

# What to ask at a university fair



Filled with admissions staff and current students from lots of universities, fairs allow you to compare and contrast lots of providers all in one place, choose which university suits you best, or help you decide if university is the right path for you now. Fairs also allow you to learn more about each university or apprenticeship provider than you could possibly get just from looking at a prospectus or a website.

Faced with a room full of people (the fair will usually be in a large room with lots of stands), it can be hard to think what to ask. So here's some questions to help you prepare.

## What to ask at a university fair...about the university

**Does your university offer the course I'm interested in?** This might seem obvious, but it really needs to be the first question you ask. Don't waste time on a university that can't offer what you want. Even if you've found the course advertised on their website or in their prospectus, it's worth double-checking as there might be plans to change the course format or remove it altogether.

**Why should I apply to your university?** University staff at fairs will be in a relentless PR mode, repeating the same sales pitch to student after student. That doesn't mean it's not worth hearing though, as you'll surely still learn something from hearing what they think the university's best qualities are. Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions either, as this will be your opportunity to break away from their pre-prepared script and get information which might be a little more honest.

**What are the university facilities like? Is the library open 24 hours a day?** It's easy to forget in the rush to learn about a course and its structure that you also need to get a feel for what it will be like to actually study at the university. Learning more about the facilities, whether it's labs if you're a science student or provision of library books if you're a

humanities student, will give you a better idea of the wider university experience and also how well you'll be supported academically. If a university hasn't bothered to invest in upgrading their teaching facilities and keeping their library stock up to date, how can you trust them to bother investing in you?

**Is accommodation guaranteed? How much do students typically pay in rent?** Away from the academic side of university, you'll also want to learn more about university accommodation. Not all institutions guarantee accommodation to students, so find out if you'll definitely have somewhere to live. This, and financial considerations such as how much rent costs, might be the decisive factor if you're struggling to choose between two university offers.

## [What to ask at a university fair...about the course](#)

**What's the weakest aspect of this course at your university?** Obviously, you'll hear a lot about how a university's course is amazing, the best in the world, absolutely top-notch, can't be beaten. But once the hyperbole has died down, asking this question is a good way to gain insight into where the course perhaps still has some improvement to do. If this weak area is something which is really important to you (e.g. number of contact hours, focus on a particular module), you'll probably be better choosing another university.

**What are the employment prospects for this course? What have previous graduates gone on to do?** There's little point in going to university unless it's going to boost your career prospects once you've graduated, especially with tuition fees rising in most, if not all, countries. Asking these questions will give you an idea of how well-prepared you'll be for the working world when your degree is over, and may even provide inspiration in terms of the types of careers available to you.

## What to ask at a university fair...about the application process

### **How do you select applicants? What aspects do you look for in an application?**

If you've asked the questions above and still feel the university may be right for you, it's time to get some more detail about the applications process. If you're chatting to an admissions officer, they might be the person who will eventually read your application, so learning what will impress them the most will give you a massive advantage over other applicants.

**What should I read to improve my personal statement?** As well as learning which of your attributes you should be highlighting in your application, it's a good idea to also learn of ways you can self-improve before writing your personal statement.

**Is there an advantage to submitting my application early?** This is a more functional question, designed to learn more about how applications are actually handled. Even though universities won't often say places are operated on a first come, first served basis, there can be an advantage to being one of the first applications that's reviewed instead of one of the last. Don't leave your application to the last minute if it's going to penalize you.

**What bursaries and scholarships are available?** This is always a good question to throw in there, especially if figuring out how you'll afford tuition is already making your head hurt. Rather than having to deal with impersonal leaflets and brochures explaining the various financial options available to you, you'll be able to explain your own situation and receive tailored advice about how to handle the cost of attending university.

