

University dealbreakers

We asked prospective undergraduates
their university application
dealbreakers

Methodology:

TSR Asks monthly omnibus survey of 2024, 2025 and 2026 entry prospective undergraduates, aged 16+

Fieldwork:

5th – 8th July 2024

Base:

415 responses

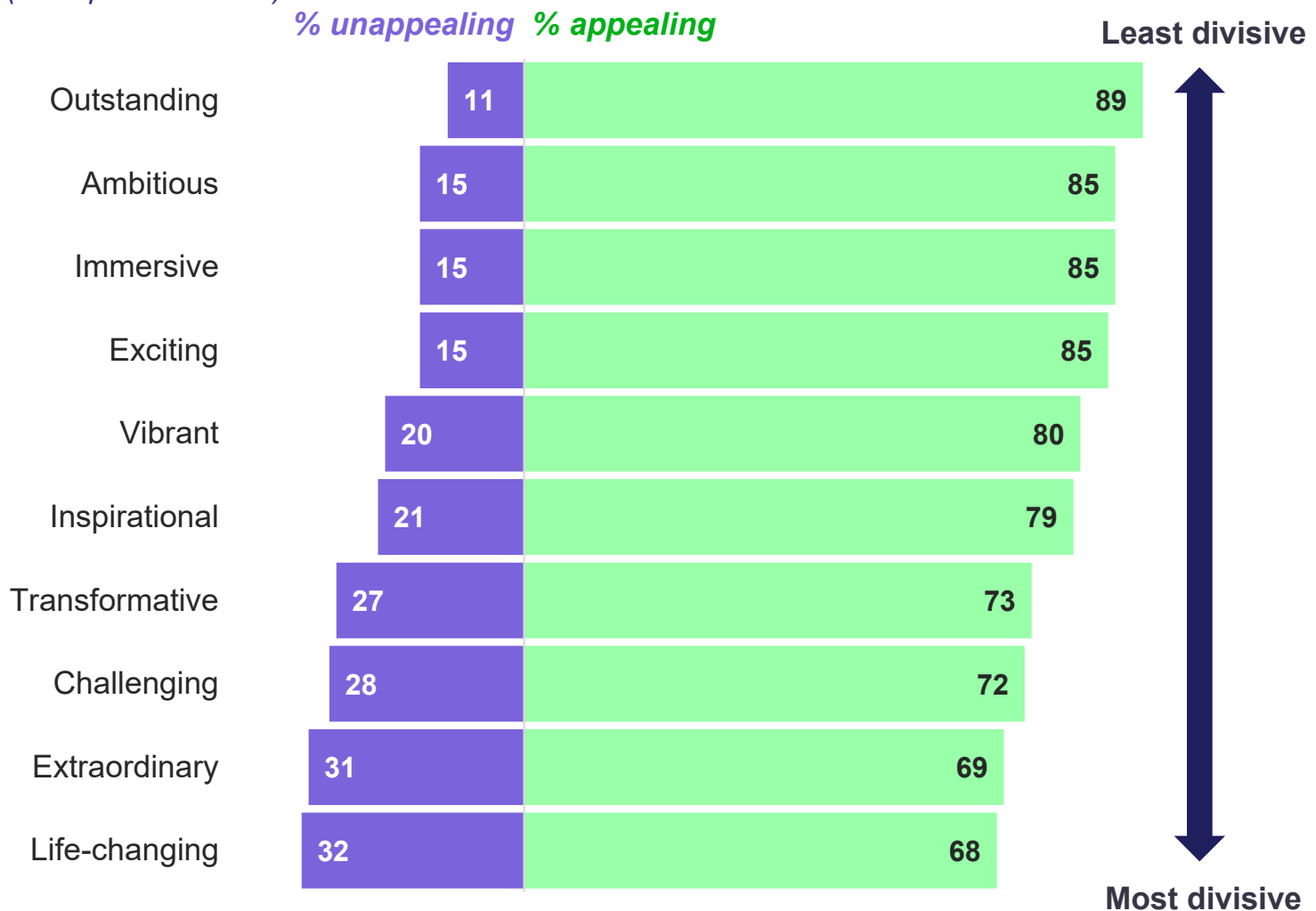
Words to describe universities and courses

We asked prospective UGs what words they liked, and what words might put them off a university.

The term **outstanding** was the most appealing term – This appealed to the majority (89%) when used to describe universities. The terms **ambitious**, **immersive**, and **exciting** also had broad appeal (each selected as appealing by 85%).

However, other terms were more divisive. Almost a third (32%) found the term **life-changing** unappealing, and similarly, more than a quarter (27%) found the term **transformative** unappealing, perhaps suggesting that not all respondents wished to change themselves at university. The terms **challenging** and **extraordinary** were also somewhat divisive, selected as unappealing by 28% and 31% of respondents respectively.

*Q: The following words are sometimes used to describe universities or courses – In this context, please select whether these words are **appealing** or **unappealing** to you (% responses shown)*



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Dealbreakers

We then asked 2025 entry respondents to describe, in their own words, what one thing might put them off applying to a university, when all other aspects of a university and course met their requirements.



Accommodation was a key dealbreaker for respondents in university choice. This included if the accommodation was unaffordable or poor quality.



In addition to accommodation costs, other financial aspects were frequently mentioned as dealbreakers, including the **cost of living** in the local area, **scholarships** and funding available, and **fees**.



Not having good **career prospects** after the course was also mentioned as a dealbreaker, as was not offering **work experience / placements** as part of the course. A couple mentioned a lack of part-time local employment.



Not liking the **local area** and **campus environment** were frequently mentioned, with some respondents mentioning **poor safety** and a **lack of diversity** in the local area. A couple mentioned poor local transport links may be a dealbreaker.



Reputational factors were mentioned by some, with **low league table position**, poor reputation, and bad reviews being cited as potential dealbreakers. A couple mentioned not being a member of the Russell Group would also be an influencer.



Course specifics were mentioned by some, for example modules not meeting their needs. Teaching that did not suit them was also mentioned by some as a potential dealbreaker. A few mentioned not offering study abroad, and a couple mentioned assessment methods. **Poor support** was also considered by some.



A lack of opportunities or **student life** that did not suit them was mentioned by some respondents, for example not having enough clubs or societies, or poor sports facilities.



A few felt a poor open day experience may put them off applying.

Q: Please think about the universities you are considering or might consider, that offer the course you want, are in the right location, and have entry requirements you can achieve.

***What one thing could be a dealbreaker that could put you off applying?** (149 open comment responses from 2025 entry respondents)*