

## Choosing a University Course

### Top Tips

- If you know which **career** you would like to progress onto after University, look at the **skills** and **qualifications** you need for your chosen career and find a course that will offer them.
- If you don't know which career you would like to do in the future, think about what you **enjoy** and what you would like to **learn** about.
- Choose a subject you enjoy that will help you **reach your goals**. Think about what you're aiming to get out of the course – career progression or the chance to study a subject you love in more depth.
- **Research** courses carefully via the UCAS website and individual University websites. Use the course search on [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) to find courses that match your interests.
- Check the **entry requirements** for any potential courses, to see what each University is expecting of its applicants.
- Attend **Open Days** and visit the University. Take time to look around the city/town/area of your potential University choices. You will be living wherever you choose to study for the next 3 years or more. Whilst on any visit days, consider the student accommodation, sports facilities, extra-curricular activities, student support, social events or any other factors which you feel are important.
- **Find out** as much as you can before applying. Don't be afraid to phone the admissions office or the students union to gain further information or ask questions.
- **Speak** to your family, friends, careers advisers and teachers about your choices.

### Comparing Course Content

Firstly, you will need to choose the type of course you would like to study. If you don't know your options, you should look at the different [course types and entry requirements](#).

If you have already decided what course you would like to study here are some things to consider when comparing different courses, and different universities.

1. Look at the modules covered in each course and identify which ones are most interesting, or relevant to your career aspiration.
2. How many lectures are there, and how much group work will be done in seminars?
3. What does the assessment at the end of each module look like? Exams, coursework, presentations, or a combination of all three?
4. Who are the tutors, and are they experts in areas you want to learn about?
5. When choosing a course, remember that not all courses with the same name are identical in content.

### Comparing Course Providers and Locations

There are many ways you can research a university, conservatoire, or college, including reading their website or prospectus, looking at online reviews, and social media channels, but ideally you should see the campus, city, and course lecturers for yourself.

Universities and colleges run open days throughout the year – [find upcoming open days](#). If you can't visit in person you might be able to [attend a virtual open day](#).

Once you have shortlisted the different universities and colleges offering the course you are interested, in there are a number of [things to consider when comparing](#) each one:

1. [What subject areas do they specialise in?](#)
2. Can you study part of your course abroad, or get help with work placements?
3. [Discover what studying at a UK college is like](#), and how it differs to studying at university.
4. Do they have sports facilities or societies that you would want to join?
5. How near to home, a city centre, or the countryside are they?
6. What accommodation is available for students?

## Subject and University Reviews

As well as talking through your ideas and plans with family, friends, teachers or advisers, you can find other opinions online. Take the time to check what other people thought by visiting the following:

1. Get a student viewpoint at [Discover Uni](#) – perfect for subject and course provider reviews.
2. Read uni and college reviews from the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education](#).
3. Check league tables that rank university and colleges. Make sure you check the sources though, as some can be biased. [The Guardian](#), [The Times](#), and [The Complete University Guide](#) are some of the more impartial places to look.
4. Look at the government's [Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\)](#) for ratings on teaching quality, learning environment, as well as student outcomes.
5. [Speak to current undergraduate students on Unibuddy](#)

## Help with your decision making

Try rating the decision-making criteria that are important to you when deciding on a course and university. The blank spaces at the bottom of the table allow you to add any additional criteria that are important to you.

Decision-making criteria	Rating				
	Not important	Not very important	No preference	Quite important	Very important
Location					
Interesting course content					
Academic reputation					
Employment rates					
Quality of academic facilities					
Opportunities for study abroad or work placement					
Accommodation					
Availability of financial support					
Opportunities available outside your studies (clubs and societies)					
Availability of part-time work					


Next, list the courses are considering against the decision-making criteria that you have ranked as important or very important. Give each University and course a mark out of five, awarding the highest score (5) to those that fully meet your criteria and the lowest score (1) to those that don't (example below).

	<b>Courses I am considering</b>				
<b>Decision-making criteria</b>	<b>Maths at University A</b>	<b>Maths and Statistics at University B</b>	<b>Maths at University C</b>	<b>Maths at University D</b>	<b>Maths at University E</b>
Location	5	1	3	5	3

	<b>Courses I am considering</b>				
<b>Decision-making criteria</b>					
<b>Score</b>					

Try writing a **SMART Action Plan**. Choose a **specific** objective, ensure the result of your objective is **measurable**, make sure it is **appropriate/achievable**, check also that is **realistic** and ensure a **time-restriction**.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Help needed</b>	<b>Potential barriers to completing the task</b>	<b>Evidence of achieving the task</b>	<b>Completion or review date</b>
e.g. I want to study a joint honours degree in French and Politics but do not know where to study it.	e.g. Research the universities that offer French and Politics	e.g. Use the UCAS website and its course finder  Look at individual university websites  Review subject league tables  Use Discover Uni to compare courses	e.g. Not enough time to do this research whilst studying A Level content  I do not know where to start	e.g. A list of universities that offer French and Politics	e.g. 3 June


## Further Reading

[UCAS Subject Guides](#)

[UCAS Search Tool](#)

[UCAS Hub](#)

[UCAS Events and Discovery Days](#)

[UCAS How to Choose between Undergraduate Courses and Unis](#)

[Open Days](#)

[Discover Uni](#)

***Please contact the Careers Department at [careersstaff@staidans.co.uk](mailto:careersstaff@staidans.co.uk) if you would like individual information, advice and guidance on choosing a University course – we are happy to help.***

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