



# CHOOSING A COURSE AND INSTITUTION

Finding Your Place at **University**





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This workbook is to help you have more of an understanding of what opportunities are available for you at university. It may also help you realise **what** course you want to study and **why** and **where** you want to do it.

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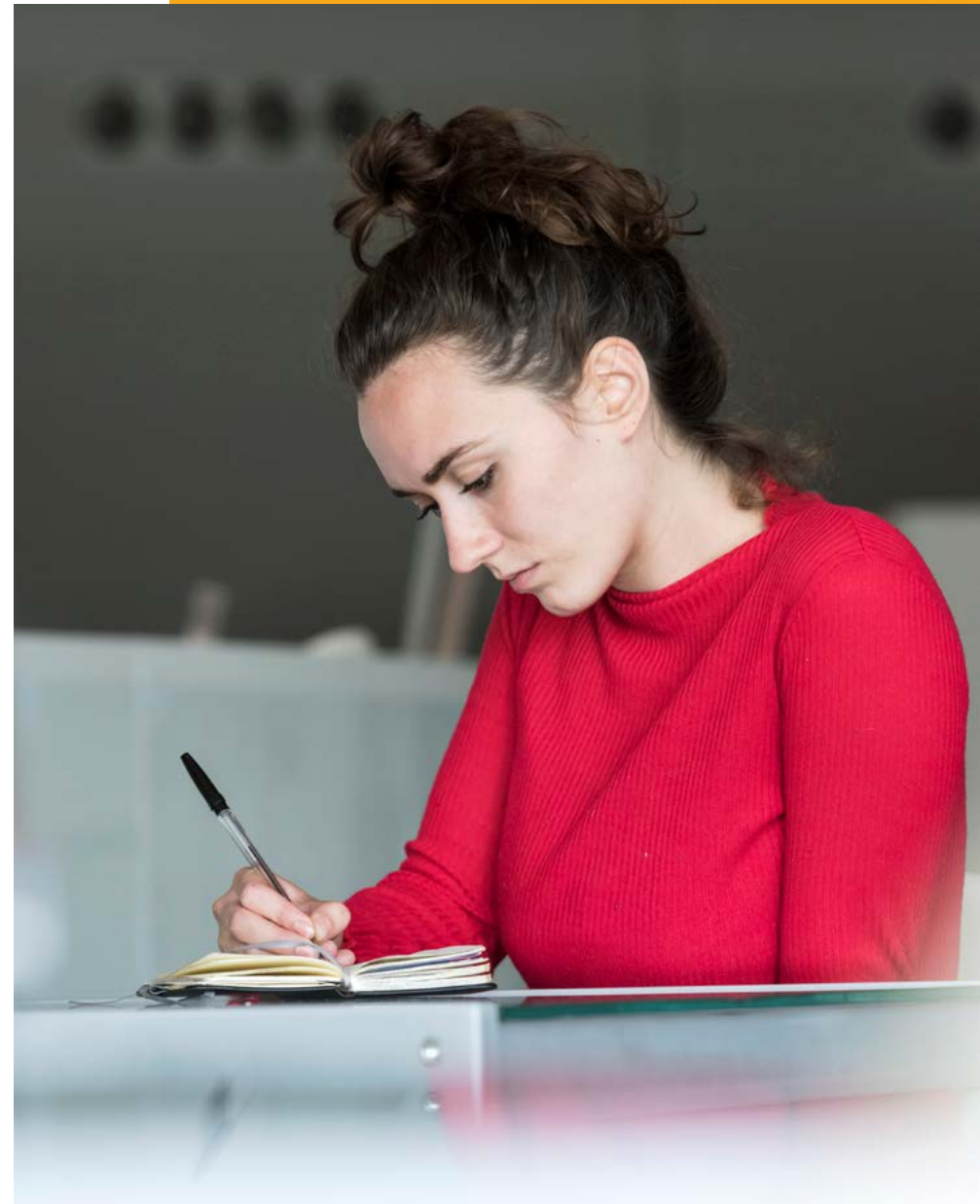
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# HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT UNIVERSITY?

I can't wait to go to university.

I want to go to university, but I've not researched any courses yet.

I'm not 100% sure, but it's still an option.

I have other plans:

my future plan is:

# WHAT ARE YOUR SKILLS?

Make a list of the things you are good at:



## ACTIVITY:

Tick the statements that best describe what you enjoy:

- |                           |                             |                               |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Working as part of a team | Being a leader /in charge   | Studying/learning new things  |
| Meeting new people        | Looking after people        | Working with IT / Technology  |
| Analysing things          | Speaking in front of people | Being hands on /making things |



# GETTING STARTED

## HOW DO I MAKE A CHOICE?

Making a decision about what to study and where to do it can be daunting. There are tens of thousands of choices out there. But the more information you have at your fingertips, the better the decision you'll make.

Let's look at some things you should think about to help you start your research and what you should consider. By the time you're finished, you should have a better idea of the **top 5 picks for you**.

## WHERE'S THE BEST PLACE TO START?

If you haven't thought about what it is that you want to study, a perfect place to start is to list the things **you** like to do. Could your favourite part of the day become your job? Perhaps there's a subject at school you want to learn more about? Or maybe you know someone with a job that you'd really like to do? Knowing the things you love will really help you make a decision.

## STUDENT TOP TIP:

George, Medical student, UEA

"I considered which subjects I enjoyed the most, not necessarily the one I was best at, and went from there, so for me, that was Biology. It's essential to choose something you know you'll like if you're going to study it for 3+ years!"



And if you already have a clear idea of what you want to do, there's still plenty of other things you need to start thinking about...

## ACTIVITY

What are you studying?



What do you like about your course(s)?



What are your hobbies or interests?





# NARROWING THE FIELD

## WHAT EXACTLY WILL I STUDY?

### COURSES

With more than 35,000 different courses to choose from at universities across the UK, there's lots of degree subjects that you know from your studies so far. But there's also many you won't have heard of.

You can study a single subject, or you can decide to combine subjects and study a dual degree – e.g. English and Drama. Different institutions will allow you to combine different subjects.



## WHERE DO I DO MY RESEARCH?

### ONLINE RESOURCES

The **UCAS HUB** is a great place to start looking at courses – it's a one-stop-shop for university research. You need to sign up first, but then you can personalise your profile based on subjects you are interested in.

You'll also find league tables there, which is a great way to find the top institutions for the subject you want to study. Watch **UCAS's handy webinar** on unpicking league tables.

## WHAT'S THE BEST LOCATION FOR ME?

### INSTITUTIONS

There are over 330 institutions in the UK. And they're not all universities – as you can also study degrees at Further Education Colleges.

A great place to start your research is the undergraduate course search on the UCAS website. If you know what you want to study and where, you can filter your search. There's also some excellent **virtual open days** which will give you a good idea of what it's like to live and study there.



## ACTIVITY

List the top **5 locations that take your fancy.**

Knowing this can help you decide on what institution you want to go to!



1

.....

2

.....

3

.....

4

.....

5

## STUDENT TOP TIP:

Ivanabelle, Pharmacy student, UEA

“When looking at universities, diversity was a big factor for me because I didn’t want to feel isolated. I also wanted to ensure that the uni had nice accommodation and that I liked the city the university was in.”





## WHAT DO I NEED TO GET IN?

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

All the entry requirements for your course are on UCAS or directly on the institution's webpage. Use the search feature on the UCAS hub to find the institutions that match your predicted grades. But don't be put off making an aspirational choice!

Some universities will specify particular grades (e.g. ABB – A level or DDM – BTEC). Sometimes they ask for minimum grades that you need to get in specific subjects (like A in A level History or DDM in a Health course.)

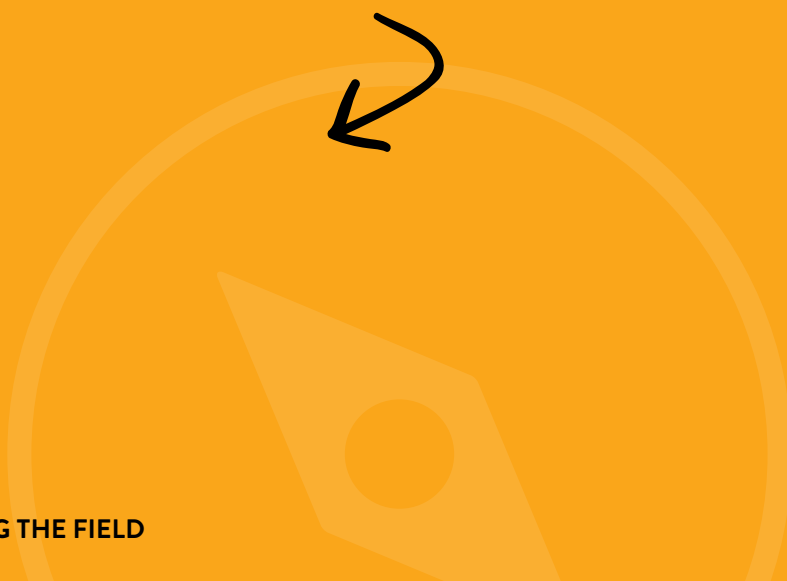
Other universities will work on a points-based tariff system. Each of your grades are worth a particular number of points, (e.g. an 'A' at A level gives you 48 tariff points).

Remember, some subjects can have GCSE or work experience requirements, and if you're studying a BTEC some vocational courses may require you to have taken certain units, so it's vital that you read through all the information carefully.

Some courses may accept Functional Skills as an alternative to GCSEs but do double check this beforehand.

If you don't have the grades or haven't previously studied the required subject course, check if there's a Foundation Year available. This adds a year to the start of your degree where you'll top up your subject knowledge and have extra time to adjust to university study. After passing your Foundation Year, you'll be able to progress on to the first year of study in your subject.

**If you have a question about admissions, or can't find your qualifications on the list, email the institution's admissions team.**





# MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS

*What will it be like when you get there? You can't know everything for sure, but the more you look into your choices, the better informed you'll be.*

## STUDENT TOP TIP:

Becca, International Development student, UEA

"Try to research lots of universities. Don't just look at the course, but the location, facilities and social/leisure activities. Those things make a big difference!"



## WHAT WILL I ACTUALLY BE STUDYING?

### AVAILABLE MODULES

At degree level, the topics available within each course are called modules. They'll be broken down on the institution's website, so check to see whether the detail of the course matches your expectations. For example, a History course at one institution could look entirely different from a History course at another because the modules that it specialises in are different. They can also change each year, so the current list may not be available when you start your course. Bear this in mind.

## STUDENT TOP TIP:

Imogen, English Literature and Creative Writing student, UEA

"I looked to see what modules were available; after all, I wanted to have a large number of options to choose from, including having topics that I'm passionate about. Similarly, I looked to see the particular module makeup for each university — ask yourself, does one have a number of mandatory modules each year? Are they in your area of interest? Would you prefer to have more freedom in choosing?"







# HOW WILL THEY JUDGE MY PROGRESS?

## ASSESSMENT METHODS

On some university websites, they'll offer you a breakdown of how the course is assessed (like written or multiple-choice exams, essays, lab assessments etc). Make sure this lines up with how you like to be evaluated. Your grades could depend on it! If you can't find this information on the university's website, find out on an open day or email the university's admissions team.

If you really love a course, but their assessment methods don't suit you, don't let that get in your way. Universities have specialised student support teams to help you throughout your degree. A Foundation Year is also a great option to help those less confident in academic study adjust to university-level learning.



## ACTIVITY:

How would you evaluate yourself? **Mark yourself out of 10** on the below assessment methods.

**Don't panic.** This is just to get you thinking about your **strengths** and **weaknesses** and will help you find a course that's the right fit for you.

- Essay writing / 10
- Multiple choice / 10
- Lab work / 10
- Written exams / 10
- Presentations / 10
- Group work / 10
- Creative projects / 10
- Course work / project work / 10

## WHAT WILL MY OTHER OPTIONS BE?

### COURSE OPPORTUNITIES

Have you ever thought about doing a Year Abroad or Year in Industry? Lots of courses have that option. A three-year course could turn into four years — spending your third year either studying abroad or getting valuable experience with an employer.

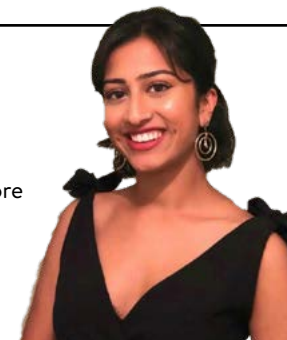
Some courses also have an option to study an integrated master's. This turns a typical three-year bachelor's degree into a four-year master's programme. It's a great way to learn even more about your subject and finish the course with a higher-level qualification.

To find out where you can do any of these options, search for your chosen subject with 'Year abroad', 'Year in Industry', or 'Integrated Master's' on UCAS search or the UCAS hub.

### STUDENT TOP TIP:

Noor, Medical student, UEA

"University is a chance to try something you've never done before or that you're most passionate about. Unlike school, university is the opportunity for you to spread your wings and find out what you really love!"



## WHERE CAN IT TAKE ME IN THE FUTURE?

### CAREER PROGRESSION

If you already know what career you want, see if there's a specific degree you need to do it. Go to the Prospects website to see what's required for your chosen job. And on the UCAS hub, you can see what proportion of graduates have gone onto your chosen line of work. If the course relates closely to a particular profession, check whether it's accredited by the relevant body for that career. The right accreditation can save you a lot of time and exams after you graduate.





## WHAT HELP'S AVAILABLE ONCE I'M THERE?

### STUDENT SUPPORT

Do you have a learning difficulty, mental illness, or a long-term health condition (psychological or physical)? Do you struggle with handling data or structuring your writing? There's lots of support available while you're studying. Take a close look at the Support Services webpages for the institutions you're considering.

## IT'S NOT ALL WORK WORK WORK, IS IT?

### SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Getting a healthy work-life balance is really important when you're studying. Student Unions (SUs) have loads of clubs and societies to help you meet like-minded people. Visit the SU websites to see what's on offer at different institutions. And don't forget to look into what's available in the local area, too. Whether it's a lively music scene, or a city rich with history and culture, it makes sense to pick a location where you can see yourself living for three or more years.

## WHERE WILL I LIVE?



### ACCOMMODATION

If you're thinking of moving away from home for your studies, universities have accommodation that you can apply to stay in for your first year. Have a think about the following questions when considering where you'll live;

- Does the university guarantee you accommodation?
- Do you want it to be catered or self-catered?
- En-suite or a shared bathroom?
- Do you want to be close to the university or live near a city?
- How much does it cost?

Accommodation options will be listed on university web pages. Open days are a great opportunity to explore the available accommodation. If it's not possible to visit in person, a lot of institutions now have 360° tours of rooms available on their website.



## ACTIVITY:

Answer the **accommodation questions** below.

### WOULD YOU RATHER:

Move away?

Stay at home?

### WOULD YOU RATHER:

Uni halls?

Private halls?

### WOULD YOU RATHER:

Shared room?

Alone/single room?

### WOULD YOU RATHER:

En-suite

Shared bathroom

### WOULD YOU RATHER:

In a city

On campus

### ONE THING YOU WOULD BRING WITH YOU:





# COMPARE YOUR CHOICES

## PUT THE SEARCH IN RESEARCH

### COURSE CHART

You can submit up to 5 choices on your UCAS application form. If you're finding it difficult to decide, use this template to complete your research and to make a pros and cons list. Use the list of key factors below to aid your research and to help build your pros and cons list. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers; it's down to what you really want.

#### Key Factors:

- Accommodation
- Location
- Social activities
- Student support
- Entry requirements
- Assessment methods
- Available modules
- Course opportunities
- Career progression

NAME OF COURSE OR INSTITUTION	PROS	CONS
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ACTIVITY:

UCAS HUB PROCESS (Please tick when complete)

- 1

Sign up, using your personal details and UCAS logins.
- 2

Personalise your profile based on subjects you are interested in.
- 3

Look through course profiles and find out more about the university.

ACTIVITY:

Note down **3 courses you're interested in** and what **requirements** you need for them.

COURSE	REQUIREMENTS
COURSE	REQUIREMENTS
COURSE	REQUIREMENTS





# WHAT IS CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS?

Universities use additional information from your UCAS application to assess your potential to succeed.

You could receive a reduced offer to study, or an invite to interview/audition.

Universities will have different eligibility criteria.

## UEA ELIGIBILITY

- Come from an area of low progression to higher education and/or
- Eligible to receive Free School Meals and/or
- Care experienced and/or
- Estranged





# GOOD LUCK

There is lots to consider when choosing the right course and university for you, so what are you waiting for?

**Start your research now!**

If you'd like to receive information about studying at UEA:

