
Understanding the University Application Cycle

Session 1: Making Choices

Reading 2: What advice can you give to your students when they are choosing their university?

'How do I choose a university?'

Looking at League Tables

In the process of choosing a university, it is important for your students to consider which universities specialise in which subjects and where they rank for student satisfaction, teaching, and employability. Students should look at the factors that they value most and weigh them up. Doing this will allow them to choose a university that is one of the best for them and the course they have chosen. For example, below is a small sample of The Guardian general league table: Oxford has a higher score for 'satisfied with course', but Cambridge has a higher score for 'satisfied with feedback'. There are a number of different league tables to consider.

UK universities ranked

Subject area		All subject areas		How to use these tables »				
Rank 2017 **	Rank 2016 **	Institution **	Guardian score/100 **	Satisfied with course **	Satisfied with teaching **	Satisfied with feedback **	Student to staff ratio **	Spend per student/10 **
1	(1)	Cambridge	100	88.0	91.3	73.6	11.0	9.7
2	(2)	Oxford	95.4	91.6	92.9	71.5	10.5	10
3	(3)	St Andrews	90.8	89.6	91.1	74.5	11.6	6.9



Thinking about location: campus or city

When your students are choosing universities, it is important to consider how far away they want to be from home. Do they want to be close to home or would they prefer to venture further out? Advise them to look closely at a map to understand how far a university is from their home. However, it is also important to consider travel and how easily they would be able to get to and from university. Is there a direct train route?

Next, they should take a look at the area surrounding the university. Is it well connected? Is it in a rural area or in a city? How far away is the nearest train station? Would they prefer to be at a campus university, where the facilities are all in one place, or a university which has facilities spread across the city? The best way to understand these factors is to visit universities on open days. As well as visiting the university facilities, encourage them to allow time during their visit to explore the wider geographical area.

Researching student life

Student life is a major part of university. Your students will be living a lifestyle that revolves around becoming an independent adult. This will involve managing a work-life balance. Therefore, it is important to consider what universities offer to enrich student life. Factors could include sports, societies, volunteering and work opportunities. Most universities will offer a wide range of societies (academic/recreational groups) and sports to join. These can range from rock climbing, to Harry Potter appreciation. It is important for your students to check that the universities they are considering offer opportunities outside of their study that will help them get the most out of university life. If part-time employment is important to your student, advise them to research if there are any opportunities to work while they study.