

## How to choose an undergraduate degree course and university

In the UK, there are over 37,000 undergraduate courses on offer from 130 universities (and another 250 higher education providers). Add to that the option of studying abroad and the choice can be quite overwhelming.

### Research, research, research

The good thing is that with such a wide range of courses on offer there's bound to be something that interests and suits you. Finding the right course can take a while, but the more time you dedicate to exploring options and researching courses, the more likely you are to find the right one.

Good places to start are:

**UCAS** – UCAS has a good search tool

<https://www.ucas.com/>

**The Uni Guide** – this is another excellent tool which helps you find courses, universities and answers some of your questions about how to prepare for university.

<https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/>

**The Student Room** – this is an online forum where students can ask undergraduates about all aspects of university life and get honest answers from those experiencing it first-hand.

**Russell Group** – the Russell Group (24 of the UK's universities) produces a helpful document called **Informed Choices** which provides information on how to decide which university is best for you.

<https://russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/publications/informed-choices/>

At the age of 17/18 most people have no idea what they want to do in later life. Other than some vocational careers, such as medicine, law, engineering, there is not always an obvious degree path to follow and it can help if you ask yourself some questions and answer them as honestly as you can.

### Things to consider

#### Choose a course you will enjoy

It is very easy to think that if you are good at a subject, you should study it at uni. That's great if you enjoy it and feel that you want to learn more and increase and improve your knowledge in that subject area. If not, then you should consider studying something different. Certainly, don't apply to study a subject because someone tells you that you should or that they wished they'd had the opportunity to study it. It's about you, not other people.

### Can you study something new?

If you choose a degree course in a subject that you have studied at school, then you will have an idea of what that subject and the study of it entails (although you may find it very different at university). One of the exciting things about moving from school to university is the opportunity to study something new. This could be learning a new language from scratch (ab initio) or studying a subject that is not taught at school, like law or sports science, or delving deeper into a subject by studying a more specialist area, like astrophysics. If you decide that you would like to take on a completely new academic challenge, make sure that you research each university's entry requirements.

### Will my degree course impact on my career prospects?

Not surprisingly, people often worry about whether their degree course will lead to the right job. In reality there is no such guarantee. Of course, there are degrees, like medicine, dentistry, engineering or music which teach you very specific skills and often lead to related careers. Other degrees will provide you with a whole range of abilities – such as research skills, analysis, numeracy, teamwork, communication and presentation skills, independent learning and time management, all of which are attractive to employers. You should focus on getting the best possible degree, and adding to your skill set, in order to make you look as attractive as possible to potential employers. One way to boost this, is to take a 'sandwich' degree which allows you to take a year abroad or a year of work experience (usually in the third year).

### Which university is right for you?

While choosing the right course is key to your happiness and success as an undergraduate, finding the right university is also important. Do you want a campus university or one that is spread across a town/city? Do you want to be in an urban or rural environment? What sort of accommodation would you like? Living in a group of flats or a traditional hall? En-suite bathroom? What sort of social life would you like? Does the university offer sports/music/extra-curricular activities that interest you? Do go and visit the universities on your shortlist and see if you can speak to students there. Some universities also arrange for you to email current students with your questions. It is also worthwhile checking out [The Student Room](#), a forum where students share information and experiences. You can also talk to students via the [UCAS Student Hub](#).

### Remember the alternatives

Even if it seems that everyone else around you is putting together a UCAS application and applying to university in the UK, remember that there are other options which may suit you more. These include taking a gap year, applying to university overseas, applying for an apprenticeship (which could sponsor you through your degree or take you straight into work) or a career in the armed forces.