

UNIVERSITY OPEN DAYS

University open days provide a fantastic opportunity to find out more about a university, visit its departments and facilities, see student accommodation and get a feel for what it might be like to study and live there.

Open days take place throughout the year, but some months, like June and September are particularly busy. It is always advisable to book your place well ahead of time. Details are published on university websites and you'll also find a calendar of open days at <https://www.opendays.com/>

How to make the most of an open day

The key is to prepare. First of all, check that the university offers the course that you're interested in. Then take a look at the course in more detail, to see what modules you can study, the topics covered and how you will be taught and assessed. If the course still appeals, then a visit to the university is a good next step. If the course doesn't really appeal, then don't waste your time visiting it.

Make sure you know how long it will take you to get there and, if travelling by train book in advance. Public transport can be very busy as prospective students all converge on one town or campus.

On open days, many universities offer a timetable of events, including talks, taster lectures and departmental visits, so make sure that you know what's on offer and that, if necessary, you have signed up to the events that interest you.

Go armed with questions and don't be afraid to ask them – after all you're on a fact-finding mission. Talk to the lecturers who will be teaching on the course and chat to current students – there are always plenty of students around on open days, who volunteer specifically to help answer your questions about what it's like to be a student at that university.

Universities use open days to show off the best bits. Make sure that you look around the whole campus and visit parts of town where student accommodation is found, especially where you might be living after the first year. When in town, explore what's there. Is there enough for you, what are the transport links like, how far is it to facilities that you might want to use?

Questions to ask at open days

You'll undoubtedly have your own questions, but here are a few to get you thinking about what you may want to ask about.

- What is my week likely to look like?
- How many lectures/seminars will I have per week?
- How many contact hours will I get per week?

- How easy is it to meet with tutors/lecturers if I need help?
- How much choice do I get about what I study?
- Is there a reading week?
- Can I do a year in industry/abroad?
- Can I do a joint honours or combined degree?
- How far is the department/library/student union/sports centre from where I might live?
- How much free time will I get?
- Can I pursue the hobbies/sports that interest me?
- How likely is it that I will get into a university/college sports team?
- What other opportunities are there to play competitive sport?
- What's the social scene like?
- Is there night-life on campus or do I need to go into town?
- What's it like at weekends?
- Where and what are the nearest supermarkets?
- How expensive is accommodation/living here?

Virtual visits

If you can't get to an open day, you may find that the university has a 'virtual' visit on its website. It's not quite the same as going to the university but it will give you a flavour of what it's like there.