

Parents' and supporters' guide to... Choosing the right course and university

Once your child has decided that they want to go to university, there are a number of other big decisions to follow. These include what course they want to study, along with which institution will be the right fit. We've put together some top tips to help you support your future graduate in their decision making.

University

1. Consider the location

There are 165 institutions to choose from that span the whole of the UK. For this reason, they will need to think about where in the UK they would like to be, or, how far away from home they are willing to travel.

2. Type of university

- **Campus university:** The nature of a campus university is that the accommodation blocks and academic buildings are situated within a short distance from each other. Often, campus universities have shops and food facilities on site and are said to have a strong sense of community.
- **City university:** If the hustle and bustle of a busy city is the preferred choice, choosing a city based university would be the best option. Be mindful that the nature of a city based university is the accommodation and academic buildings may be a considerable distance from each other, so careful travel planning is a necessity.

3. Does it offer the type of course your child wants to study?

Choosing a university is as much about choosing the course as it is the environment. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website will help to identify universities offering courses in a particular subject group.

4. What is the surrounding area like?

Getting a good feel for the general location is vital as they will be spending a lot of time studying and socialising there. Researching local towns, access to transport links, shopping facilities and opportunities to get a part-time job, are an important part of choosing a university.

5. Research league tables

Using league tables may help to decide which institutions are the best for their chosen subject. Using the National Students Survey (NSS) results will give insight into what graduates/former students think of a particular university, including feedback on the course they studied. Whilst league tables are useful they should not be the only consideration when choosing a university but are helpful in building a complete picture.



Course

1. What are the entry requirements?

Each institution will ask applicants to achieve certain grades at A-level, BTEC, International Baccalaureate (or equivalent) before being accepted on a course. It is important to choose an institution where achievement of the entry requirements is realistic. For instance, the five courses chosen should include a university whose entry requirements are achievable, one which is aspirational and one that is placed slightly below predicted grades. It is important that your child does not underestimate themselves and choose an institution that is asking for significantly lower grades than predicted, as this could be an indication that the course will not be academically challenging for them. Universities may also ask students to attend an interview, audition or provide a sample of their work alongside their predicted grades.

2. What modules are included in the course?

Dissimilar to school studies, the content of university courses with the same title could vary considerably. Researching the individual modules that form the content of the course will ensure that they will be interested in and motivated to study their chosen degree.

3. Opportunities that are part of the course

Many institutions will offer courses that give opportunities for students to study abroad, work for a year in industry, go on a micro-work placement or complete an integrated Masters degree. These factors can be used when researching universities and will help to reduce the shortlist to a manageable number.

4. Socially or scientifically based?

There are two main degree types, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) which is humanities and arts based and a Bachelor of Science (BSc) which has more of a science and mathematical bias. There is also a Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) and a Bachelor of Music (BMus). Whilst all have the same academic standing it is worth investigating the course modules to find out which course meets expectations and is the appropriate one to study.

By thinking about why and what they want to study, your child can start to wade through the myriad of options available to them. If the information needed isn't easily available, then contact the admissions office at the university and ask questions, the more information to hand the easier it will be to make a decision.