GUIDE 01 • PLAN YOUR STUDY LOCATION

Choose a Student City

The right city shapes your budget, community and everyday life.



A practical guide for students

A university decision is also a lifestyle decision. Use this guide to compare cities fairly, not just by reputation or photographs.

- Compare **course fit** and realistic monthly living costs together.
- Consider accommodation, transport, safety, support and your preferred environment.
- Score your shortlisted cities using a simple decision worksheet.

How to use this guide

Read the advice, use the practical checklist and worksheets, and check current requirements directly with the university and official sources before making commitments.

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Start with what matters to you

A city is a good fit when your studies, finances and lifestyle can all work there.

1 Your course comes first

Check the exact programme, modules, placement options, teaching style and campus location. A highly ranked university is not automatically the best match for your chosen course.

2 Compare the full cost of living

Look beyond advertised rent. Include utilities, internet, transport, food, deposits, travel home and social spending. Check whether accommodation contracts cover the entire period you need.

3 Think about daily life

Would you rather have a busy city centre, a quieter campus, green spaces, or strong public transport? Consider commute times and how easily you could build a social network.

4 Check the practical details

Research proximity to libraries, healthcare, supermarkets, prayer spaces or community groups if relevant, accessibility requirements and the university's international student support.

Important: compare actual addresses

Some universities have several campuses. Check the campus address for **your course**, not just the main university address, before estimating housing costs or travel times.

Five questions to ask each university

- Where will my teaching actually take place?
- What student housing is available and when do applications open?
- Which costs are compulsory beyond tuition?
- What academic, wellbeing and careers support is available?
- Are placements, field trips or specialist facilities part of the course?

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Compare cities without guesswork

Use recent, comparable information and confirm estimates directly with providers.

Factor	What to investigate	What to record
Course fit	Modules, accreditation where relevant, entry criteria	Pros/cons and course URL
Housing	Rent, deposit, contract length, included bills	Monthly cost + upfront payment
Transport	Campus commute and travel pass options	Weekly cost + commute time
Lifestyle	City size, leisure, communities, local services	Personal fit score
Support	Student services, arrival help, careers provision	Who to contact
Opportunity	Placements, local employers, work rules relevant to your status	Verified options only

UK city examples to research

London: Extensive choice of institutions and activities; verify accommodation and travel budgets carefully. **Manchester / Birmingham:** Large urban student environments with many transport and housing options. **Cardiff / Glasgow:** Capital-city settings outside England, each with its own housing and transport market. **Cambridge / Oxford:** Distinctive university environments; compare institution-specific courses and local accommodation rather than relying on reputation.

These are starting points, not rankings or promises of lower cost. Prices and housing availability change.

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Use the UCAS Budget Calculator

UCAS introduced a tool in July 2026 to help students compare estimated living costs in more than 100 UK locations. Use this with live housing listings and university guidance. **Visit UCAS**.

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Your city decision worksheet

Print this page or write into a separate notes document.

City / university shortlist

Criteria	Option A	Option B	Option C
City + institution	_____	_____	_____
Course suitability (1-5)	_____	_____	_____
Housing budget fit (1-5)	_____	_____	_____
Commute convenience (1-5)	_____	_____	_____
Lifestyle fit (1-5)	_____	_____	_____
Support / community (1-5)	_____	_____	_____
Total /25	_____	_____	_____

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Before making your choice

- Open the official programme page and verify deadlines and requirements.
- Compare real accommodation listings for the semester or academic year.
- Estimate a full monthly budget and your one-off setup costs.
- Ask the university directly about uncertain policies and facilities.
- Make a shortlist of realistic alternatives in case plans change.

Useful resources

UCAS - course search and student budgeting ↗

UKCISA - student information and support ↗

Want help planning your next step?

Berkeley is Axyron Destinations' AI assistant. Ask a question, explain your needs, or request help from our team.

Chat with Berkeley on WhatsApp →
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General educational information only. This guide is not a university admission decision or regulated immigration advice. Verify current course and entry requirements with official providers. Updated October 2026.

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