

# What Information Should Students Take into Consideration when Choosing a University?

If you're looking to enhance your qualifications through Further Education, you will no doubt be thinking about applying for a course at a university. For most, studying at university is seen as the route to a decent professional career, but let's face it, there are other attractions to the whole experience. What about the independence that it brings, the social opportunities and the challenge of a new location? Here are some essentials you should have on your wish list when making your mind up about which university is right for you. Presumably, getting the course choice right is a priority, so we will start with that.

## **The right course**

Research what is right for you. Remember, specialist courses have fewer locations accessible to you. A major subject, such as English or Law, will have many more places on offer. However, be realistic – what are your entry level results likely to be and will they be good enough for your dream course?

## **Location**

Think about whether you need (or want) to be near family and friends and how far away you are prepared to live. How will you travel there and what is the cost of living away from home? The cost of living is likely to be greater in London and the south of England. Also, be careful as some universities have more than one campus and they may be miles out of a town or city centre, depending on which course you choose.

## **Facilities**

Within your location, what facilities are important for you to access? You will want to have some fun and enjoyment outside of lectures and seminars and time to switch off from your academic day. If you're a 'social butterfly', you may want the bars and clubs on your doorstep. If you're the sporty type, you may thrive in an area with good sports facilities and university teams. Other necessary facilities that will be part of your daily life are important, so consider the choice and proximity of supermarkets and doctor surgeries. You may wish to check out the student union, societies and libraries too.

## **Cost**

English universities have been able to charge tuition fees for a few years now. These can be as much as £9,000 per academic year. Bursaries and scholarships are available to help those from low-income families. Check out student loans and how much you would need to repay and over what time period.

## **Quality**

Universities are one of many establishments that have their own league table. Don't worry if your ideal course doesn't fall in the top ten. You can weigh up other factors for an individual university such as quality of research, student feedback and employment prospects. It is obvious that universities appearing at the top of the table will demand higher grades, so again, consider the likelihood of achieving these.

So, with your list in hand, do as much research as you can. Think about the critical factors for you and this will help you to narrow down your course and location. Looking in prospectuses and visiting university open days will give you much more of a feeling for a place – it has to feel right! Attending a three or four-year course, with potential debts attached, is not to be taken lightly. Most students

drop out in the first year due to poor course choice. Therefore, starting with the right course and following this decision up with your preferred location will benefit you in your final decision. All the other things in your wish list may become a bonus.

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