



Choosing a university

Tips for school leavers on choosing the right course and campus for you

The most important factors

When deciding the right course for you, ask yourself:

- Am I really interested in the subject? Does the course content excite me all the way through?
- Are there any aspects of the course I may find tricky such as essay writing or maths? If there are, then is this the right course for me or is there something I could choose along the same lines?
- What are the job prospects with the chosen degree?

When you're trying to choose the right university, try and visit as many of them as you can before you make your choice. Open days are a good way of doing this. By planning early when thinking about university, you will learn about application dates and criteria and can submit early requests to your teachers for references.

Other things to consider

Location - are there good transport links?

Accommodation - is it on or off campus and what do you prefer?

Pastoral and well-being support - is there a good network of support available?

Student facilities - is there a choice of clubs that interest you?

It can get a bit stressful deciding which university to choose, so make a 'pros and cons' list after your visits and add to as you go along. Take your time - there is no hurry to decide straight away after the offers have come in, you might change your mind. Use all the time you are given to make your decision.

What not to do

Don't decide on a university just because your friends are going there – you will always make new friends. If you do find out that someone else from your school is going to the same university as you, try and make contact and perhaps set up a WhatsApp group so you can arrange to meet in your first few days.

Universities have Scottish, UK and worldwide rankings. Don't base your choice too much on rankings as they often change.

Preparing in advance

Research your course on the university website and talk this through with your Pastoral Care or equivalent at school. Compare courses between universities as the course content may differ and some may offer opportunities to go abroad or flexibility to switch or adapt the content after the first year.

Consider a university summer school to give you a taster of university life, such as the Sutton Trust.

Have an understanding of the essential requirements for future courses or employment and use your subject choices in S4 to help you on your chosen pathway. Be aware of subjects that you need but may be challenging. National 5 Maths is often one of these. When you are fully informed, you can make lots of choices about focusing the subjects you need for your preferred course.

S5 grades are more important than you think. Often, a university will base their entry requirements on your S5 grades. S6 is a great opportunity to improve your grades, add to or re-sit a subject.