

UCAS Information

Question	Answer
<p>What do students study at university, and how long for?</p>	<p>Students study at university for a degree. Most degrees take three years, some take four. An undergraduate is anyone studying towards their first degree. A postgraduate is studying towards an additional degree. Most undergraduate degrees are called either a BA (which stands for a Bachelor of Arts) or a BSc (which stands for a Bachelor of Science). Degrees are awarded at different grades with a First (1.1) being the best. This is followed by a 2.1 then a 2.2.</p>
<p>Why do students go to university?</p>	<p>There are lots of good reasons to go to university. The most common are; 1. To enable progression to a specific career that requires a degree (e.g. Medicine or Engineering). 2. Due to a love of ones subject and a desire to study it in greater depth. 3. For the financial benefits that a degree can bring. 4. For the life experience and to broaden ones horizons</p>
<p>How to choose a subject?</p>	<p>This is a really important question but the answer isn't always what some people would think. For some students the task of choosing a subject is easy as a specific subject is needed for the career they desire (e.g. Nursing or Architecture) but for the vast majority of careers the requirement is for a 'good degree in any subject'. (Typically a good degree is judged as a 2.1 or above.) Therefore your degree only matters in terms of how well you will do, and how much you'll enjoy it. For example, even for traditional careers like Law, a Law degree is not a requirement. Students can investigate this by searching for jobs themselves. Consequently our advice is that for the vast majority of students the best thing to do is to do the subject they think they will enjoy and to do something they are good at. We all do best at the things we enjoy and are good at, university is no different.</p> <p>To help choose a subject we strongly recommend that students sign up for taster days in subjects they might be interested in. The University of London offer lots of these and they are free to attend. Students should also talk to their teachers and to Mr. Howarth and Dr. Grossman to help narrow down their choices.</p> <p>The UCAS Course Search tool (easy to google, I promise!) will help you see all the possible courses available linked to searched key terms.</p>
<p>What if I can't decide between two subjects?</p>	<p>if they are very different (e.g. you cannot decide between Media and Chemistry) you need to make a decision. Talk to your teachers and talk to Mr. Howarth and Dr. Grossman to help inform that choice. Taster days at universities will also be very beneficial.</p>

	<p>If your possible subjects are quite similar (e.g. History and English or Philosophy and Psychology) you might consider doing a joint honours subject. This is where you do them both together. This is a very common thing to do and means you keep a feet in both camps.</p>
<p>What is the difference between a subject and a course?</p>	<p>A subject is the broad area you are studying, e.g. History. The course is the way that the degree is organised into segments or options. For example, in one university the History course might have a particular focus on American History, whereas in another the focus may be on Russia. Students should look carefully at the course and not just the subject to make sure it is precisely what they want. In particular they should look at the 2nd and 3rd year options as these tend to vary more than the first year options.</p>
<p>How are university students taught?</p>	<p>University teaching depends greatly on the subject and the university's particular approach, but the following are all common methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures – Large sizes of students when you are talked to and take notes Seminars – mid-sized groups and taught more like a school class Tutorials – small or even one on one teaching Laboratories/Practicals – subject specific practical classes <p>Students should think about how they like to learn and look for courses that support that method as much as possible. Most universities use examinations to assess knowledge of the course, but it is also common to do a dissertation (a long essay or project.)</p> <p>The best thing to do is to visit some universities. All have open days and will show you around. These are free to attend, and you are strongly encouraged to book some of these. If you qualify for the Sixth Form Bursary (household income below £30,000) we would happily help pay for the cost of transport.</p> <p>You need to decide between a campus university (where everything is on one site) a city university (spread across a city in different buildings) or a collegiate university (split into small colleges where students both live and study, with individual colleges spread across the town.)</p>
<p>How do I choose a university?</p>	<p>You also need to consider how close to home you want to be, both geographically and in terms of the time it takes to travel to the university using public transport. Again, the best way to help answer these questions is to visit universities for open days.</p>
<p>What grades will I need?</p>	<p>Universities vary considerably in the grades they require for entrance. A large part of investigating suitable universities is to look at what grades they typically require. This will be listed on their websites but will also be available via the UCAS course search.</p>

Should I worry about university league tables?	Not too much, but they are worth looking at to help form your judgements. Most people have heard of the famous universities in Oxford and Cambridge, but there are lots of very good universities in the UK. The Russell Group of universities is a good place for ambitious students to start. Often universities have specialist departments in some subjects so looking at subject league tables might be useful too. However, you have to live at the university you choose so do not make a choice based purely on reputation!
Where would I live?	Assuming you go away from home to university you would most likely live in university accommodation in your first year and private rented accommodation with your friends in subsequent years. Some universities can offer accommodation beyond the first year, but this is rare.
What is there to do a university besides study?	Essentially, everything and anything you like. The range of societies and sporting clubs and teams is enormous. You really can find (or set up) whatever you would like to do. The ability to find likeminded people to do things with is one of the best things about university for most students
What is the cost? Will I enjoy it?	Please see the separate guidance on student finance gov.uk - student finance or UCAS website The answer for the vast majority of people is a resounding 'Yes.' Most students' love life at university and make life-long friends while gaining a valuable academic qualification that helps set them up for life. However if you are worried if you're right for university or not, come and talk to us and we can help you decide.
What to do next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Log on to wwwucas.com and start your application for 2017 entry. The buzzword to link your account to the school is 'beaconacademy2017. 2018' • Attend one of the sessions in school about personal statements and get cracking with it • Sign up for some taster days for some courses you are interested in • Talk to your teachers your tutors, your parents/carers and Mr. Howarth/Dr. Grossman about your plans • Do things over the summer that you can help show your interest in your subject on your personal statement, e.g. free lectures, visits, reading suitable books/magazine articles... • If you're unsure or have any question please come and talk to us or email: c.howarth@beacon-academy.org or k.grossman@beacon-academy.org

Student Finance – The Essentials

- Tuition fees for the vast majority of full time courses are £9,000 per year. This is paid for via a tuition fee loan that covers the full amount
- A maintenance loan is also available to all students. The amount a student is eligible for varies depending on household income. Please see the table below. These figures assume you are living away from home. www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance can be used to calculate more precisely the funding that will be available to you

Household Income	Amount of Maintenance Loan (outside of London)	Amount of Maintenance Loan (London)
Over the threshold	£3,821	£5,330
£60,000	£4,078	£6,506
£50,000	£5,256	£7,705
£40,000	£6,434	£8,904
£30,000	£7,612	£10,103
£20,000	£8,200	£10,702

- Rental costs will vary from University to University. It is likely to be between £4,500-£6,500 per year. It will be more expensive in London. The average cost is £4,900 per year according to the National Union of Students
- Students will also need to budget for everything else (food, books, going out, clothes, insurance etc. etc.) This is likely to cost an additional £4,000-5,000 per year.
- Most students work in the holidays (which are long!) or during term time to help pay for this, but are likely to rely on parents or carers to some extent
- There are other sources of funding available including bursaries and scholarships. All universities will also have a hardship fund of some kind to support students who are in economic difficulties
- Repayment on loans (both maintenance and tuition) begins when a graduate's income rises above the minimum threshold which is currently at £21,000 per year. The interest rate on the loan is currently at 3%. What this means in terms of repayment amounts can be seen in the table below

Your income per year	Repayment amount per month
£21,000 or less	£0
£25,000	£30
£30,000	£67
£50,000	£217