

Choosing What and Where to Study

Choosing what to study and where to study at university is a big decision. With over 37,000 undergraduate courses at over 370 Higher Education Institutions in the UK, it's really important to find out what matters to you. This guide will encourage you to think about the range of options available when making these decisions and provide top tips to help with your research.

ACTIVITY

Your route to university

Before undertaking your research, answer the questions below to identify a subject area that you are interested in exploring further.

Why do you want to go to university?

Think about your end goal. Do you have a specific career in mind? What subjects are you good at? What do you enjoy?

What subject area(s) are you interested in?

Do you need to study a particular subject in order to reach your end goal?

What A-levels/BTEC/ equivalent qualifications do you currently study?

What do you currently enjoy about your subjects? How do they link together?

What do you do outside of school/college?

Do you belong to any clubs or societies? Do you play an instrument or are involved in a sport? Do you have any outside interests that you could study as a degree?



Sarah King
Computer Science and Maths with
Industrial Year – Fourth year student

Why did you choose to study the course you are currently on?

I chose to study Computer Science and Maths for several different reasons. I had always been good at Maths at school, and so it was logical to take that further. However, I wanted to do something a little bit different as well, so I looked into the joint honours options. Computer Science was something completely new to me, and it seemed very interesting.

Why did you choose to study at The University of Manchester?

I attended an interview and was impressed by the facilities, lecturers and modules. I wanted to move away

from home, and Manchester was a good distance for being far enough away to be completely independent, but close enough to visit home if necessary.

Where did you go/who did you ask for advice when making a decision about choosing what and where to study?

Initially I used my school's careers service and careers advisors; I also relied on asking people at open days for their opinions and using prospectuses to make my decision. The choice of where to study was something that was completely down to me, as I knew I had to be happy wherever I ended up.

Choosing a course

Getting started

Now that you’ve had the opportunity to identify the subject area you’re interested in, it’s time to research the wide variety of undergraduate courses available.

Researching the course

ACTIVITY

Consider the following questions when looking at course options:

- How is the course structured? – How much ‘contact time’ does your course involve?
- How is the course assessed?
- How is the course taught? – Consider lectures, seminars, independent study, laboratory work, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and tutorials
- Are there opportunities to study abroad/undertake an industrial work placement?
- What are the core modules?
- Is there the opportunity to take optional modules? Are these optional modules part of your course or outside your discipline?
- Can you pick up a language alongside your course?
- Does your course have the relevant accreditation? Higher Education accreditation is a type of quality assurance process involving the course being evaluated by an external body. If standards are met, accredited status is granted. For some careers, for example – a Psychologist, you need to have studied an accredited course in order to progress into the career.
- Do you need to sit entrance exams or submit a portfolio of work in advance? E.g. the UKCAT for Medicine and a portfolio for Architecture.
- Is work experience a requirement for the course you’re interested in studying?
- Will you be required to attend an interview?
- What jobs do recent graduates from this subject do?

Notes

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TOP TIP
Not all courses are the same – even if they have the same name! Make sure you research the course content in detail.



Chloe Hale
Social Anthropology
Third year student

Why did you choose to study the course you are currently on?

I was really uncertain about what to study when I was completing my A Levels, I really enjoyed Philosophy at A level but I was uncertain whether I wanted to study this alone. When I found that Manchester was starting a BA in Social Science I loved the idea of being able to choose modules across the Social Sciences.

I hadn't ever studied or really even heard of Social Anthropology before coming to

Manchester but I loved the way the course was described in the prospectus and it seemed to include all my interests.

After a year of studying Philosophy, although I enjoyed some modules, I transferred onto the Social Anthropology course, the subject I had fallen in love with.

Why did you choose to study at The University of Manchester?

I chose to study at Manchester because I loved the hustle and bustle of city life. I had grown up just outside Birmingham and so I was very used to living in a city and when I visited other smaller campus universities they didn't suit me. I was also aware that Manchester has a great reputation for Social Science and I was keen to study at such a highly regarded institution.

Where did you go/who did you ask for advice when making a decision about choosing what and where to study?

Largely, I spoke to older friends for advice. I attended quite a lot of open days which is important to get a real feel for the University. Ask students at the universities the questions you really want answering which aren't included in the prospectus, such as 'Is it okay being in such a large University?' 'Did you get lost?' 'Where is the best place to do your weekly shopping?'

Choosing a university

Getting started

Choosing a university is a big decision as you will spend three or more years studying there. How do you pick one that is right for you? It's your decision so why not consider the following factors:

- Location
- Cost of living
- Bursaries and scholarships
- Accommodation
- Sports facilities
- Transport links
- Pastoral care
- Careers service
- Campus university
- City university
- Students' Union clubs and societies
- Social activities
- Part-time jobs
- Distance from home
- Academic reputation
- Students' Union
- Support for students with additional needs

TOP TIP

Check if there is an accommodation guarantee for first-year students.



Muhammad Anss
Medicine
Third year student

Why did you choose to study the course you are currently on?

Medicine became appealing to me whilst doing my A-Levels. During this time my work experience with a GP confirmed my desire to study Medicine. My high academic skills were a motivator to study a demanding subject. Medicine involves a wide range of skills to learn and many opportunities to display my expertise. I learn advanced science, alongside developing excellent communication skills to interact with

patients. There are also opportunities to carry out projects and research, which I can present at national and international conferences. Medicine leads to a diverse journey, ranging from lab-based work to community practice.

Why did you choose to study at The University of Manchester?

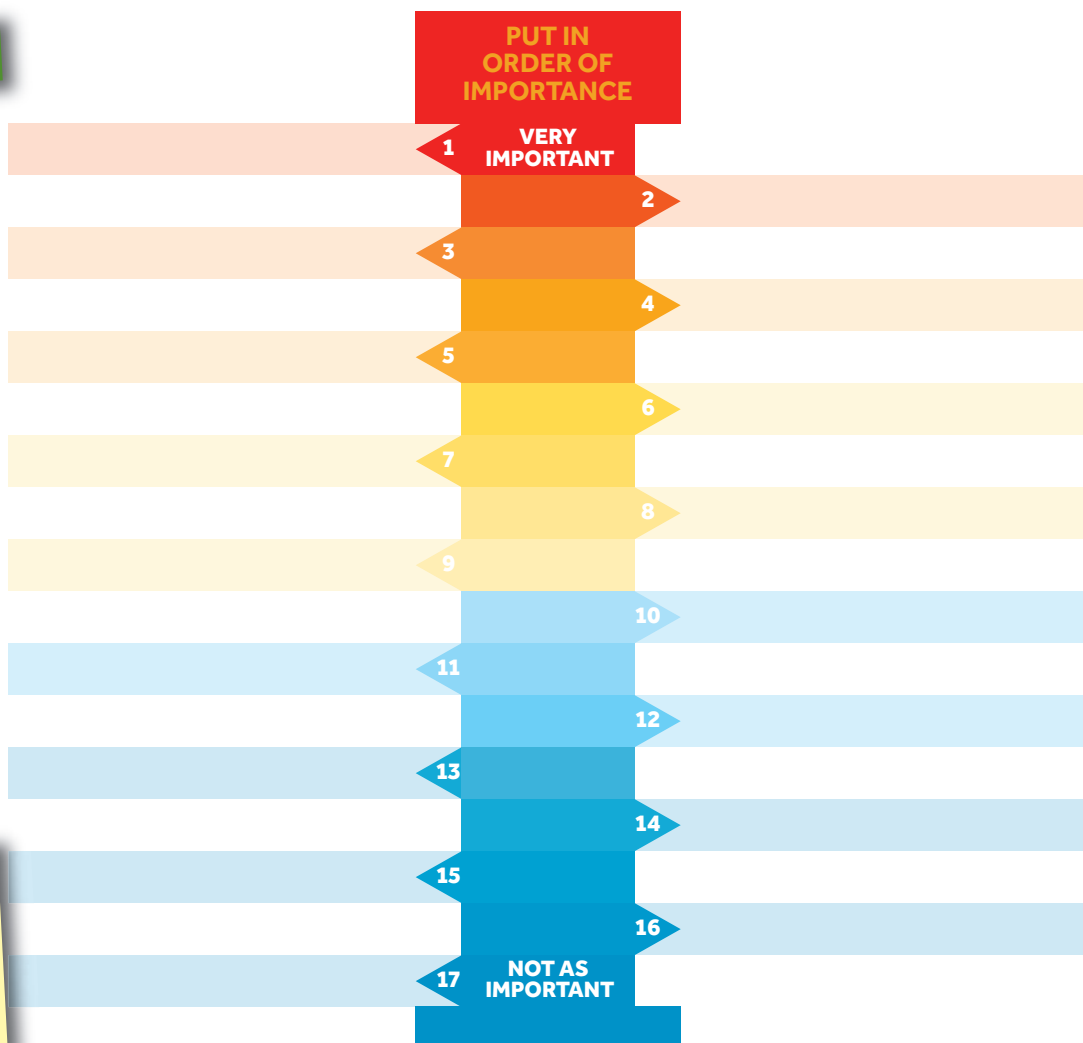
Being from Manchester originally, I always walked past this university with a thought of studying here one day, and here I am! My experience through the Manchester Access Programme was the first insight into university life. During this time I also visited other university open days, however Manchester appealed to me the most. It offers a vibrant campus with lots to do besides studying. Manchester Medical School is the biggest in the UK and it also offered the chance to study Medicine with hands-on experience.

Where did you go/who did you ask for advice when making a decision about choosing what and where to study?

I believe the biggest advisor is you, yourself! I acted upon what I wanted to study and what I was good at. Further advice was provided by college staff, careers service, careers advisors and the university itself. Visiting an open day certainly helped me. I also sought advice from family and friends. The best advice will come from those who are at university; they will share their student experience with you.

ACTIVITY

From the list above, place each item on the scale in order of preference and what is important to you when choosing a university. There is no right answer!



TOP TIP

Take this list with you when you go to university open days!



TOP TIP

Use the UniStats website in the 'Where to find out more section' below to compare universities on issues such as the quality of the course, how the course is assessed and the cost of accommodation.

Your Checklist



Choosing a course

Have you discussed your course options with your tutor/careers advisor?

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Have you found your course on the UCAS search engine?

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Do you have an understanding of the optional course modules available?

☐

Do you know how the course is structured and how it may differ between institutions?

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Are you aware of how this course is assessed at each institution?

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Choosing a university

Have you checked that the universities you are interested in offer your course?

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Have you picked up a university prospectus?

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Do you know where your university choices are located in the country?

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Do you know how far each university is from home?

☐

Have you visited the universities you are interested in?

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THE APPLICANT JOURNEY

Action		Key dates
1	Research courses and universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend UCAS Conventions and University Open Days Speak to teachers and discuss predicated grades – make realistic choices Decide which five universities to apply to Explore subject choices and careers paths by attending University Discovery Days. 	Year 12 and beginning of Year 13
2	Complete the UCAS application form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather together qualifications achieved and currently undertaking Write a personal statement Teachers to write student academic reference to support student's application Submit application form to UCAS Sit any additional entry admissions tests (e.g. UKCAT/BMAT for Medicine/Dentistry). 	Summer of Year 12 and beginning of Year 13 1 September - the UCAS application cycle opens 15 October - deadline for application to Oxford or Cambridge and courses in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science 15 January - deadline UK/EU applicants to be guaranteed equal consideration. Students are advised to apply before this deadline.
3	Wait for decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers/declines/invitations to interviews start to arrive – check UCAS track Attend interview and university visit days to help make an informed choice on which university to attend. UCAS Extra opens in February for students who have declined all their offers or not received any. 	Receive confirmation of university decisions from UCAS September onwards (depending on when UCAS form submitted). Please note that the length of time varies across all institutions.
4	Accept/decline offers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform UCAS of firm/first choice and insurance/second choice. 	End of April/May Students will be informed by UCAS of exact deadline
5	Results day If: Firm choice grades met – wait for confirmation of place from UCAS/university Or: Firm choice grades not met – check with firm choice university; if not accepted contact insurance choice.	Mid August
6	Firm/insurance choice grades not met or no offers held – enter Clearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact universities with vacancies. 	On and after results day
7	Firm choice grades met and exceeded – students may be eligible for Adjustment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact universities with vacancies available through Adjustment to ask about options available. 	On and after results day If a student chooses Adjustment, they have five calendar days to find an alternative place.

Where to find out more:

The University of Manchester

For information on how to apply, courses offered and open day dates www.manchester.ac.uk

UMASS University of Manchester Aspiring Students' Society application advice and glossary of terms www.umass.manchester.ac.uk

UCAS Course search function and advice on writing and submitting UCAS application www.ucas.com

UniStats

For official statistics on universities and courses <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk>