

Choosing a University

Higher education providers can range from the small compact college to a large university with 40,000+ students – and, depending on the popularity of each institution, the degree entry grade requirements can vary just as widely! It is important to encourage your son or daughter to take a structured approach to choosing where will be right for them. They may find the following pointers useful.

Before you start looking at universities it is important to choose the subject you want to study. You may find it helpful to first read [Choosing a Degree Subject](#).

You can then use [UCAS course search](#) to locate universities that offer your chosen subject.

Be Realistic!

Don't choose universities where the usual entry grade requirements (called typical offers) are much higher than your predicted grades.

- As you research keep in mind your grade level and ask your teachers/tutors for the grades they predict you should be able to achieve at the end of your A level (or equivalent) course. This will be easier when you have results from any mock exams and your school have decided the grade predictions they will include in the reference they write for your UCAS application.
- **As a general rule choose universities where the grades do not exceed what you are predicted to get.** Note that eventually you will have to choose a firm (first choice) and insurance (second choice) university, so ensure you include **at least one university** where the grades are lower than you are predicted to get as a fall-back plan. As an option you could choose one aspirational university where the grade requirement is one grade (or possibly two) higher than your prediction. If you are a strong candidate in other respects, a university may still offer you a conditional place, and when it comes to results time may still confirm your place if you are one or two grades down from their typical offer.
- **The best way to be sure of how flexible universities are likely to be with grades, is to ask admissions tutors for the individual courses you are interested in.**
- Check specific subject requirements, e.g. you may need an A grade in A level English Literature or English Language and Literature for some English degrees.
- Don't forget to check GCSE requirements as they do vary! For example, you may need a 7 (A in old grading system) in maths for some economics degrees.

Open Days

Visiting is by far the best way to see what a university is really like. You can find out much more than by reading a prospectus or browsing through a website. You can talk to tutors and current students, take departmental tours, go to taster lectures, see facilities and equipment and get a better sense of where a university campus is located.

- Trust your instincts – could you see yourself studying or living there?
- Make notes so you can compare universities when you return home.
- Be confident, talk to tutors and students – you will learn a lot more by talking to people and often get a more honest view.
- Act quickly to book Open Day visits – it is sometimes first come first served for departmental talks and taster sessions.

Employability

What jobs do students go into at the end of the degree? Check the information that is included in course details on university websites or visit the Discover Uni website. How many students are in a professional or managerial job at six months? Does the university offer work experience or employability modules as part of the course?

Other Considerations

- Location – do you want to be close to, or live at home, to reduce living and/or travelling costs? Or perhaps you want to broaden your horizons – go north/south or experience a big city.
- Accommodation – how do costs match what you will receive on a student loan? How much choice do you get? Who gets priority? e.g. students who choose that university as their firm choice.

(Remember living and accommodation costs can differ greatly from north to south and are typically high in London)

- Size – do you want a large multi site/department university or a small college of higher education?
- City/Campus – do you want to be in the heart of a big city or on a leafy campus in a dedicated student village or a mix of the two, a campus at the edge of a large city?
- Facilities – is the equipment state-of-the-art, particularly if your course involves considerable use of technical equipment? What future investments in facilities are promised?

- Support – if you have a disability, or are a care leaver, will you get the support you need?
For example: scribe, adapted accommodation, support worker.

Studying Abroad

Have you considered if your chosen course is offered abroad? See [Parental Guidance: Study abroad](#)

Lastly, the university needs to be right for you – listen to the opinions of teachers, parents and friends but remember the choice should ultimately be yours!

Useful Websites/Information

[UCAS](#)

University websites and prospectuses

[Discover Uni](#)

[The Guardian University Guide](#)

[The Complete University Guide](#)

(Remember to use league tables as a rough guide and with care, with an understanding of how they have been compiled)

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