

Manchester Live: Choosing what and where to study (transcript)

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So, in choosing what and where to study, we are going to be obviously talking about how you guys can make your decisions about where to study at university, and what you might be wanting to study.

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So we're going to be talking about why you might want to go to university, what you might want to study, and why you might want to study that. We're going to be talking about how to approach all these different choices that you're going to be making, and hopefully give you some good tips on how to how to go through your decision process.

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Before I go onto the presentation, we are an interactive webinar. So, as you get your questions come into your mind, you can just go to the right hand side of the page and click on the questions tab, and my colleagues, Katie and Maddie, will be there to help answer your questions. So, anything you think of, just pop it in the questions tab, and we'll try and find an answer. So, to start off, we are going to be talking a bit about reasons that you might want to go to university. Because, obviously, it's not for everyone, and that's absolutely fine, but we're going to be talking about why you might want to make that choice.

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There generally tend to be different career prospects. So obviously, if you have a particular career and mind, say, you want to be a nurse, an architect, an engineer, these are all careers that you need to have a specific degree in order to do that profession. So you obviously need to study the correct subject.

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Other people may go to university, like myself, just because they really love that subject that maybe they've been studying at school or college, or they have a really good interest in it and want to take it further.

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And the final reason is probably quite important for a lot of students: student life. So, this is your opportunity to kind of become, maybe more independent. It might be your first time moving away from home. You might choose to stay at home and get involved with lots of societies. There's so many different ways that you can make your student life really exciting.

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So the benefits of higher education. So there are lots and lots of benefits, both academically and socially, in going to university and doing a higher education degree.

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So on average, this is obviously an average.

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But people who go to university tend to be less exposed to unemployment. So that's a really good benefit, I think. And they tend to be more involved in public debate.

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And maybe more likely to vote, and which obviously, really important in society. And also, when you go to university, you are going to be getting some really good transferable skills as part of your degree. So, say you study a subject like English, even though you're going to be studying English as your subject, you're going to be learning how to do research. How to

present, how to work in a team, how to present your argument. So that is really useful for later in life when you go onto a different career.

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Just to mention a bit more about the benefits of higher education. In terms of earning potential, so, again, this is definitely an average. It doesn't, it doesn't mean it's the same for everyone.

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But you can see here, the column which shows the graduates, and the column which shows postgraduates, they are median salaries, and they tend to be a little bit higher than those who haven't been to university, for example.

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So, just bear that in mind, but, yeah, as I say, it's an average, but quite a nice average.

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So what you need to start thinking about in your decision process, is: why do you want to go to university? What course would you like to study? Obviously, where would you like to study this? Where would you like to live? And you'll notice here, we've got the 'you' highlighted, because that is just to emphasize how important it is that it's your decision, and that you're going to be happy with what you decide to study and where you decide to live.

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Obviously, ask your family and friends, your teachers, your colleagues, anyone who you might get support from, for help in your decision, but at the end of the day, it's going to be you studying that degree, and you living in that place. So, make sure it is a decision that you're happy with.

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And obviously, that involves a lot of research. So I think the key message today is to be researching your application as much as you can. I know it's different these days with everything being online, but a lot of universities are trying their best to get lots of online resources up there, so you can have a look, and I'll touch on ours at the end of the presentation.

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So now I am I going to talk about choosing what to study?

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I know I said this before. But if you have a particular career path in mind, it's really important that you do your research now to discover what it is that you need to study in order to reach that. If maybe you haven't done you're a levels yet, I assume most of you have, or the international equivalent, but even if you're not at that stage yet, you need to make sure that you're there doing the correct qualifications to qualify for your particular degree.

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To then go on to your dream career.

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So whether that might be an engineer, a doctor, a nurse, as I said before, a lawyer, all these different things that you need to study a particular subject for. You might want to just do something you enjoy. So this might be something you've done at school or college. So say you've got a real passion for science, you might just want to study science subjects.

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And you might want to study something completely new. So I know, definitely, at my school or college, we didn't have the opportunity to study things like criminology, philosophy and sociology, all these kinds of things. And zoology, for example, these are all quite new subjects that maybe haven't studied before, but, you know that it's something you'd enjoy.

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Look at course profiles on the website. And have a look at student blogs, as well, to see whether the kinds of subjects that people are studying is something that would be interesting to you.

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And finally, it's really important to check the entry requirements. So, obviously, when you go onto a course profile on the website, you're going to be learning a lot about the course, about the different subjects that you can study within that course. But it will also tell you the different entry requirements, So what kind of a levels or BTECs, or international equivalent qualifications, you need to be accepted into that degree program. So, definitely have a look, and check you've got the right qualifications before you apply.

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Does your course choice affect your future plans? So, as I've mentioned a few times, it does, in terms of having a certain career that you need a specific degree for, for example medicine.

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On the other hand, your course choice, in a way, it might not affect your future plans because the statistic here: 66% of graduate jobs just ask for a degree of any discipline.

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So that means that, say, there's a graduate scheme in a particular company, they just want to know that the people who are applying for that scheme have a degree in general - they don't necessarily have to have, say, a maths degree or a history degree or a languages degree. It just has to show that they have a degree and that they've developed the transferable skills that I talked about before.

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So that's really important.

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And it just means that, know, you're not stuck in your particular pathway. Say you decide to study something at university, it doesn't mean you have to go along that line of study forever. For example, I studied Spanish and French. Although I'd like to, I'm not using my languages at the moment. So it just proves to you how many different opportunities you will have after you've been to University.

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And you might want to study a different qualification after you've finished your undergraduate qualification. So you might want to do a postgraduate study, masters, PHDs. You may want to do a law conversion. You could do something called a PGCE which is where you can train to be a teacher after you've done your first undergraduate degree.

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People may have heard of UCAS, but this is the website that manages University applications.

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So when you go onto the on to the UCAS website, there's a page specifically for choosing what and where to study. So it's got a lot of great subject guides. It has got advice on

choosing a course. It tells you when different open days are, different options such as apprenticeships. So definitely have a look at that and that should help you make your decision.

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What should you consider when you're trying to choose your degree?

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It's definitely a good idea to be looking at the course structure because this is the most important thing about your degree.

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You need to know how much contact time you're going to be getting. So by contact time, I mean hours that you're learning with your tutor, with your lecturer, with your seminar leader. So that is contact time, as opposed to independent study, which is where you just may be studying independently in the library or at home, for example.

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So have a look at how much contact time you get.

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You may want to look at the different assessment methods. So with that,

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say, you really perform well with coursework, or

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You really perform better when you do exams. You may want to check how your degree is assessed, just to make sure that it suits and your preferred assessment style.

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Have a look at teaching techniques, because these are obviously really important whether you're going to be having lots of seminars, which are smaller groups. Are you going to have lots of lectures? Which is a big room full of people, and with one teacher at the front.

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If you're wanting to study a science subject, you might have lots of lab work, so definitely have a look at these on the website.

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You might have the option to do study abroad as well, which is a really exciting opportunity.

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So if you do a degree, like a language degree, for example, a year abroad is definitely advised. It's not compulsory, but lots of people go on one. Even if you do a subject such as like, well, most courses at Manchester, bar a few, allow a student to do maybe a semester abroad, or sometimes a year abroad as well. So check out your different options if that's something that is interesting to you.

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Definitely look at the different modules, and I'm gonna go on to talk about that in a little bit. So I won't mention that too much now.

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See whether you can study additional languages.

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At Manchester, we have a thing called UCIL, which allows students to do a different module, which isn't part of their course.

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So, say, you wanted to study a science course, you could do a 20 credit module in another subject, such as a language or a business module, or something like that. It just broadens your portfolio and gives you different skills. So have a look at that on the university websites.

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If that's something that's interesting to you. You might want to look at whether you need to do any work experience before you apply. I know that for a lot of medicine courses, nursing, that kind of stuff, you really do need to have some work experience. I know at the current time that this is impossible. So, if you're worried about that, just contact your academic school. Or have a look at the Frequently Asked Questions on the website, so not to worry.

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And have a look at employability.

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Whether you can work as part of your degree, and see if your course is accredited professionally as well.

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So I know for a lot of psychology courses it's important it's professionally accredited.

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So make sure that yours is. And it says at the bottom, have a look at the academic reputation of the university. But it's important to point out that you need to look at this for your particular course, I would say. Because you need to know how well your course is performing and whether it would suit you rather than just the general reputation of the whole University.

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When you're looking at the course, like I said before, have a look at course content. Because all courses are definitely not the same. So say you wanted to study history.

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You may look at the course at Manchester and it will look completely different to a course at different institutions.

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So make sure you're looking at the course content to see what kind of modules you'll be studying. So, as an example:

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You can look at the UCAS website to search for courses, or you can do it directly on your University of choice's website, because they'll have all the information.

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This, for example, this is an example of some of the first year modules for history at the University of Manchester.

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As you can see, most of these modules are optional. So that means that the course at Manchester is very flexible.

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However, if you go to a different institution, maybe it will be more structured in the first year. You need to think about which kind of learning will suit you. Would you rather be kind of more structured in your first year? Or would you rather have complete free reign of what you want to study? So these are really important things to think about.

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So when we're thinking about where to study, there's lots of different factors that we need to kind of think about when we're trying to make that decision. Definitely, it's your decision, and you need to make sure that whatever you choose is right for you, because at the end of the day, it's your university course, and it's your life, so you need to make sure that you're happy with whatever you decide to study.

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Here is a list of different factors for when you're thinking about where you want to study. There are so many different HE institutions in the UK and abroad. So, you know, there are a lot to choose from. So maybe if you have a look at this list, you need to check whether that university actually does your course.

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And that's really important, because not all universities offer the same courses, obviously.

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You might want to see if it's a campus university, or whether it's a city university, where all the buildings are in and around the city.

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You might want to go to maybe a small town university, if you don't want to go somewhere really big. Or maybe you might be really kind of excited to go to a big city, and have a new kind of lifestyle. It's completely up to you.

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Look at the transport links - how far away it might be from home, whether you can get there easily by train, or by plane - make sure you have a look at that.

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Definitely have a look at the accommodation on offer and what kind of support there is at the accommodation.

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You might want to look for the different bursaries as well. So this is money that you might get from the university, which you don't have to pay back. So it's good idea to have a look to see if you're eligible for any bursaries at your university.

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So once you've made a list like that, try and put them in order and see which are most important to you, and that might help you figure where you want to apply for. I know there's so many choices. But, with lots of good research, you will make the right decision for sure.

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So, next steps in terms of making your decisions, there's lots of information online. You have the UCAS website.

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You might want to look at stuff like the student room, which is a website, it's run by students, so, there's lots of good opinions on different universities, and definitely have a look at that.

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We've got here visits and open days. Obviously, at the moment, these aren't possible. So I'm gonna be giving you information, in a few slides' time, for our virtual Open Week, which everyone's worked really hard to put together. And that should give you a good experience of the university, even though you're not able to come to an open day at the moment.

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And it's the same goes for higher education fairs, but the stuff that's going on the website should give you lots of good information. Have a look at a prospectus on the website.

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And I would advise, as I said before, looking at student blogs, because you want to hear from students really. So have a look and see what their experiences are.

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The most important thing you can do at the moment is start doing your research because that's how you're going to make your decisions, and make sure that's the right decision for you.

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You don't want any kind of shocks when you get to university thinking: Oh, I really wanted to study this particular module in my course, and then find out that it's not offered. So, definitely have a look at the different opportunities. And maybe speak to your teachers if you are still able to, because they obviously send students to university every year. So, they definitely know lots of tips and tricks, and know what they're talking about in terms of applications. So, speak to your teachers, see if they've got any advice. And visit any University Open Days online.

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And make sure you kind of engage with those at the moment.

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We also have a line-up of future webinars focusing on different topics. So just go to the Manchester Live webpage on the website, as you did when you booked this webinar, because we've got all the webinars we are hosting there available to book now.

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So have a look and see if you want to see any of the webinars. So we've got stuff on the student experience, finance, UCAS, accommodation, that kind of thing. So they are super useful.

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And so, not too long now, if you go onto the university website and type in the open days, that will bring you to a registration link where you can register your interest for the virtual open week. And you can see what kind of subject talks you want to attend, and also different kind of student life talks. And there might be accommodation you want to find out about, which there's really good resources on the website for that you can have a look at.

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That's the end of our webinar today, so I'm gonna stay online for a little bit, so we can answer all of your questions. So, hopefully that's given you some food for thought on trying to choose your university. I know there's so many choices. But with lots of research, you'll definitely come to the right decision. So, thank you so much for listening, and we'll just stay online a little bit longer. Thank you so much.