ac.uk

A graduate careers site which gives information on career paths.

Useful terms

These pages list some common terms you will hear in relation to university and Higher Education, and also offer a description of what they mean.

Access course

Access courses are designed to prepare students who do not have standard entry qualifications for Higher Education courses.

BA/BSc

Bachelor of Arts/Science; the award for an undergraduate course.

BEd

Bachelor of Education.

Campus

The main area on which the university is based. Some universities might have more than one campus.

Contact time

The amount of time you spend in lectures, seminars, labs, etc.

Contextual offer

A reduced grade entry offer given to a student where a university recognises that a student's personal circumstances may have impacted achievement at school or college.

Degree course

A Higher Education course leading to the award of a bachelor's or master's degree.

Dissertation

An extended piece of work approximately 5,000-10,000 words, usually undertaken in the final year of a degree.

Foundation course

A two-year degree level qualification which combines academic study with workplace learning. It is the equivalent of two-thirds of a full honours degree.

Fresher

First year student.

Graduate

Someone who has attained a bachelor's or higher degree.

HE

Higher Education; education beyond the secondary school/college level leading to a formal degree.

Joint honours

A degree where you study two or more subjects e.g. History and Politics.

MA/MSc

Master of Arts/Master of Science; postgraduate qualifications that can be studied after an undergraduate degree. They usually take a year to complete or two years part-time. Some 4 year degrees are classified as MA or MSc. MPhil Master of Philosophy; another form of postgraduate qualification. MPhil signifies the completion of a period of research rather than a taught programme.

MBA

Master of Business Administration.

MEng

Master of Engineering.

Modules

Programmes of study are made up of units- called modules- which will focus on a specific area or topic.

Personal statement

A short reflective essay written about yourself which evidences why you're a good candidate for the degree course to which you're applying; submitted through UCAS alongside your application.

PGCE

Postgraduate Certificate in Education; a teaching qualification.

PhD

Doctor of Philosophy; a higher level degree normally taken after a postgraduate degree.

Postgraduate study

Generally speaking, a postgraduate degree is a qualification you can undertake once you have completed an undergraduate degree.

RIU

All RO universities are research intensive universities (RIUs). See page 21 for more information.

Sandwich course/year

A course of study which includes periods of practical work in organisations outside of the university or college.

Semester

A study period of up to 16 weeks, often with exams or assessments at the end; similar to a term.

Single honours

A degree where you study a single subject e.g. Chemistry.

UCAS

Universities and Colleges Admission Service; the organisation responsible for managing applications to Higher Education institutions.

Undergraduate study

An undergraduate degree (also called first degree, bachelor's degree and sometimes shortened to degree) is the standard first degree taken at university.

During your journey to university, you might come across new words you hadn't heard before. Whenever we experience something new, we will gain vocabulary associated with this new experience. This is true for new hobbies, jobs and places we might visit - so don't worry if you come across a new word. This is a natural part of life!



Key contacts

RO Central Team

The RO Central Team, based at Newcastle University, lead the programme on behalf of the RO Partner universities.

Our contact details are:

The Realising Opportunities
Central Team

info@realisingopportunities.ac.uk
www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk

Your host university

You can find the contact details for your host university via the contacts list.

RO Partner universities

Each of the RO Partner universities has dedicated members of staff working on the RO programme. As an RO student you have access to all the RO Partner universities - not just your host!

If you have questions about the programme don't hesitate to get in touch with the RO Central Team or the RO contact at your host university.

Contact list

You can find an up-to-date list of contacts at
realisingopportunities.ac.uk/KeyContacts.pdf





**REALISING
OPPORTUNITIES**
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The Realising Opportunities Central Team
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University of Birmingham

University of Exeter

Lancaster University

University of Leeds

University of Leicester

University of Liverpool

Loughborough University

Newcastle University

University of Nottingham

**Queen Mary University
of London**

The University of Sheffield

UCL

University of Warwick

University of York