

What is the Children's University?

The Children's University (CU) is an international charity that provides 7 to 14 year olds (and 5 and 6 year olds with their families and carers) with exciting, innovative high-quality learning experiences outside the normal school day, at weekends and during the holidays throughout the British Isles and beyond.

There are in excess of 115 local Children's University centres across the British Isles all managed to meet the needs of their local communities and all involve local universities, colleges and schools. There are also CU developments in the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, China and India.

Although open to all, the Children's University aims particularly to reach children facing educational and socio-economic disadvantage.

Our aim is to raise aspirations and develop a love of learning by issuing children with a *'Passport To Learning'* which records their individual learning journey. The children are rewarded for their participation with certificates at graduation ceremonies at grown-up universities with proud parents in the audience.

The activities are practical, fun based and voluntary and include after-school clubs, community activities, and learning at museums and theatres, in parks and galleries and even at B&Q and the BBC. Children are also encouraged to attend CU lectures and seminars at universities in order to whet their appetite for future learning.

Independent evaluations by the University of Cambridge have shown that the Children's University makes a difference to children's learning and achievements, both in and out of school.

After the age of 14 Children's University 'alumni' can continue their involvement through our CU Volunteering scheme which is linked to the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The Children's University aims to develop the understanding that learning can be a satellite navigation to better places in life ... all under the motto *"aspire to inspire"*!

What Children Do!

Examples of Children's University *'Learning Destinations'*

'Learning Destinations' are places and organisations to which children can 'travel' with their *'Passport To Learning'*. They provide high quality learning activities and experiences with a 'wow' factor and have passed the Children's University's own quality assurance process (*'Planning for Learning'*). A *'Learning Destination'* can range from a museum to a farm or from an airport to a university as long as the learning activity connects with Children's University learning which is linked to actual university course provision as exemplified on www.ucas.ac.uk/students/coursesearch/.

BBC Tours: Exciting and interactive tours of working BBC studios promoting understanding of how TV and Radio broadcasts are made. It is part of the BBC Outreach remit to educate, entertain and inform.

A group of children from the West London CU were the first to gain a stamp for learning from the BBC in their Children's University Passport after they took part in an exciting interactive tour of the BBC Television Centre. The group, all members of the West London Academy Apprentices club, saw studio one being prepared for a brand new show and then tried out the sets once used for Match of the Day and Blue Peter. Saleem most enjoyed the weather forecasting, especially when he tried the "magic" green cloak and his body disappeared "I can't believe that ... how?!"

U Create Radio promotions: An exciting new e-learning programme which enables CU students to create their own radio promotions. Children use on-line resources, with the assistance of a teacher and the UTV Media creative team, to write, record and mix a radio or video commercial using the interactive e-learning platform U Create.

Budding Birdwatchers with the RSPB: *'Wildlife Action Awards'* – CU students find out about wildlife whilst doing practical things to help and inform others. Lots of things threaten our wildlife, but nature is all around us and there are things we can do to help. This award scheme shows CU students how. *'Wildlife Explorer Groups'* – the groups meet for up to 2 hours per month and typically involves a volunteer led trail or other outdoor activity.

Southbank Centre's Poetry Parnassus: From the *'Eat Your Words Edible Poetry'* workshop to the *'Poetry Tea Party'*, CU students can start making poetry, using a little bit of sweetness and a lot of imagination. The *'Poetry Treasure Hunt'* involves CU students searching the Queen Elizabeth Hall roof garden to find lines of poems by the Parnassus poets, remixing them to make their very own work of genius, then sharing it with all the other newly fledged writers.

Natural History Museum: The Natural History Museum places CU students and their experiences at the fore – from the way exhibits are presented, the galleries laid-out, and trails and activities provided including: *'Explore & Discover Guides'*, *'Cutting Edge'* workshops, *'Animal Vision'* workshops, hands-on family activities, *'The Investigate Centre'*, *'Explorer Backpacks'*, challenges and other activities for children.

CU Lectures and Seminars:



CU Lectures and Seminars take place at colleges and universities and can focus on any subject for example: *'Science in Sport'* focussing on effects of different drugs and anti-doping: *"It was brilliant because it helped you understand the whole thing about drugs, the differences among different kinds of drugs, the effects it has on your body and makes you much more aware not just of drugs but of how your body works 'n that"*.

First News Children's Newspaper: The *'Junior Journalist'* pack includes activities to develop the skills involved in producing good newspaper articles, including: what makes a good headline, how to write interviews, how to edit work, what makes a good news report.

B&Q: The *'Kids Can Do'* It Programme consists of 18 practical classes in store, each lasting one hour. Under expert guidance, children construct one of a range of useful household items or toys. Sessions currently cost £5, and adults are encouraged to participate alongside their children. At the end of the sessions not only have they learnt new skills, but they can take home a finished article they can be proud of. '

The Apprentice: CU students are placed in teams to create, produce, advertise and sell a product. The activity involves and encourages: being creative, working collaboratively as a team, good communication, organisation and leadership skills and includes enterprise and a positive competitive element. Success and being 'hired' is based on which team makes the most profit: *"It helped me think about business and my future life. I think I may want to do that later – go into business ..."*. A trip to the BBC could also be included.

Music Unlimited Creative Recording Studio Session: It does not matter whether CU students have ever played an instrument, can sing or what sort of music they listen to. Whether they fancy strumming a guitar, creating a beat, writing lyrics, rapping, singing, or they just want to know how the recording equipment works. CU students will end up with a professional sounding CD that is theirs to keep.

Mad Science – Dinosaur Adventures: CU students can find out the differences between meat eating and plant eating animals, can take a closer look at dinosaur teeth and make their very own T-Rex tooth. CU students can become a palaeontologist for the day by participating in a mini dinosaur dig whilst using their scientific skills.

Spanish Storytime & paella demonstration (at La Tasca): CU students are introduced to a new language and culture, Spanish story time, arts & crafts, dancing, paella cookery demonstration ... and the chance to try it too!

Summer Reading Challenge at local libraries: CU students take their passport to their local library and have it stamped for 1 hour of Children's University learning per book read – so up to 6 hours of Children's University learning if they read all 6 books. In addition, they could earn up to a further 4 hours if they complete the extension activities or any specially organised local activities.

A few more examples of Children's University activities: Public speaking, photography, computers and IT, French, Spanish, textiles, animal club, art and design, chess, engineering, gardening and horticulture, choir, dance, film club, rock band club, sports clubs, performing arts club, cooking club with catering and hospitality, eco studies.

For further information visit www.childrensuniversity.co.uk or contact the Children's University head office on +44 (0)161 907 5389 or contactus@childrensuniversity.co.uk.

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