

Getting the best out of university Open Days...

Open Days are a great way to find out whether a university is right for you. You can experience the facilities first-hand and talk to the staff and existing students.

Accessing Open Days

Your needs may impact on how accessible an Open Day is to you and how comfortable you feel in that environment. Many university Open Days are designed to be as accessible as possible but you can always contact the university in advance to ask what facilities are accessible, what support there will be on the day and any worries you have. For example, you may need to request an interpreter, a quiet room or Blue Badge parking.

You can also investigate the accessibility of the university and local area using the AccessAble website. This allows you to check if locations, venues and facilities have the right accessible features for you. The site provides a Detailed Access Guide with a brief overview of information you need to visit, including upon entrance and whilst in the venue.



For more information visit: [Home](#) | [AccessAble](#)

Finding your course

Looking at the university's course selection is a big part of attending an Open Day – after all, you will be studying for a degree!



Each university course will be part of a wider department with its own staff, offices and teaching facilities. Open Days give you the opportunity to attend department welcome talks and have one-to-one conversations with lecturers about the course modules and assessments. Some departments may also have special facilities you can visit, including science laboratories, machine workshops and mock court rooms. You should check if these facilities are accessible to your needs.

Courses are taught in variety of ways:



Some courses teach with lectures and seminars which allow you to discuss reading material and ideas in smaller groups.



Some courses have practical sessions which allow you to carry out experiments or use machinery.





Your teaching time will be referred to as 'contact hours'. You may have contact hours between 3 and 15 hours a week depending on your course. The remaining time is expected to be dedicated to independent study.



Assessment methods will also vary across courses, for example, you may be expected to write essays and reports, give presentations, make a product, perform an experiment, or sit a written exam.

It is important to ask how your course will be taught, assessed and how many contact hours a week you will have. This information will help you to understand if the course suits your strengths and gives you a realistic idea of what day-to-day life will be like.

Questions to ask about your course:

- ? *What assessment methods does this course have?*
- ? *How many contact hours will I have each week?*
- ? *How will the course be taught?*
- ? *Are all the teaching rooms accessible?*
- ? *Are there disabled toilets nearby the teaching facilities?*
- ? *What kind of assessment support do you provide?*
- ? *I have a hearing impairment, do the teaching rooms have induction loops?*
- ? *Can written materials be provided in advance and in an accessible format?*

Choosing the right accommodation for you

As a disabled student you may have different priorities when considering accommodation, so it is important to find somewhere you feel happy and comfortable. Visiting the accommodation options during an Open Day is a great way to figure out if you could see yourself living there.



Most first-year university accommodation options involve living with large groups of students. This is commonly called 'halls' accommodation and rooms are situated along a corridor with a shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. If you think you might find this environment challenging, you may consider halls with a smaller number of students, ensuite rooms or a studio apartment.



Some universities offer the opportunity to choose between catered and self-catered accommodation. Self-catered accommodation allows you to shop and cook independently whilst catered accommodation provides at least one meal a day in a dedicated canteen. If you lack confidence or are unable to cook, you may find that catered accommodation is the best option for you.





The accessibility of the accommodation will also be key. You may need to check how many levels the building has, the width of the door frames and if there are lifts available. If you drive a car, you should check nearby accessible parking spaces. Universities often use their Student Ambassadors who may be unaware of accessibility features to conduct accommodation tours. You may need to contact the accommodation team or the disabilities support team for more information.



It is advisable to check the location of the accommodation. Depending on whether you are visiting a campus or city university, the accommodation may be a reasonable journey from the library and lecture halls. You should consider what kind of distance you will be able to travel each day.

Questions to ask about the accommodation:

- ? *How many other students would I be sharing the facilities with?*
- ? *Can I request a ground-floor room?*
- ? *Where are the extra facilities like laundry and parking spaces? Are they accessible?*
- ? *Do the accommodation buildings have lifts?*
- ? *How close am I to where I will be studying?*
- ? *What accessible accommodation options are available? Do you provide self-catered/catered/shared/ensuite/studio accommodation?*
- ? *If I require a fridge in my room to store medicine, how do I arrange this?*
- ? *Can I apply for university accommodation beyond my first year?*

Investigating the study facilities



The library is not only a big resource but also a key study space in many universities. It is a good idea to check that the building is accessible, especially if it is on multiple floors, and what kinds of additional support services the staff may offer.

You may be able to receive help with checking out resources, extended book loans and research assistance. Some university study spaces are also designed to accommodate sensory needs by providing areas with different noise levels and lighting.

Questions to ask about the study facilities:

- ? *What extra support do the library staff offer to disabled students?*
- ? *Are there accessible desks, seating and study room facilities that meet my learning needs?*
- ? *Are the bookshelves accessible? How can I ask for assistance if I need it?*
- ? *How are the online study resources accessible to me? Do they work with assistive technology?*



Student's Unions

Most universities have a Student's Union. This is an elected group of students that organise events, offer welfare support and represent the wider the student body. As many student clubs and societies operate out of their university's Student's Union, you might want to visit their stand during an Open Day to find out what you can sign up for. Joining a student society is a great way to meet new people with similar interests or try a new skill.



Some Student's Unions also have forums for students with similar identities or experiences to meet and socialise. For example, you might want to join the forum for disabled students to meet people with similar conditions to you. It can be reassuring to know others who face similar challenges as you whilst at university.

Questions to ask the Student's Union:

- ? *Do you have a disabled student forum I can join?*
- ? *Are the Student's Union facilities accessible?*
- ? *Are there any clubs, societies or sports teams that are disability friendly?*
- ? *How will welcome week social events accommodate new disabled students?*

Exploring the wider area



Regardless of whether you will be moving away from home or commuting for your studies, your experience will be impacted by the location of the university as well as the university itself. If you have time, an Open Day is also an ideal opportunity to explore the local area.

You will be spending a lot of your time socialising and studying there so it is good to get a feel for your potential new home. You may want to investigate the accessibility of public transport, cafés and bars and what else the city has to offer. Make sure it is somewhere you will enjoy living as well as learning.

Questions to ask yourself about the university's location:

- ? *Can I see myself living here for at least 3 years?*
- ? *Where are the local medical services? Do I need to register with a local GP?*
- ? *Is it mobility aid friendly? Some cities have hills and cobbled streets which may make them more difficult to navigate.*
- ? *How far away is it from home? Am I comfortable living independently at this distance from my family?*
- ? *Do I feel comfortable navigating this city?*



10 Top Tips

- 1 Wear something comfortable and practical for all weathers.
- 2 Engage with the student ambassadors to hear first-hand experience of what the university is like. 
- 3 Check what talks and tours are available in advance to make sure you have time to see everything you need.
- 4 Bring some snacks with you to keep you fuelled. 
- 5 Take somebody with you. Open Days are full of information, and it can be helpful to have someone with you to discuss your thoughts and feelings. Plus, they can help you carry all the leaflets and free merchandise!
- 6 Prepare a list of questions you can easily refer to if needed.
- 7 Take pictures as a memory aid for later decision making. 
- 8 Make arrangements to visit the university's Disabilities Service to discuss what kind of support they can offer.
- 9 Download or print off a map of the campus to familiarise yourself with key locations.
- 10 If you use them, bring your sensory aids with you. Open Days can become crowded and loud environments, aids such as headphones or fidget toys may be helpful. 

Virtual Open Days



Don't miss out if you are unable to attend in person, you can also attend a virtual Open Day experience. Universities hold dedicated days to give virtual tours, department welcome talks and a chance to talk to student ambassadors in a live chat room.

To find out more about where university Open Days are happening, both in person and virtually, check out their website. The UCAS website also provides an updated list of universities running Open Days.

Useful links

For more information about how to navigate Open Days and advice on making the best of the experience, visit the websites below:



[Disabled Students | Advice And Financial Support | UCAS](#)

[Disabled students: Preparing for open days and visits | Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Conservatoires, Teacher Training | UCAS](#)

