

University decision-making

We asked prospective undergraduates about the factors influencing their choices and their information needs

Methodology:

TSR Asks monthly omnibus survey of prospective undergraduate students considering starting a university course in 2024 or 2025, aged 16+

Fieldwork:

5th – 8th April 2024

Base:

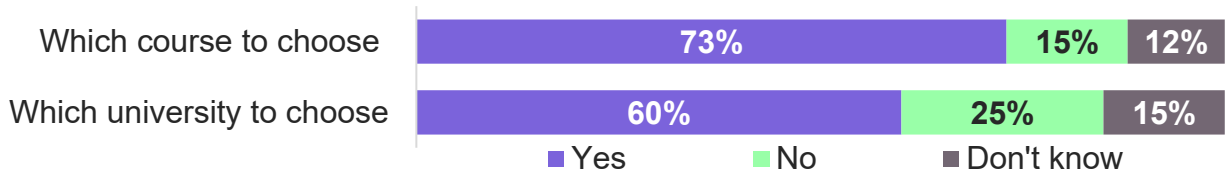
373 responses

How informed do prospective undergraduates feel and where are they seeking information?

In general, respondents appeared to feel better informed about their course choices than their university decisions. Around three-quarters (73%) felt they had enough information to make a decision about which course to choose. Whereas only three-fifths (60%) felt the same way about their university choice, suggesting providing information to help differentiate universities may be helpful. Positively, compared to April 2023, a higher proportion in the 2024 research felt they had enough information to make a decision about which course to choose (73% cf. 62%).

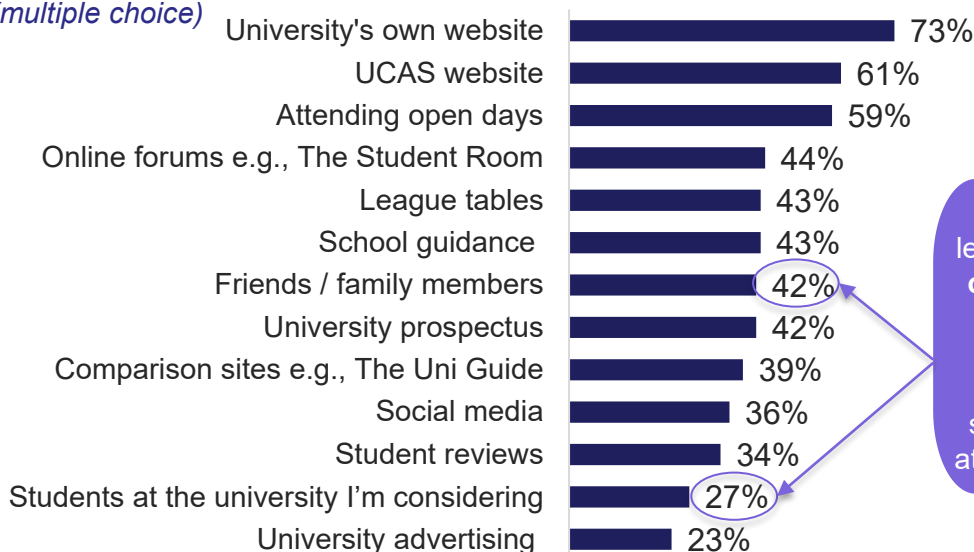
Understandably, 2024 entry respondents were more likely to feel informed than 2025 entry respondents; 91% felt they had enough information to make a decision about which **course** to choose (compared to 63% of 2025 entry) and 80% felt they had enough information to choose a **university** (cf. 49% of 2025 entry).

Q: Do you feel you have enough information to make a decision about...? (single response grid)



On average, each respondent selected around 6 information sources they had found useful when finding out about universities, with university websites (73%) and UCAS (61%) selected most often. In total, around three-fifths (61%) found using online forums and/or comparison sites useful.

Q: Which, if any, of the following have you found useful when finding out about universities? (multiple choice)



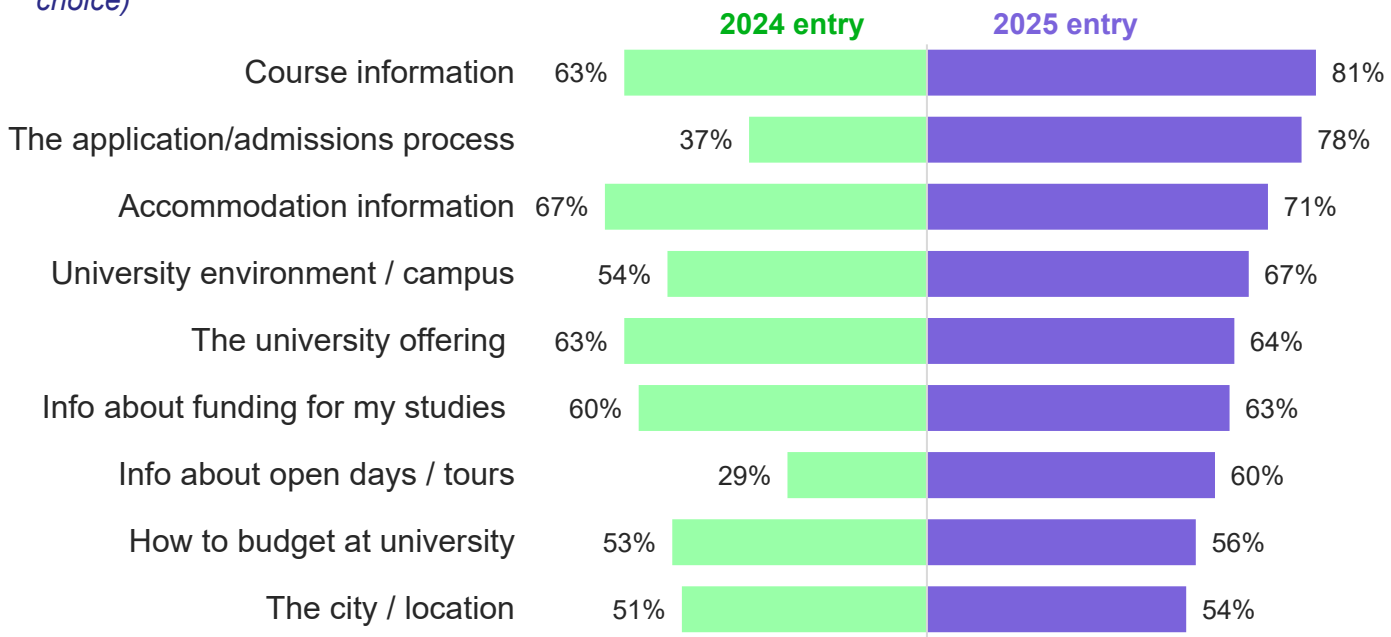
In total, 55% found at least one of these **word-of-mouth information sources** useful, highlighting the importance of positive student experiences in attracting future students

What information do prospective undergraduates want from universities?

There was an appetite among respondents for a variety of information from universities with the vast majority (98%) wanting some information from universities now. Course and accommodation information sat within the top three information needs for both 2024 and 2025 entry respondents, suggesting an appetite for this information throughout the cycle.

Reflecting their earlier stage in the university decision making process, 2025 entry respondents had a wider range of information needs, selecting an average of 6.0 options from the list, compared to 4.9 for 2024 entry respondents.

Q: What information do you want from universities now? Please select all that apply (multiple choice)



The top three information needs for 2025 entry respondents were course information e.g., modules and entry requirements (81%), information about the application and admissions process such as personal statement guidance, flexibility of entry requirements and what interviews will look like (78%) and accommodation information (71%).

2024 entry respondents were most likely to want accommodation information (67%), information about the university offering such as facilities, support or the Students' Union (63%) and course information (63%).

2025 entry respondents were more than twice as likely as 2024 entry respondents to want information about the application process (78% cf. 37%) or open days/tours (60% cf. 29%), suggesting a need for these to be provided early in the cycle.

How important is employability information and what impact is it having on university decision making?

Employability factors were influential in decision-making for almost all respondents; 96% said that at least one of these employment-related factors was important in their university decision-making, with the graduate employability rate of their chosen course being the most likely to be considered important (84% quite or very important).

As well as the overall graduate employability rate of the course, respondents were also interested in the types of roles they could progress to, and the specific employers they could work for. This suggests that further information such as alumni case studies, and information about any existing links with employers may be of significant value to prospective undergraduates during the university decision-making process.



The graduate employability rate of the course
84%



The types of roles graduates from the course go on to do
82%



The employers graduates from the course go on to work for
68%



The opportunity to take a placement year as part of the course
63%

Q: How important were each of the following in your university decision making? (single response grid, net quite + very important shown)

While these employability factors were valuable across the board, there were some subject differences.

- Those interested in Clinical and non-Clinical STEM subjects more likely to consider **graduate employability, placements, and types of roles graduates progress to very important.**
- The **employers graduates from the course go on to work for** were more likely to be considered either *quite or very important* by those interested in Social Sciences.