

# Information on class size

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

ent guide

# Introduction

There are lots of different places you can get information about higher education.

Universities and colleges have their own websites, publish prospectuses and run open days, all of which are designed to tell you about them and what they offer. There are also a number of independent sources of information like comparison websites such as [www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com) and <http://university.which.co.uk> as well as the information provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) on its website. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also released an animation which you might like to watch that tries to explain things a bit more ([www.youtube.com/qaatube](http://www.youtube.com/qaatube): 'How to choose where to study higher education').

All of this information is intended to help you make a confident decision about what and where to study. One thing that will probably be important to you is what it is actually like to study at the university or college you are thinking of going to. In particular you might want to know about issues like how much time you will be expected to commit to your studies, how you will be taught and who will teach you, how many people will be in your class and how you can make your views known when you get there. This series of four short guides helps you answer those questions by explaining some of the key pieces of information you could look for, grouped into four themes:

- Information on staff teaching qualifications
- **Information on class size (this guide)**
- Information on workload
- Information on how you can comment on your course.

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

# Information about class size

You should expect the university or college you are thinking of attending to provide you with clear information about the size of classes you will be taught in during your studies, so that you can think about whether that approach is right for you. They should also explain why the class is the size it is.

Universities and colleges will often talk about class size as an average. This is because sizes can vary. An average class size for different types of activities on a particular course should provide you with a meaningful and reliable basis on which to make choices and to make comparisons between different places and subjects.

Small class sizes may be more important in some subject areas than others, for example when access to specialist resources is necessary, such as in science laboratories.

When looking at information about class size, it is worth remembering that this is only one factor in how you will be taught over your time at university or college. The way you are taught has many different purposes and may be organised in differing ways, by a range of staff members.

For example, a lecture by a leading expert in a subject could be attended by 100 students, during which there would be little opportunity for discussion. However, this could be followed by smaller group sessions with the lecturer, of perhaps 15-20 students, to focus on specific bits of the lecture, and give you lots of opportunity to raise questions and discuss. There might also be individual or small group tutorials to talk about exactly how you have done.

## What other students think about class size

Detailed research was carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS) during 2008-11, providing evidence showing that students thought class size was important for good quality teaching, but that there were other things that were equally or more important.

The top three matters of importance to students were:

- the teaching skills of staff (important to 91 per cent of students surveyed)
- use of interactive group sessions (83 per cent)
- the size of the class (70 per cent).

When students were asked to reflect on what would make things better, the most common suggestions were:

- more interactive group sessions (chosen by 50 per cent of students)
- more individual teaching sessions/tutorials (43 per cent)
- more contact with a personal tutor (42 per cent)
- lecturers with better teaching skills (35 per cent).

# Further information

If you have any questions about staff teaching qualifications then the best thing to do is to get in touch with the university or college using the contact details on their website or in their prospectus.

QAA 544 08/13

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education  
Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2013

ISBN 978 1 84979 904 1

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786