

**Making the Most
of**

**OPEN
DAYS**

2017/2018

It is important to put visits to Open Days in perspective. Firstly the negatives:

- The travel costs can be **expensive**.
- Open Days are almost invariably in term time, a lot of lessons can be missed – which may be at a fairly crucial time in terms of exam preparation.
- These occasions are in reality little more than a **sales pitch** by the institution concerned, aimed at attracting as many possibly realistic applicants as possible. In order to do this, they will of course attempt to present themselves in as **favourable light** as possible and the truth about the place may be shrouded in several layers of mist.
- It is important to realise that it is **not** only Open Day visits that can provide useful information. Universities and their towns can be usefully visited **during holidays** once it is clear what to look for i.e when you have visited one or two institutions.



On the other hand, Open Days do provide:

- a vital opportunity to view the university and its environment.
- the chance to talk to lecturers and students about the place and the courses.



What is most important is to make the most of the opportunities that Open Days give whilst being aware of their limitations.

To try to discover just what the institution and the courses are really like the key is to **prepare** thoroughly.

Before The Visit.....

- Read the prospectus and the website.
- If they do not answer all your concerns, then make a list of questions which still need to be answered.
- Look up the details of the Open Day itself. Use the website www.opendays.com or the university website itself. If required, contact the university to register. Make sure you do this early. Popular universities/colleges do get booked up.



Study the programme for the visit and make sure you can get there on time.

• Make sure you are clear about what you are trying to get out of the Open Day. Do you **know** which subject or Faculty you are interested in? If so, **read** the details of the courses carefully on the website or prospectus.

• Order your own prospectus if you are very interested in that course/institution.

• Talk to **staff** who went to that university.



• If there are particular **interests** (beyond the course) that you wish to pursue whilst at university e.g **sport** or **drama**, then check the provision that is made for them by both the institution and the city/region and investigate this during the open day.

The Visit

Make sure that you have registered for the day, are aware of the program and take a copy of the prospectus with you. The key point to bear in mind is that you will never have a better opportunity to **sort out your concerns**, and need to ask appropriate questions, however awkward they are. This can be a little daunting, but it is essential for your peace of mind.

In order to help you assess that particular institution, you ought to consider the following questions and may well have your own to add to this list.

The Course

1. What features of the course interested you most?
2. Which aspects of the course do you find unattractive?
3. Does the course demand specific AS or A-level subjects? Are you studying the appropriate subjects?
4. Does that course interview? If so, when? What form do the interviews take?
5. Is the content of the course fixed, or are there options within the course? If so, when do options become available? (Bear in mind that most courses allow greater choice after the first year)
6. What teaching methods are employed for the course? Does it all revolve around lectures to the whole year group? Do tutorials/seminars play a part in the teaching? Are lecturers trained to teach?
If appropriate to your subject, what provision is there for:
 - a) practical work
 - b) field work
 - c) work experience



7. Is there any student assessment of the course or the teaching on it?
If so, can you see the results of it?
8. How is the **course examined**? Does it involve continuous assessment, or is it based only on exams. If it is the latter, when are these exams? Are they every year?
9. What is the **academic level** required for the course? Are you (being realistic) likely to achieve this level? Will your GCSE results and likely AS performance be sufficient to suggest that you can eventually achieve the A-level grades required?
10. How many places are there on the course each year? How many applicants were there last year?

The Faculty

1. Does the Faculty **accept/recommend** taking a **Gap year**? If so, is there any particular Gap activity that is thought to be particularly useful?
2. Does the department accept deferred entry?
3. Is there a Faculty prospectus? If so, make sure you get a copy.
4. Does the Faculty issue a reading list? If so, then ask for a copy.
5. Is work experience either **preferred** or **essential** for the course? If so, can the Faculty help organise it?
6. Are there opportunities to **develop skills** which the course itself does not cover e.g. language skills, IT skills? How can these opportunities be accessed?
7. What is the employment record like for graduates from the faculty you are interested in?



The University

1. Is the university campus based or dispersed throughout the town/city?
2. Do you like the university? What are the **positive** features? What are the **negative** features?
3. What is the **distance** from the **halls** of residence to the **academic** department; the social and sporting areas, and the town centre? What transport arrangements are available, and at what **cost**?
4. What residential arrangements are there?
Are undergraduates **guaranteed** a place in hall in their first year, or longer?



5. What is the **standard** of accommodation? How does it **compare** with a bed-sit in boarding houses here?
6. Does university accommodation have **access** to the **Internet**?
7. What accommodation is available (and at what price) if you do have to live out at any time?
8. Did you visit the **Student Union**? What facilities (catering, leisure etc.) are provided? What societies are there?
9. What **sporting facilities** are there? (Be careful to differentiate between what is on offer for elite players and those of more modest talents).
10. Is there a university **careers** service? Do they help arrange vacation work experience?

Weighting it all up ..

Following an open day ask yourself the following questions;
In general

1. Did the university impress you?
2. Did the faculty impress you?
3. Did the town/city offer what you wanted?



Decision to be made.....

**Will it be one of your
UCAS choices?**