

Methodology

The Sunday Times has compiled this guide from the latest data available. The following methodology shows how we used the information in our league table and individual university profiles.

The league table

Universities were ranked according to marks scored in key performance areas:

Teaching excellence (250 points)

The results of questions 1 to 12 of the 2011 National Student Survey (NSS) are scored taking a theoretical minimum and maximum score of 50% and 90% respectively. This meant each percentage point gained above 50% was worth 6.25 points in the league table. Questions 1 to 12 relate to student satisfaction with teaching quality, academic support, assessment and feedback. Universities were awarded points for their overall institutional score and this is shown in the university profile and the teaching excellence table. The individual subject scores are displayed in descending order within each university profile page. This is a change to our previous methodology which was based on all responses to questions 1 to 22. The data used is drawn from the NSS data for all institutions - level 2 subjects for full-time, first-degree students only, except Birkbeck, University of London and the Open University, where part-time students' responses were used. Source: NSS 2012.

Student satisfaction (+50 to -55 points) The responses given to question 22 of the NSS: "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course" were compared to a benchmark for the given institution, devised according to a formula based on the social and subject mix. Five bonus points were awarded or five penalty points deducted for every percentage point above or below the benchmark score the university's actual score happened to be. Source: NSS 2012.

Research quality (200 points) We used data from the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), published in December 2008. Five different ratings were awarded for research quality, ranging from 4* to unclassified, from which we calculated an average score per member of staff entered for assessment. This average score was converted to a percentage and double weighted to give a score out of 200. In order to take some account of the number of staff submitted for assessment (and make a judgment based on quantity as well as quality), we limited the maximum institutional score to 150 points, 100 points and 50 points, where the number of staff submitted dropped below 200, 100 and 50 respectively. The percentage score produced by the above formula is shown in the university profiles and research table, while the double-weighted points score is shown in the overall league table. Buckingham did not take part in the 2008 RAE. Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce).

A-level/Higher points (250 points) Nationally audited data for the 2010-11 academic year were used for league table calculations. All entry points gained under the

Ucas tariff system were used to calculate mean scores for all universities. Grades for leading qualifications were awarded points according to the following scale: A-levels - A*: 140; A:120, B:100, C:80, D:60 and E:40; AS-levels - A:60, B:50, C:40, D:30, E:20; Advanced Highers - A:120, B:100, C:80; Highers - A:72, B:60, C:48. Other qualifications were also used in this year's calculation. A ceiling was set of 500 points and a percentage of all available points calculated for each university. The total Ucas tariff score is shown in the university profiles and the entry points table, while the score based on the above calculation (halving the mean tariff score) is shown in the overall league table. Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (Hesa), 2010-11 data.

Unemployment (200 points): The number of students assumed to be unemployed six months after graduation was calculated as a percentage of the total number of known destinations. This is shown as a percentage in each profile. For the league table calculation, the percentage was subtracted from 50. Separately, the percentage of full-time, first-degree graduates in full-time, non-graduate jobs as defined by SOC 2000 (Standard Occupational Classification 2000) grouping was subtracted from 50. The two scores out of 50 were added together and then doubled to produce the points score shown in the league table. The percentage unemployed and percentage gaining graduate-level jobs is shown in the university profiles and associated tables. The double weighting is new this year. Source: Hesa, 2010-11 Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education data.

Firsts/2:1s awarded (100 points) We calculated the percentage of students who graduated with firsts or 2:1 degrees. Unclassified degrees were excluded. The percentage achieving firsts or 2:1s under this methodology is shown in the university profiles and the degree table, while the identical points score is shown in the overall league table. Source: Hesa, 2010-11 data.

Dropout rate (+57 to -74 points) The number of students who drop out before completing their courses was compared with the number expected to do so (the benchmark figure shown in brackets in the university profiles). Benchmarks vary according to subject mix and students' entry qualifications. The percentage difference between the projected dropout rate and the benchmark was multiplied by five and awarded as a bonus/penalty mark. Universities that lost fewer students than their benchmark gained, those losing more had points deducted. Source: Hefce, Performance Indicators in Higher Education 2009-10.

Liverpool Hope, Swansea Metropolitan, and Wolverhampton universities are excluded from the guide after withholding data from publication in The Sunday Times.

Subject tables

Subjects are rated on a combination of factors. The subject groupings are based on the following subject codes used by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (Hesa):

<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/102/136/1/6/>

The factors used to measure each subject include:

- Teaching excellence (250 points) - a subject-by-subject breakdown within each institution based on the outcomes of the 2012 National Student Survey;
- Entry points (250 points) - the level of qualifications obtained by entrants to courses in 2009-10 and 2010-11, measured by Ucas tariff points;
- Graduate-level jobs (125 points) - the proportion of students gaining graduate-level jobs on departure from university (2009-10 and 2010-11 data);
- Unemployment (125 points) - the proportion of students assumed to be unemployed six months after graduation (2009-10 and 2010-11 data);
- Firsts/2:1s (125 points) - proportion of students gaining top-class degrees (2009-10 and 2010-11 data);
- Dropout rate (125 points) - proportion of students who neither complete their course nor transfer to another institution (2009-10 and 2010-11 data).

All data apart from the National Student Survey is supplied by Hesa. Where there are fewer than 52 students in a subject population, data is suppressed (and the field left empty in the relevant subject table), although an overall ranking may still be achieved.

Rankings are derived from the proportion of the maximum possible score (1,000 points) achieved at each institution. Where the total number of points on which an institution is ranked drops below 500, the institution is excluded from that subject table.

Indicators in the profiles

Fees The range of fees charged for full-time first degree courses from 2013 (excluding foundation years/courses). Source: Sunday Times University Survey.

Bursaries The spread of means-tested awards open to students in 2013, including awards under the National Scholarship Programme. Number and likely proportion of students to benefit shown where known. Qualification criteria vary widely and students should check the precise detail with institutions.

Scholarships The value of academic, sports, music and other non-means-tested awards for 2013.

Graduate salaries The average salary of graduates in their first job. Source: Hesa, 2010-11 data.

Teaching excellence see league table definition above. Figure is an institutional score based on NSS data for all institutions - level 2 subjects for full-time, first-degree students only, except Birkbeck, University of London and the Open University, where part-time students' responses were used. Source: NSS, 2012.

Student satisfaction the percentage score for the response by students to the statement: "Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course." Source: NSS, 2012.

World ranking The rank achieved in the 2012 QS World University Rankings, where

applicable (with the 2011 ranking in brackets). Source: QS World University Rankings, 2012.

Undergraduates/postgraduates The first figure in each category shows the number of full-time students, the second, in brackets, part-time. Source: Hesa 2010-11.

Teaching staff The number of staff at each university engaged in teaching and research. It excludes those engaged solely in research work and part-time staff, paid by the hour, who practise a profession or trade outside. Source: Hesa 2010-11.

Student/staff ratio The number of students for every member of university teaching staff. Source: Hesa, 2010-11.

Applications/places The ratio of degree-course applicants to the number accepted for these courses who applied through Ucas. The figure shown in brackets is the percentage increase or decrease in applications this year up to June 30, 2011. Source: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas) annual statistical tables, 2011 entry, and Ucas 2012 data.

Clearing entry The percentage of spare places filled through clearing. Source: UK Universities, 2011 entry.

Live in the proportion of the total student full-time student population housed in university accommodation (with the proportion of first-years in brackets), followed by the minimum and maximum costs of university owned or managed rooms.

EU/overseas students This shows the percentage of students admitted to universities from the European Union and overseas in 2010 who applied through Ucas. Source: Ucas annual statistical tables, 2011 entry.

Mature students The percentage of students aged 21 or over when they began their undergraduate courses in September 2011. Source: Ucas annual statistical tables, 2011 entry.

State school The percentage of young, full-time, first-degree students of known background drawn from state schools or colleges. Source: Hesa, Performance Indicators in Higher Education, 2010-11.

Lowest social classes The percentage of young, full-time, first-degree students of known background whose parental occupation is non-skilled manual, semi-skilled or unskilled (social classes 4, 5, 6, 7). Source: Hesa, Performance Indicators in Higher Education, 2010-11.

Low-participation areas The percentage of young, full-time, first-degree students of known background whose home postcode has a low participation record in higher education. Source: Hesa, Performance Indicators in Higher Education, 2010-11.

All telephone numbers, addresses and websites listed are for admission inquiries.