

Ready, steady, visit...



Many people will tell you there is no substitute for making a personal visit to a university or college.

If you are planning on a visit, here are some tips from students who have already been through the experience. We start with what it will be useful for you to find out in advance, and then give you ideas for questions to ask and what to look out for on the day.

Things to find out in advance

An official open day

Check out whether you need to book your attendance in advance and, if applicable, will any car parking be reserved for visitors on the day?

Note: some city-centre universities lay on coaches from park and ride sites located on the outskirts near the motorway network.

If arriving by train, will student ambassadors be available at the local station to meet and greet you?

Try to establish if there will be an opportunity to meet a member of staff and / or students from the course(s) that interests you.

If attending with a parent, will there be any separate talks available for them? (For example, on accommodation options and tenancy contracts.)

Not an official open day

Universities and colleges realise that the dates of advertised open days are not always convenient for everyone. If contacted in advance (through the school and college liaison team), they will always try to provide alternative arrangements, particularly if a long journey is involved.

Maximising your visit

Questions to ask

How many taught hours does the course have?

How will marks towards your final degree be split between the years (first, second, third year), and between course assignments and exams?

How will the degree be assessed? (Options could include coursework, exams, practicals, presentations, and group work.)

How many offers did the university / college make on the course last year?

Are there scholarships or bursaries on offer?

Will the course be interviewing students or setting an admissions test?



For courses that use specialist facilities – such as recording and editing suites, or scientific laboratories – will the facilities be shared between undergraduate and postgraduate students?

Does the course carry professional accreditation? (For example – in psychology, is the course recognised by the British Psychological Society)?

How many weeks of the year are covered by the halls of residence contract?

What jobs do graduates of the course go on to do?

How well staffed is the university careers service?

Can the university / college help find internships or work placements?

Is the library open seven days a week?

Are the core and optional modules still the same as published in the prospectus?

Do lecturers have Twitter profiles that can be followed, for insight into the course content?

Does the university / college take many students through Clearing or Adjustment?

Things to look out for

Does there seem to be a good rapport between staff and students?

Do lots of computers seem out of action in the IT suites?

For car owners – is there much (if any) student parking, and what is the cost?

Is the campus well served by buses (from town / city centre or the railway / bus stations)?

Are the buildings well designed and welcoming with good signage (including 'you are here' location maps) to help visitors (and freshers) find their way around the campus?

Check out the students' union and departmental notice boards – are there lots of interesting things going on?

For those with special dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, gluten-free), is there much choice in the cafes and food outlets?

Try to read a copy of the latest edition of the student newspaper – what are the important issues on campus?

How far away from the halls of residence is the nearest supermarket?

Tip: If you are planning to visit several universities, you may wish to record the answers you receive on a spreadsheet – a great memory jogger.)

And if you can't make a visit

All is not lost, as you can access a wealth of freely available data on websites and through social media.

For example, **www.unistats.co.uk** is the place to go to compare UK higher education course data. This includes satisfaction scores from the National Student Survey, jobs and salaries after study, and other key information.

www.which.co.uk/university is another source of feedback from students on their ratings for degree courses.

Current degree students often post candid views of their experiences of university life through forums such as **www.thestudentroom.co.uk**

Universities are often active in posting information about themselves on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.