

Choosing a University to study your chosen course

Now that you have a clearer idea on what it is you are looking to study at university, it is now time to look into where you want to study.

First and foremost, your university needs to offer your desired course, so be sure to use the [UCAS Course Search tool](#) and [Indigo](#) to narrow down your options.

Here's what you should consider when choosing a university:

The Course

Each course is unique to each university, so be sure to look into the modules offered – do they appeal to your academic interests? Also, how is the course taught and assessed? Investigate the contact hours and how this is divided up between lectures, seminars and independent study, in addition to what the balance is between exams and coursework.

Placements, Years in Industry and Years Abroad

Similarly, are there opportunities to take time out of regular study to develop skills professionally or even further afield?

City, Campus, Collegiate?

Campus unis can be like towns in themselves where you can expect to have accommodation and faculties by and large based on one site, usually just outside a city, whereas other universities are integrated with the city itself. Here, you can expect to encounter the locals and enjoy the bustle of city life, but you may have to travel around a little more (remember that not all cities are as big as London!).

If you are looking for a mixture of the two, a collegiate university might be for you! These include some of the top universities in the UK, like Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and York, where the college can act as a mini university in itself. Benefits include more personal pastoral support, inter-collegiate sports and a unique sense of community.

Here are two articles which summarise some of the pros and cons of city and campus life:

<http://www.studentworldonline.com/article/campus-vs-city-universities-which-should-you-choose-413/>

<https://www.topuniversities.com/where-to-study/europe/united-kingdom/study-uk-city-uni-or-campus-uni>

Location

You are going to be spending a lot of time at university over multiple years: How far away from home do you want to be? Some people are happy to flee the nest and head far away from home, whereas others look for something a little closer. The UK is quite well-connected by road and rail; with several institutions within an a few hours' reach from London. You may be looking to explore your surroundings, so consider factors like the cities nearby, proximity to the coast, and even the weather!

Student Life, Clubs and Societies

A lot of your time at university will be spent outside of the lecture theatre, so choose a university that piques your extra-curricular interests. Can you carry on with your current hobbies? Are there any new hobbies you fancy taking up? Don't forget that you can always start your own society! Also, what are the sports facilities like?

Cost

We're not talking tuition fees here, but rather the cost of living. Everyone has access to a maintenance loan, however this won't necessarily cover all of your costs. It is worth considering how much money you will have to live on each year compared to your outgoings. Your main outgoing will be accommodation, so consider the cost before applying.

Rankings and League Tables

These shouldn't be relied on too heavily, however can provide a good overview of the university's performance. Remember that different organisations source their data differently and prioritise different factors – for example, Loughborough is ranked fourth in the UK according to [The Guardian](#), meanwhile [Times Higher Education](#) puts it at 42nd!

[Indigo](#) compares these league tables for you in the Unis module.

Entry Criteria

Try and see the entry requirements in a positive light: on the one hand, they give you a target to aspire to when completing your A levels, while on the other, they ensure that your university peers will be of a similar level to you. Nobody wants to feel out of their depth at university, nor will you want to feel you're not being stretched and reaching your full potential.

You have five universities to apply to and will later need to choose a firm and an insurance university. Your choices should be aspirational (i.e. best case scenario), yet realistic. You need a small variation in entry criteria so that if you don't quite meet your target in Year 13, you have something to fall back on.

In addition to your research, don't forget that you should visit each of your chosen universities to get a feel for the university itself!

Useful links

www.indigo.trotman.co.uk

www.thestudentsurvey.com

<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/>

<http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk>

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/>