



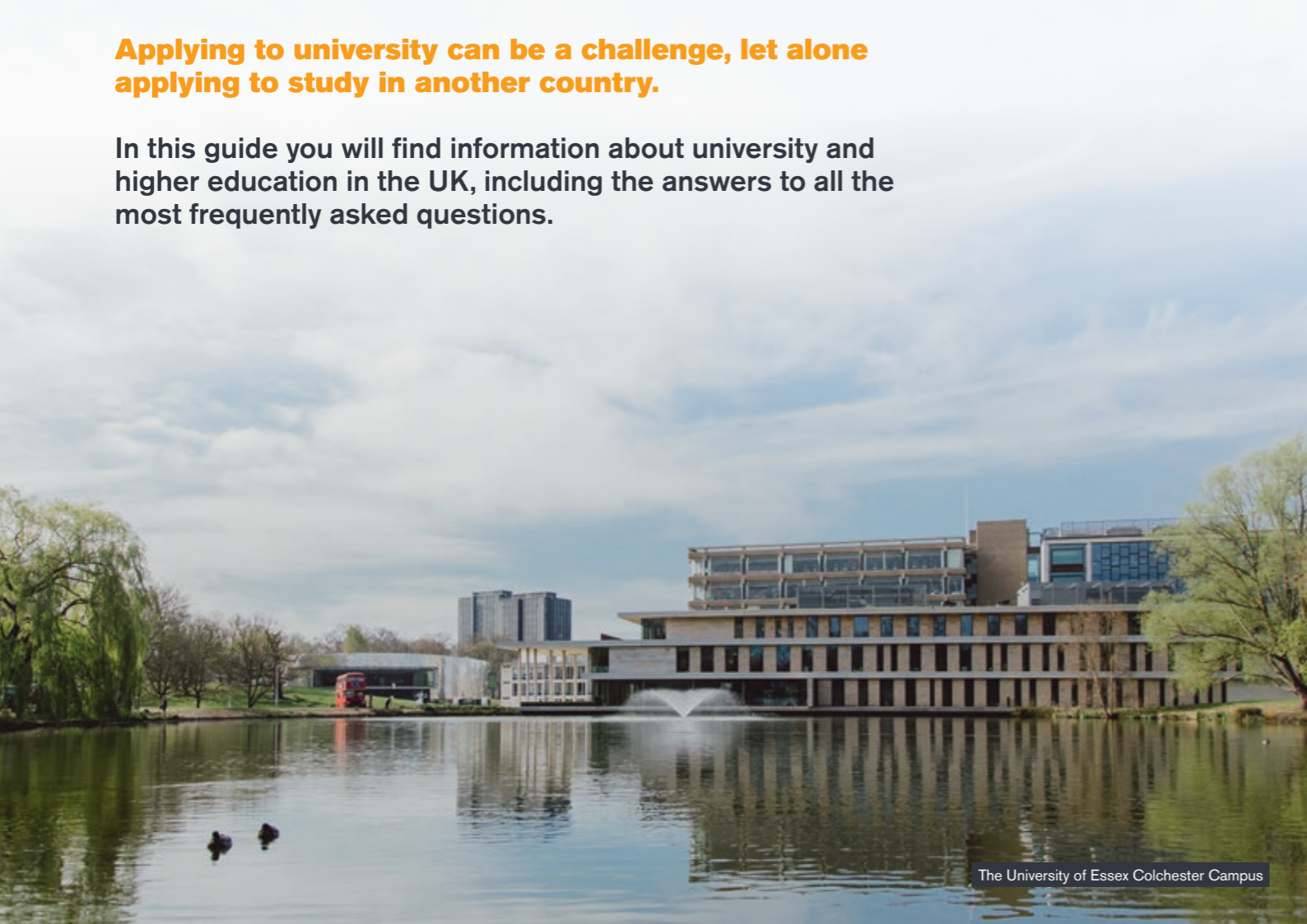
**UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX** **GUIDE TO**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
**STUDY**  
**IN THE UK**



University of Essex

**Applying to university can be a challenge, let alone applying to study in another country.**

In this guide you will find information about university and higher education in the UK, including the answers to all the most frequently asked questions.



The University of Essex Colchester Campus

# UK UNIVERSITY TERMINOLOGY

Here's a short glossary of the main terms we receive questions about.

## **Bachelors degree**

An undergraduate academic degree. Usually the first degree a student studies.

## **Undergraduate**

This is a student who is currently studying for their bachelors degree, which typically take 3 years to complete in the UK. This is an important point to consider when estimating the overall costs of study.

## **BA – Bachelor of Arts**

These are usually courses based on Arts and Humanities subjects such as English Literature, Art History, Drama and Philosophy.

## **BSc – Bachelor of Science**

These are usually science or IT based courses that require some lab time, whether that is in a science lab or a computer lab.

## **BEng – Bachelor of Engineering**

These are usually mechanical, electrical or telecommunications engineering courses.

## **LLB – Bachelor of Laws**

A law degree. To become a barrister you have to sit a further 'Entrance to the Bar' examination after your degree.

## **Single honours**

This is a degree course where only one subject is studied in detail, such as BSc Biological Sciences.

## **Joint honours**

This is a course in which you study two subjects. If the course title has the word 'AND' in the middle it means that both subjects are equal in content. If it has the word 'WITH' then the first subject will have more content than the second.

For example: At Essex you can study BA Business Management and Modern Languages, or BA Business Management with Modern Languages.

## **Modules**

Each course is broken down into smaller sections called modules. There are core modules that you have to complete and there a number of optional modules to choose from. Optional modules sometimes change but universities will display modules they currently offer on their websites.

For example: At Essex the possible optional modules for BA Film Studies might include: Hollywood Directors, Introduction to Screenwriting and Film and Propaganda.

## **Foundation Year/Year Zero**

If you haven't reached the entry requirements for your chosen course, you may be offered a foundation programme. This adds on a year to your degree and gives you the opportunity to develop your subject specific knowledge and improve your academic skills. For example, our Essex Pathways department offers foundation programmes; and one of our partner institutions, Kaplan, offers pathways for international students.



### **Sandwich courses**

These are courses that include a placement year or a year spent studying abroad - which is usually after your second year of study - then you return to your university for the final year of study.

### **Masters degree**

A degree with a higher level of expertise within a chosen field. It is studied after completion of a bachelors degree. You can study a Master of Arts (MA); a Master of Science (MSc); a Master of Research (MRes); a Master of Law (LLM); a Master of Business (MBA) or a Master of Fine Art (MFA). Some courses also offer Integrated Masters which adds on an extra year to your bachelors degree, so that you graduate with your Masters.

### **Graduate**

A student who has finished their degree and passed.

### **Postgraduate**

A student who returns to university after their first degree to study at a higher level. A Masters degree is usually the next step which typically takes a year to complete. After this a student can go on to study for a PhD which usually takes a further 3 years of study.

### **Dissertation**

A large-scale research project. An undergraduate degree usually offers a dissertation module that takes up a large number of credits in your final year. Whether you have to do a dissertation will depend on the subject you study and the university.

### **Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)**

If you want to study an undergraduate degree in the UK then you can apply through UCAS. You can apply for up to five courses, four if you want to study medicine, veterinary science or dentistry. You then receive replies from the universities as to whether they will offer you a place and they will state any conditions you need to meet to be accepted. Then you choose your firm and insurance choice from those you have received offers from. Find out more about UCAS on page 12.

If you want to apply only to Essex, you can apply directly to us. Terms and conditions apply.

[www.essex.ac.uk/direct](http://www.essex.ac.uk/direct)

If you are interested in postgraduate study, you can apply online via our website.

[www.essex.ac.uk/masters/applying-to-essex](http://www.essex.ac.uk/masters/applying-to-essex)



# CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY

Campus or city-based? What facilities do they offer? What are the travel links like? Do you want to study abroad for a year? These are all things to consider!

## How many universities are there?

There are over 130 universities and 37,000 courses to choose from in the UK alone. You're probably wondering how you go about making a choice from that many, so why not take a look at the UCAS website where you'll find all the information in one place – [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com).

The search tool will allow you to see every university course in the UK related to your subject. It even has links to individual websites so you can look into the detail of each course. Prospectuses are also a good place to start. You can usually download or request a prospectus by post on individual university websites.

## Facilities and support

Universities have a lot of support and services available to students; such as accommodation, scholarships, student support and employability advice, and it's important to find out as much as you can about the facilities and services on offer at the universities you're interested in.

At Essex, you can find all of this information on our website.

## Campus or city-based?

Campus universities like our Colchester Campus have facilities on site: including accommodation, a library, sports facilities, shops, cafés, bars, and restaurants. It's like a small town for students!

City-based universities may have study and social facilities spread throughout the city. It's an exciting life in a city for some people, but

can be too busy for others, and some people don't want to have to travel around.

Think about the kind of environment you would prefer to study and live in. Find out more about our campuses by visiting [www.essex.ac.uk/life](http://www.essex.ac.uk/life).

## Travel

Getting to university and travelling home is important. Some universities are close to airports and train stations which is handy if you're an international student. Most universities will have information on how to get there on their website, but just contact them if you can't find it.

At Essex we have six airports all within two hours, including Stansted airport which is under an hour away.

## Studying abroad for a year or term

If you're interested in studying at a university abroad you will need to look at the individual websites and contact the universities directly for information on how to apply.

It is worth remembering that the majority of UK universities offer study abroad options such as a term abroad or a year abroad – it will depend on the course you are studying and the university you are studying at as to whether this is an option. At Essex we have relationships with 150 institutions worldwide, giving you a number of options when studying abroad.

# UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

There's a wide variety of university rankings used in UK higher education, and universities use different rankings to show off their credentials.

Some of the most well regarded league tables and rankings to take note of are:

- The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide (TGUG)
- The National Student Survey (NSS)
- The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
- QS World University Rankings (QS)

The list goes on but these are some of the key ones to look out for.

However, rankings can't tell you everything. You might also want to consider which universities have strengths in delivering your chosen subjects, specialist industry links, beautiful study spaces, excellent student support, plenty of sports clubs, extra-curricular activities on offer and anything else that's important to you.

Remember, studying a degree subject at one university will be a completely different experience to the same course at a different university.

## Rankings explained

The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide – this is a ranking given to an institution and also each of its individual subjects. Just because a university is in the top 10 universities in the UK it doesn't mean it is in the top 10 universities for your subject area.

The National Student Survey – Each year every final year undergraduate student at an English university is asked for their feedback on their course; universities are then ranked accordingly.

Teaching Excellence Framework – this measures the excellence of teaching at the university with gold being the top level. The University of Essex is TEF Gold.

[www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/tef)

QS World University Rankings - this provides a global overall ranking and subject rankings based on a number of academic and institutional factors.

[www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings](http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings)



# WHAT IS UCAS?

UCAS is the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

Most UK universities will require you to submit your application through UCAS for a bachelors degree. You can apply for up to 5 universities at the same time, but only 4 universities if you are applying for medicine, veterinary science, or dentistry.

The deadline for UK students is the 15 January on the year you plan to go to university. As an EU or international applicant you do not have to submit by this deadline. However, particularly competitive courses and universities will make offers early, so it is advised that you submit as soon as you are ready. The deadline for veterinary science, medicine, dentistry, Oxford, and Cambridge is the October 15 the calendar year before you plan to study.

## What do I need to provide?

- Information about what you are studying/have studied (such as IB, A-levels, GCSEs, other international qualifications)
- Your predicted grades if you don't have your final results yet (supplied by your teachers)
- A reference from your school (supplied by a teacher or tutor)
- A personal statement – this is an essay you will write to introduce yourself and why you have chosen to study the subject you are applying for. You can check out our Personal Statement Writing Guide on our website.

[www.essex.ac.uk/undergraduate/applying-to-essex](http://www.essex.ac.uk/undergraduate/applying-to-essex)

## UCAS Points

Some universities will ask for grades, some will ask for UCAS points. Each grade you receive is worth a certain number of

UCAS points, and you have to add together the points you have from your grades to meet, or exceed, the points requested by the university. Still not sure? Check out the UCAS website for further details. [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

## Your UCAS Status

When you apply to a course your status changes depending on the progress of your application. The first character signifies the decision made by the university you've applied to. The second character signifies your decision.

## What the letters mean

U = unconditional offer

C = conditional offer

F = firm choice (this is your first choice)

I = insurance choice (this is your second choice)

\_ = blank (no decision made yet)

For example:

UF - unconditional firm. This means you have an unconditional offer from your chosen university, meaning you will be given a place regardless of your exam results. Those who already have their results are likely to receive unconditional offers. It is a firm choice because you have made it your first choice.

CI - conditional insurance. This means you have an conditional offer from your chosen university, and must meet the conditions of your offer to get a place. It is an insurance choice because you have made it your second choice.



# SEE IT FOR YOURSELF

Visiting universities may not always be possible, so there's plenty of online resources to give you a feel for the universities you're interested in.

If you are able to come to the UK before you choose a university, you could visit a number of universities in a week. Universities have scheduled Open Days, but you can also request a personal tour. Most universities are able to accommodate a visit during working hours.

We are happy to provide personal tours, just email [tours@essex.ac.uk](mailto:tours@essex.ac.uk).

Our Open Days dates are on our website.  
[www.essex.ac.uk/visit-us/open-days](http://www.essex.ac.uk/visit-us/open-days)

If you can't visit, we have plenty of online resources such as videos and virtual tours of accommodation and campuses, including department-specific introductions. It's a great way to get a feel for the University from the comfort of your home. Our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts also provide a great insight into student life.

## What happens next?

Keep an eye on your emails. Universities may contact you if they need any more information, or if the course requires you to attend an interview or audition. Interviews and auditions can usually be virtual for international applicants.



/uniofessex



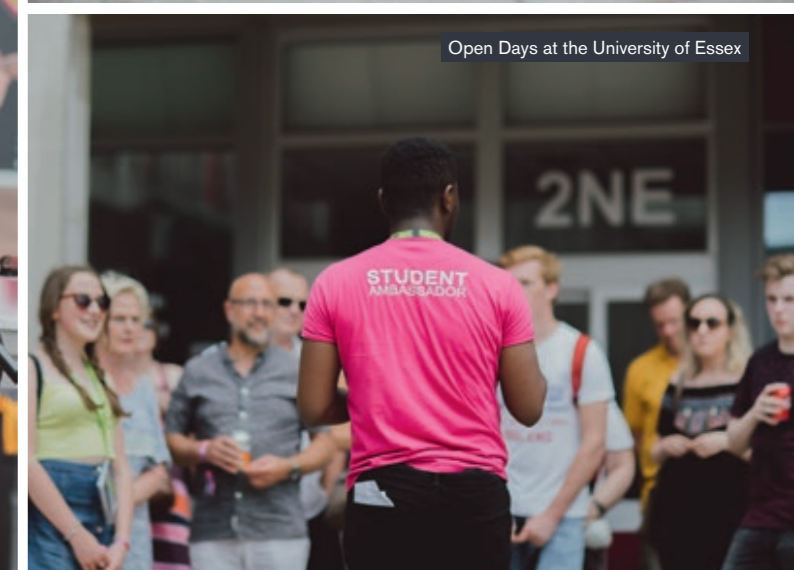
/Uni\_of\_Essex



/uniessex



/uniofessex



Open Days at the University of Essex

# HEAR FROM OUR STUDENTS

We can give you all the information, but it's also important to hear what students have to say about their experiences at University. Here are some of our students telling their stories.



“Last year I was given a peer mentor because I was new to the University and I wanted some guidance on where to find resources to help with my work. She helped me get through my assignments and encouraged me to get more involved in the quizzes and competitions in my department.

My sister just started her first year at Essex too which means I can pass on my knowledge of the University to her. She's never been out of India so it's a brand new environment for her. She got her first assignment back this week and she got 90% which was great. She was quite nervous about it and I was trying to comfort her, so we celebrated as soon as she got her mark. It really made me smile!”

Nupoor, BSc Computer Science



“Everyone is so friendly, I couldn't wish for more. I've already met two very good friends. The discussions I have with them are great because they think like me.

I was really shy before, but now I can talk in public! At the moment I am vice-president for the Romania Society, and the PR Manager for the Game Development Society, so those two positions put me in front of crowds to talk, and that's helped me a lot.”

Catalin, MSci Computer Science



“When I was 18 I set up my own foundation back home in Malaysia, so my aspiration is to grow my foundation as well as being a Criminal Lawyer for the government. I set up the foundation because I felt discriminated against for not wearing a hijab.

People would stare at me when I went to prayers without covering my hair, and I kind of like colouring my hair, so I stood out. I could tell they were thinking ‘Why is that girl praying?’, and I think that that needs to change.”

Nur, LLB Law

Read more of our stories: [www.essex.ac.uk/we-are-essex](http://www.essex.ac.uk/we-are-essex)



We hope this is a helpful introduction to university study in the UK. You can connect with us via email or Live Chat on our website, an instant messenger service which runs every weekday from 8.00am - 10.00pm GMT, so you can get instant answers to your questions.

**E** [admit@essex.ac.uk](mailto:admit@essex.ac.uk)

[www.essex.ac.uk/about/contact](http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/contact)