

Choosing degree courses and universities

Sources of information and guidance

PODCASTS

To save costs, an increasing number of universities and colleges are providing podcast material, free to download, through iTunes.

UNISTATS

This website brings together a wealth of authoritative, official information, enabling applicants to compare subjects at UK universities and colleges. It includes destinations of leavers from higher education and the results of student satisfaction surveys. See www.unistats.direct.gov.uk.

YOUNGOFURTHER.CO.UK

youngofurther.co.uk, the UCAS student network, is the place for students to meet their future course mates. 'yougo', as it is more commonly known, is the place for students to meet other applicants who will be going to the same university or college, or even the same course. It's also a good way to ask UCAS questions as well as the universities and colleges themselves.

By joining yougo students will be able to:

- meet people like them before they go to university or college
- get their questions answered by UCAS experts and the universities themselves
- enter competitions exclusively for yougo members.

The great thing about yougo is that it is free to join and exclusively for students. It can help students get the most out of the UCAS application process.

If students have any enquiries about joining yougo, they can email support@youngofurther.co.uk.

GET OUT THERE!

To help them make their minds up, there are three other sources of valuable information available to students:

open days, taster courses and education conventions.

Students can try and get answers by phone or email, but they are unlikely to get the full picture unless they meet people face to face and visit the universities and colleges where they are thinking of studying.

GO TO OPEN DAYS

Attending university and college open days is a great way for applicants to get a feel for a place. During their visit, they should be shown around areas such as the student union, library, accommodation areas and the department in which they might end up studying. They might be able to meet tutors and chat with current students.

Many university open days make use of student ambassadors – these are students who are available to answer questions and give practical guidance to

visitors. They are often second year students, so they are not remote from the application process and know exactly what it is like to be a fresher at their particular institution. In fact, UCAS has helped train some ambassadors so they really are up to speed on making an application and can speak from wider expert knowledge as well as their own experience.

Most students would say that open days have enabled them to make an instinctive decision – the place may or may not feel right for them. If they don't explore beforehand, they risk feeling disappointed when turning up to start the course, only to find that it's not what they expected.

Did you know? The majority of students attending an open day will attend with a parent (or parents). Given this state of affairs, most universities and colleges will timetable in sessions just for parents on key topics like student finance, staff/student contact hours and accommodation.

See Visiting Universities document on the school website.

ENROL ON TASTER COURSES

A number of universities and colleges around the UK offer short taster courses, giving students experience of academic and social life in an HE environment. Most of these courses are free, and they last from one day to a full week. There are also summer courses available which are designed to be as authentic as possible, with lectures and tutorials, and give students the chance to share their academic interests. Demonstrating commitment in this way will also look good in the student's personal statement. Understandably, these taster courses are popular. Those who are interested need to book early to reserve a place.

ASK FAMILY, FRIENDS AND PROFESSIONALS

Students mustn't be afraid to ask for advice and opinion. As well as talking to professional advisers, you can talk things through with their parents and with friends who have progressed to HE to find out what their experiences were like. (What did they do before applying? And, with the benefit of hindsight, would they do anything differently if they had to go through the process again?)

BOOKS

Various guides exist and we have several in the careers room. You may decide to buy one or two. In addition, there are guides to studying specific subjects such as the Progression series and books about Law and Medicine. There are guides to Oxbridge entrance and to Admissions tests.

STANFORD TEST

Available on the UCAS website. A series of questions that might help you choose a course.