

# An Open Path to University for Home Educators

by Tamsyn Fortune-Wood

Many home educators will, at some point in their lives, want to follow some form of higher education in order to either pursue a career or just expand their knowledge of a subject area.

One of the biggest questions many people pose is, "How can I get into university?" It is also one of the arguments used against home education and something that parents may worry about. There are, however, many ways in which a home educated teenager can get into university.

I'm a nineteen year old ex home educated child who now attends Birmingham City University. I'm in my second year of studying for a BSc in Nursing (child branch). And I got there without any schooling.

I was educated at home from the age of 5½. I am a member of a family of children who were all home educated. I had a very non-coercive upbringing and didn't do any form of structured education till I was fifteen, when I decided that I would like to go to university to do a medical subject. At this point I started to do an A-level in biology, but I found that although I was getting high marks, I was not finding the course engaging. So I decided to look elsewhere for courses in science subjects.

I found the Open University and looked into their courses as a means of getting into other universities. I found that it was entirely possible, so I enrolled on to 'The Discovering Science' course. I really enjoyed all my courses with the Open University because they fitted around my lifestyle and I could do the work in my own time. After doing eight courses with the Open University and accruing about half the points of a first degree I went on to a traditional university. I have no GCSEs and no A levels and I got offers from several universities, including an interview at Cambridge and an unconditional offer to study genetics.

I am enjoying the new experience of lectures and I am enjoying meeting people from all over the world. A teachers' official in Wales recently wrote an article about how home educators find it difficult to move on to other educational environments due to socialisation problems, but this isn't something I've experienced at all.

A friend of mine, Tommy Robin, has just started a degree at Sheffield University – the Contemporary Art Media course. He got accepted by Sheffield by attending an interview, showing enthusiasm for the subject and showing some of his previous work.

"They were looking for someone who was enthusiastic about the course," Tommy said.

I have found that this option is particularly open for art courses at universities, whereas science subjects tend to want some kind of qualification. It doesn't have to be a conventional qualification, though. My older brother decided to do the whole of his degree with the OU and is now studying for an M.A. in Creative Writing. My younger sister studied courses with the both the OU and the Open College of Art and has worked with a local silversmith to build up a portfolio. She is now doing a diploma at an art college and plans to do a degree in photography.

There is also the more conventional way for applying to university. It is still possible to do A-levels and GCSEs as a home educator by going to college or by studying through a distance learning college like the NEC. The point is that there are many paths to university open to home educators.

[www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk)

[www.nec-courses.co.uk](http://www.nec-courses.co.uk)