

# WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN FIRM AND INSURANCE DECISION MAKING?

AND HOW HAS IT CHANGED  
IN THE PAST 5 YEARS?

UCAS



# EACH YEAR, FOR OUR STUDENT DECISION REPORT, WE ASK MAIN SCHEME UNDERGRADUATE APPLICANTS TO RESPOND TO A SURVEY AFTER REPLYING TO THEIR OFFERS

We ask how important 20 factors are when deciding which offers to accept or decline, including accommodation, course modules, social life/ activities, and location to give us an importance rating. This summary looks at the sector level importance ratings over 5 years – highlighting the views of over 480,000 applicants (2019 - 2024).

## IMPORTANCE SCORE RANKED BY YEAR

The top four factors ranked most important have remained unchanged over the five years

1. Range of modules
2. Student reviews
3. Social life or activities available
4. University's location in the town or city

Employability factors have increased in importance; **graduate earning potential** has moved from 7th in 2020 to 5th most important in 2024, **work experience as part of the course** moved up from 8th to 6th most important.

**Fitting in with other students** has seen the greatest decline in rank over the 5-year period from 6th to 9th position, perhaps in line with the increased importance score for the option to live at home.



## RANKING OF FACTORS BY IMPORTANCE OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD

The table presents the ranking of each factor based on its importance rating for each year over the five-year period.

**A rank of 1 indicates the factor deemed most important in that year, while rank 2 represents the factor with the second highest importance, and so on.**



| Factor                              | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Range of modules in course          | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Student reviews of this uni         | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    |
| Social life or activities available | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    |
| Location in town or city            | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    |
| Graduate earning potential          | 7    | 6    | 6    | 5    | 5    |
| Work experience as part of course   | 8    | 9    | 10   | 10   | 6    |
| Communication before/after applying | 5    | 5    | 5    | 6    | 7    |
| Accommodation quality               | 9    | 7    | 7    | 7    | 8    |
| Fit in with other students          | 6    | 8    | 8    | 8    | 9    |
| Accommodation availability          | 11   | 10   | 9    | 9    | 10   |
| League table position               | 10   | 11   | 11   | 11   | 11   |
| Ease of travelling to this uni      | 13   | 14   | 14   | 14   | 12   |
| Accommodation proximity to campus   | 12   | 12   | 12   | 12   | 13   |
| Accommodation cost                  | 14   | 13   | 13   | 13   | 14   |
| Local part-time employment          | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   | 15   |
| Cost of travelling to this uni      | 16   | 17   | 16   | 16   | 16   |
| Incentives to make firm choice      | 17   | 16   | 17   | 17   | 17   |
| Sports facilities offered           | 19   | 19   | 19   | 19   | 18   |
| Speed of getting an offer           | 18   | 18   | 18   | 18   | 19   |
| Option to live at home              | 20   | 20   | 20   | 20   | 20   |

## VARIATIONS BASED ON PROVIDER TARIFF (CHANGES OF 2 OR MORE RANK POSITIONS)

The importance of league table position declined across all types of provider tariffs. In contrast, the cost of accommodation became more significant for those attending mid and lower tariff institutions. Meanwhile, graduate earning potential gained importance for students at high and mid tariff institutions.



| High tariff                         | 2020 | 2024 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|
| Increased importance                |      |      |
| Social life or activities available | 4    | 2    |
| Graduate earning potential          | 9    | 6    |
| Reduced importance                  |      |      |
| League table position               | 2    | 4    |
| Fit in with other students          | 6    | 9    |
| Communication before/after applying | 10   | 13   |

| Mid tariff                          | 2020 | 2024 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|
| Increased importance                |      |      |
| Graduate earning potential          | 7    | 5    |
| Work experience as part of course   | 8    | 6    |
| Accommodation quality               | 9    | 8    |
| Ease of travelling to this uni      | 13   | 11   |
| Accommodation cost                  | 14   | 12   |
| Reduced importance                  |      |      |
| Communication before/after applying | 3    | 7    |
| Fit in with other students          | 6    | 10   |
| League table position               | 11   | 15   |

| Low tariff            | 2020 | 2024 |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| Increased importance  |      |      |
| Accommodation cost    | 17   | 14   |
| Reduced importance    |      |      |
| League table position | 14   | 15   |

# SECTOR IMPORTANCE SCORES FOR 2020 - 2024



| Factor                              | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2024 vs. 2020 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|---------------|
| Range of modules in course          | 92.3 | 90.5 | 90.3 | 90.5 | 89.4 | -2.9          |
| Student reviews of this uni         | 84.9 | 83.9 | 84.1 | 83.2 | 82.9 | -2.0          |
| Social life or activities available | 80.9 | 80.4 | 81.4 | 81.2 | 80.9 | +0.0          |
| Location in town or city            | 80.5 | 79.9 | 80.1 | 80.5 | 80.5 | +0.0          |
| Graduate earning potential          | 78.3 | 77.0 | 77.7 | 78.1 | 79.7 | +1.4          |
| Work experience as part of course   | 75.3 | 73.1 | 71.8 | 73.4 | 75.4 | +0.1          |
| Communication before/after applying | 79.1 | 77.9 | 78.9 | 76.7 | 75.1 | -4.0          |
| Accommodation quality               | 75.0 | 74.1 | 76.4 | 75.6 | 74.9 | -0.1          |
| Fit in with other students          | 78.6 | 73.8 | 75.6 | 75.2 | 74.7 | -3.9          |
| Accommodation availability          | 73.9 | 72.2 | 74.6 | 74.2 | 74.1 | +0.2          |
| League table position               | 74.8 | 72.0 | 70.6 | 71.0 | 71.2 | -3.6          |
| Ease of travelling to this uni      | 66.3 | 63.2 | 66.0 | 67.9 | 68.9 | +2.6          |
| Accommodation proximity to campus   | 68.2 | 66.3 | 70.1 | 69.9 | 68.9 | +0.7          |
| Accommodation cost                  | 64.8 | 63.6 | 68.4 | 68.7 | 68.9 | +4.1          |
| Local part-time employment          | 61.2 | 58.5 | 63.2 | 64.5 | 66.2 | +5.0          |
| Cost of travelling to this uni      | 59.8 | 56.1 | 61.1 | 62.8 | 63.4 | +3.6          |
| Incentives to make firm choice      | 57.7 | 57.5 | 60.6 | 59.8 | 59.8 | +2.1          |
| Sports facilities offered           | 45.5 | 45.9 | 48.5 | 50.0 | 50.2 | +4.7          |
| Speed of getting an offer           | 48.2 | 49.8 | 54.0 | 50.5 | 50.2 | +2.0          |
| Option to live at home              | 31.0 | 32.0 | 33.2 | 34.9 | 37.1 | +6.1          |

■ Significant increase
 ■ No change
 ■ Significant decrease

Importance ratings are calculated by taking the proportion of offer holders who rated a factor as 'not important' or 'not at all important' from the proportion who rated it as 'important' or 'extremely important'. This difference is then rescaled to give an overall rating between 0 and 100.



**38% of 2024 entry placed students are living at home for university<sup>1</sup>** and this has increased over the past few years. This is reflected in the increased importance survey respondents placed on the **option to live at home** which saw the greatest increase in score over the five-year period.

Cost of living impacts are evident with increased importance over time being placed on

- ▶ **Local part time employment**
- ▶ **Accommodation costs**
- ▶ **Accommodation proximity to campus** - as students may be aiming to minimise the cost of day-to-day travel while at university
- ▶ **Ease and cost of travelling to the university**

While **accommodation cost** has increased in importance there has been no change in the importance of **accommodation quality** or **availability** with both aspects remaining in the top ten suggesting prospective students are seeking greater value for money in for their student rent.

#### **What does this mean for my institution?**

- ▶ The range of modules on the course has remained the top factor to offer holders when making their decisions. Bringing to life the wide variety of exciting modules a course has and standing out through student tested descriptions and content is important.
- ▶ Mixture of 'owned' and 'earned' factors evident- whilst course module information is something universities own, student reviews are much harder to control, and location is also in the top 4. While location can't change, communications can highlight the unique benefits your location brings students. For example, through a subject lens as well as the social life and activities or local part-time and graduate employment opportunities.
- ▶ Importance factors differ by provider type, to find out more about what this means for your institution contact [\*\*consultancyinsights@ucas.ac.uk\*\*](mailto:consultancyinsights@ucas.ac.uk)