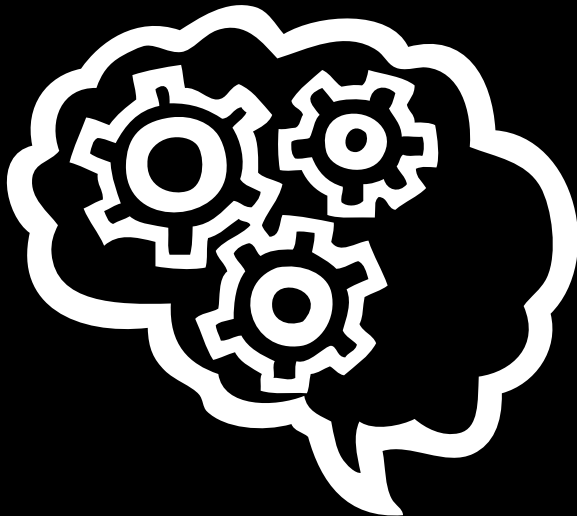




University of Essex

THE ULTIMATE DECISION MAKING GUIDE



You could leave it to fate, flip a coin, or visit a psychic, but we reckon that deciding which of your university offers you're going to make firm and insurance requires just a little bit more thought...

Firstly, congratulations – you've made it this far, but if you're lucky enough to have received more than two offers then you've got more tough choices to make, ultimately narrowing your options down to your two favourites. So put that Magic 8-Ball down and ask yourself these fundamental questions.

1.

Do you know exactly what the course involves?

Yes, I've already stocked up on half of the reading list.

No...

It's about time you get researching. Read up on the modules, check to see if there's the offer of a placement or study abroad year, look into how the course is taught, and even consider investigating possible jobs after graduation.

Ask yourself these two key questions:



Will I enjoy it?

Will it help me get where I want to be?



Avoid disappointment and any unwanted surprises by doing your research – if you aren't sure about something, ask.



Is the location right for you?

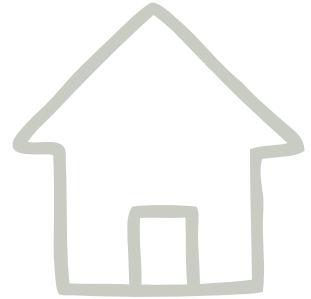
Yes, it feels like home.

No...

It's true what they say, location, location, location. Are you after a close-knit campus environment or a spread-out city setting? Do you want to be in a chilled out seaside town or a bustling metropolis? Is the other end of the country *still* not far enough away from your folks, or do you want to be close enough to get your washing done every weekend?

Make sure you know exactly where you'll be living and working – you'll be there for at least three years so it's important you feel at home.

2.



3.

Have you been to visit?

Yes, I know the campus like the back of my hand already.

No...

What are you waiting for? You can read all you like but no amount of student profiles, photographs and league tables will give you a truer feel for the place than seeing it for yourself. So put that prospectus down and get exploring. If you've missed out on Open Days and post-application Visit Days, never fear, most universities will offer one-to-one campus or accommodation tours. There won't be the hype of an Open Day and you'll be able to see what the university is really like.



Essex Bonus

You're welcome to come and visit us any time, just email tours@essex.ac.uk to book your Colchester Campus and accommodation tour, or southend@essex.ac.uk to visit our Southend Campus.

Do you know what's available outside of your studies?

Yes, Harry Potter Society, here I come!

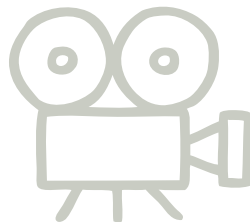
No...

Student life is definitely not all work and no play – you'll have the chance to get involved in hundreds of different sports, clubs and societies in your free time. Keep fit, learn a new skill, try something exciting, and make loads of friends. Check out what's on offer and pledge to get stuck into at least one society. Go on, we dare you!

Essex Bonus

Our award-winning SU has something for everyone with over 165 different clubs and societies. We even offer on-campus paid placements with our famous Frontrunners scheme. Our Colchester Campus boasts its own art gallery, theatre, state-of-the-art sports centre and a whole range of cafés, restaurants, bars and a nightclub, whilst Southend Campus is situated in the centre of a lively and dynamic town – boredom is impossible.

4.



5.

Would you be happy there?

Yes, it was love at first sight.

No...

They might claim to have the best student experience ever, they might be ranked top in the league tables, but if you can't imagine yourself living there happily, then perhaps it's simply not the place for you.

Nerves are natural, but if it doesn't feel right, it's time to rethink.



6.

Have you compared the costs?

Yes, I've got it covered.

No...

It goes without saying that university is a huge investment. It's worth noting, however, that the big costs aren't just limited to your tuition fees. Living costs (food, rent, and your social life) are key factors, as well as travel – how expensive is public transport in the area? And how much will it cost to get back to see your family?

Practically every university will offer a range of scholarships and bursaries to help you lighten the load, so do some investigating – you never know what you might be eligible for.



Essex Bonus

Our Employability and Careers Centre will help you find a part-time job whilst you're studying, as well as offering fantastic careers advice even after you graduate.

There's plenty of opportunity to work on-campus during your time with us too. Check out our whopping great range of scholarships and bursaries, as well as advice on fees and funding, at www.essex.ac.uk/studentfinance.

Do you understand the terms of your offer?

Yes, it's crystal clear.

No...

This spells trouble ahead! Get in touch with the university as soon as you can – there'll be nothing worse than choosing them as your first choice, only to find you don't match all their criteria so if in doubt, double, triple and quadruple check.



8.

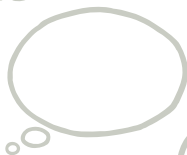
Have you discussed your choices with family, teachers and friends?

Yes, they've got my back.

No...

We hate to say it, but sometimes mother (or father/ favourite teacher/ trusted friend/ favourite second cousin twice removed) knows best. Not convinced? Well they'll have your best interests at heart, and give them credit; they probably know you a lot better than you think.

Ultimately, the choice is yours, but talking through your university options often helps clarify your decision. Other people might think of things you haven't yet considered and put everything into perspective. You haven't *got* to listen to them, just make sure that you're confident with your final decision.



Are the entry requirements ambitious?

Yes, but I'm positive I've got what it takes.

No...

If the accepted grades are easily within your comfort zone, you could consider this as your insurance choice. But if you're certain that this is the one and only university you want to go to, and nowhere else in the world will do, then go ahead and make it your firm choice.

But remember, it's sensible to make sure your insurance choice requires lower grades than your firm – it's your backup after all. Don't say we didn't warn you!

Fingers crossed plan A works out for you; but if not, don't panic, and contact us to see how we can help.

9.



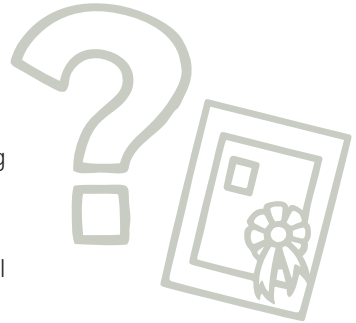
Got your career all mapped out?

Yes, I have a definitive five-year plan, with a colour-coded spreadsheet and stickers.

No...

There's no doubt university can take you places, but exactly where can be hazy. If you need help deciding what your calling is, or just a leg-up to your dream job, it's worth thinking about how your uni can help. Check out the employability schemes your choices have on offer and whether they have good links to local industries. The right help at the right time can make all the difference to your future.

10.



Essex Bonus

At Essex, we offer a whole raft of extra things we know employers love. Our tuition-fee free placements give you a full year in a role of your choice. An opportunity to gain key skills and experience, this shows employers you're a real self-starter and ready to go. You can also choose to spend a tuition-fee free year abroad, gaining qualities of adaptability and awareness – key skills for today's global market. Our award-winning Languages for All scheme can also help you learn a second language in your spare time. And yep, you guessed it – that's absolutely free as well. Phew.

Congratulations!

Hooray! If the required grades are ambitious, but still realistically within your reach, you might have found your perfect university (unless of course you haven't picked Essex, in which case head straight back to question one.*).

The next stage is to go back through these questions and find your insurance choice.

We hope this life-transforming, ideas-sparking, brain-decluttering decision-making guide has helped make things a little easier for you. Now all you have to do is work hard and wait for Results Day.

Good luck!

*We're kidding. Sort of.

A few other things to consider...

Do I have to make an insurance choice?

If you've come to the realisation that none of your other options will make you happy then don't worry, it's not the end of the world – you don't actually have to put down an insurance choice. However, if you don't meet the conditions of your firm offer and they can't confirm your place, you won't have a back-up choice and will be automatically entered into Clearing.

I have an unconditional offer!

If you've already got your exam results and have an unconditional offer it's still important that you think carefully about your decision so that you pick the course provider who's right for you. Remember, if you make an unconditional offer your firm choice, that university or course provider will expect you as their student and you won't be able to make an insurance choice. If you receive a mix of unconditional and conditional offers, it's possible to accept a conditional offer as your firm and an unconditional offer as your insurance choice – that way you'll definitely have a back-up.

We can't stress how important it is to make sure you completely understand the terms of your offer – it'll save you getting your knickers in a twist on Results Day.

When can I make my choices?

Once all of your universities have made a decision on your application you'll be able to make your replies. However, it's definitely a smart move to start thinking about it well in advance. This is a big decision, and it's certainly not one to make lightly, so don't rush it. You must have made your final choices by the deadline given on your UCAS Track (usually in May) otherwise UCAS will automatically decline all of your offers.

What if I change my mind?

You can change your replies once within 7 days of when they were initially made. To make the change, or to discuss other possible options for changing if you're outside the 7 day period, you will need to contact the UCAS Undergraduate Customer Experience Centre. You can call them on 0371 4680468.

Once you have your results and if you meet the conditions of your offer, it will automatically change from being conditional to unconditional. That university or course provider will expect you as their student. If your results are lower than expected and you do not make it into your firm choice, you may still be accepted by your insurance choice. If it comes to Results Day and you have successfully secured your place at either your firm or insurance choice but you decide you no longer want to go there, you can look for a place elsewhere through Clearing. Likewise, if you meet and exceed the conditions of your firm choice, you can ask to enter Adjustment to swap your chosen university (once you've finished jumping up and down, screaming, and calling everyone in your phonebook to tell them the good news, of course).

To you commitment-phobes out there, this might all sound a little scary, but that's why we keep banging on about taking your time and thinking through your options carefully.