



### A-Level Decisions and Higher Education - Some points to consider:

Your A-level choice is important as it determines your higher education course choice. It is recommended that you thoroughly research the subjects you are taking at A-level and make an **informed** choice as universities may require or prefer certain subjects for entry to specific courses. Also, entry to higher education is likely to become more selective with funding changes and high demand on certain courses. Whilst many degree courses accept applicants with a combination of any A-level subjects, there are some that do specify a subject or subjects that **must** be taken at A-level. All subjects will be linear with examinations taking place at the end of the full two year course. It is important, therefore, to check these differences with your subject choices with the colleges/sixth forms you would like to apply to. Three or Four subjects can be chosen at most further education institutions.

Some Colleges offer A-level programmes for entry to specific university courses e.g. Medicine, Engineering, Computer Science, and Business. Some leading universities have subjects they specifically require or prefer for entry to some of their courses (e.g. Medicine), so it is important to check this with favoured institutions. There is a new UCAS tariff table on the [www.ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com) website: <https://www.ucas.com/files/new-tariff-tables>

If you are opting for a vocational course i.e. a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma (broadly equivalent to 3 A-levels) it may be possible at some colleges to study **one** A-Level subject or a 'BTEC Subsidiary Diploma' alongside it, this can be helpful in boosting entry to some universities, for some courses (e.g. Midwifery) but it is **not required** in most cases, so careful consideration should be given to this option and advice taken as it does mean mixing two different learning styles: vocational and academic.

- There are over 50,000 courses at more than 300 institutions! Some students decide on their degree or diploma course at university/college on the basis of their A-level exam subjects as it is a reasonably safe option since you would be familiar with the subjects themselves having studied them at GCSE. Others choose their degree course based on their career interests. You will get help and advice in Year 13 (second year of your A-level studies) from your college/sixth form on choosing your higher education courses and applying through UCAS.

- Some students may prefer to take for example, four science subjects or four arts, or four humanities subjects at A-level (History, English, Philosophy and German). Some universities may like to see one or even two contrasting subjects - this goes for courses such as Medicine, providing the required subjects are also offered (usually Chemistry and a second science subject) but check individual schools of medicine as it does vary) If you want to maximise your chances of getting on to a degree course in a leading university, the Russell group advise you to consider the combinations of subject choices carefully to ensure the subjects will equip them with the right skills and knowledge required for their university course that will show an aptitude for a particular subject. See the 'Russell Group' video and pdf document called 'Informed Choices' for further information on 'facilitating subjects' that keep degree a wide choice of degree options open.
- The Russell Group advise that it is important to **consider** choosing at least **two "traditional" subjects**, e.g. Maths, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, History, Geography and an ancient or Foreign Modern Language - and to be cautious about choosing what **some** Universities would consider as a "softer" subject for certain degree courses at A-level/BTEC e.g., Art and Design, Business Studies, Photography, Music Technology, Media Studies, Accountancy, Drama/Theatre Studies, Sports Studies, Film Studies, ICT. These are valuable subjects, but some universities favour subjects that they feel prepare **their students** better for study at **their** particular institution. Check entry requirements and favoured/preferred subjects with undergraduate admissions departments at the Universities of interest. But think about whether the course, teaching, environment, etc., feel right for you or would you prefer a University with more flexibility on their course offer and with the option of 'add on' modules available, work placements, and research projects. Be guided by your instinct and research as much as possible so as to make an informed choice based on your course, the future job prospects, your particular interests, and don't forget your personality type and learning style.
- It is not necessary to study Law at A-level to do a Law Degree (it is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage) and some universities would prefer History over Law at A-level. Check university prospectuses and websites (see resources section) for their preferred subjects for entry.

Each degree subject you choose is actually one of a much larger subject family (see some examples below). You can familiarise yourself with courses that are related to the same subject area to see what else appeals (remember too that there are also new courses being introduced to keep pace with industry demands particularly in digital

and computer science fields). Here are some examples of A-level subjects and related higher education courses to research further:

- **Art and Design:** Art, Computer Games Art, Fine Art, Digital Design, Fashion Image Making and Styling, Digital Media, Textile Design, Theatre Design, Furniture Design and Photography, Special Effects & Media Make-up Artistry etc. Students who want a career involving art or design can choose to go to art school. This usually involves studying on an Art Foundation course after A-levels (entry to which is dependent on a portfolio of your art work).
- **Biology:** Medicine (usually required, but not for all institutions, do research this carefully!), Microbiology, Midwifery, Molecular Sciences, Physiotherapy, Zoology, Veterinary Science, Animal Science, Biotechnology, Biological Sciences, Life Sciences, Ecology and Conservation, Prosthetics and Orthotics, Maritime Studies, Naval Architecture, Ship Science, Marine Biology and Oceanography, Nanotechnology, Environmental Management, Ophthalmic Dispensing, Optometry, Dentistry, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences etc.
- **Business:** Enterprise, Leadership and Management, Management Science (Operational Research), Business Management with sport, Business and Tourism Management, Business and Finance Management, Corporate Law, Business Analytics and Consultancy, International Business Management, Digital Marketing, Land Economy, Law & Economics, Management and Entrepreneurship etc.
- **Chemistry:** Chemical Engineering, Medicine & Surgery, Nanotechnology, Forensic Sciences, Pharmacology, Pharmacy, Biochemistry, Chemical Physics, Petroleum and Mechanical Engineering, Biomedical Genetics, Agriculture and Agronomy (crop production), Dentistry, Immunology, Medical Biochemistry, Neuroscience, Paramedical Science etc.,
- **Physics:** Aviation Technology or Engineering with Pilot Studies, Mechanical Engineering, Marine Engineering, Computer Science, Aeronautics, Physics with Musical Performance, Nanotechnology, Robotics, Civil Engineering and Architectural or Structural Engineering
- **Maths:** Nanotechnology, Robotics, Aeronautical Engineering, Quantity Surveying, Computer Science (Security & Resilience), (Software Engineering) (Mobile & Distributed Systems), Ship Science, Marine Engineering, Naval Architecture, Optometry, Economics, Accounting and Finance, Actuarial Science etc.

- **Computing:** Gaming Technology, Cybernetics, Computer Systems Engineering, Software Engineering, Computer Science with Business Management and/or Maths, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Computing and Communications, Digital and Technology Solutions etc.
- **English Language and Literature:** Drama, Publishing, Scriptwriting, Theatre Studies, Creative Writing, Linguistics, Journalism (Broadcast and Multimedia), Media and Cultural Studies, etc.
- **History:** Archaeology, Art History, Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, Education, Classics and Ancient History, Social and Economic History, Philosophy, Politics, Law Classical Civilisations, International Relations, International Politics and Security
- **Geography:** Archaeology and Geography, Earth Sciences, Water Science, Oceanography, Meteorology, Forestry, Environmental Policy, Geology, Land Economy, International Disaster Management, etc.
- **Languages:** International Business Studies, French Law, German with Journalism, German with Landscape Gardening, Chinese, Russian & Japanese Studies, South Asian Studies, Speech and Language Therapy, Teaching, Modern and Medieval Languages. Linguistics, etc.
- **Music:** Professional Sound and Video Technology, Audio Acoustics, Audio and Music Production, Sound Engineering and Design, Music Technology, Music & Live Events Management, Music Therapy, Music Performance & Production, Audio Systems Engineering etc.,
- **RE:** Religions and Theology, Social Sciences, Sociology, History or Art, Criminology and Law, Philosophy, Psychology, Social Anthropology etc.,
- **Sport/PE:** Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Sport Psychology, Coaching for Performance in Football, Sport Science, Sports Technology, Sports Management etc.,

#### **Choosing your Higher Education course by career interests:**

- You may not have set your mind on a particular career yet, but if you have some idea, it is important to remember that there are some 'vocational courses' which are very similar to your planned career. These are just a few examples of career areas and the degree subject in that field:
- **Accountancy careers:** Accounting, Actuarial Science, Risk Management Business Studies, Economics, Business and Finance, Banking and International Finance etc.

- **Animal careers:** Veterinary Science, Veterinary Nursing, Animal Sciences, Biological Sciences, Equine Management, Bio-veterinary Science, Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Zoology, Animal Biology, Equine Science etc.
- **Physiotherapy:** Exercise Science, Nursing, Orthoptics, Sports Rehabilitation, Physical Education, Paramedic Studies etc.
- **Social Work:** Young People's Work Force, Journalism, Law, Nursing, Early Childhood Studies, Education, Sociology, Counselling studies, psychology, Social & Public Policy etc.

Confirm your subject choices: 

**Make sure you have chosen the right subjects! Check the course subject requirements in university prospectuses and on their websites - if it is not clear what their 'preferred subjects' are, and they have not published a list, contact them direct by e-mail or telephone for confirmation- do not assume!**

*Get as much help and advice as you can, speak to your careers and subject teachers in school, local colleges (tutors and students), universities, family, friends, and the school Careers Adviser if you need further help.*

- General Studies and Critical Thinking A-levels - check acceptability with universities and colleges as they may not be included in some offers.
- To make sure you have chosen the right subjects check the course subject requirements in university/college prospectuses and on their websites.

### **Suggested resources:**

#### Useful books:

Choosing Your A-levels (and other post-16 options) [www.trotman.co.uk](http://www.trotman.co.uk)

Jobs and Careers after A-levels (Beryl Dixon - Lifetime publishing)

For more detailed information on the above see: 'University Degree Course Offers (Brian Heap Trotman Publishing): The Essential Guide to Winning Your Place at University' book by Brian Heap is available and published by Trotman. Also see 'Heap online': <http://www.heaponline.co.uk/university-choices-finances.aspx>

Getting in to Oxford and Cambridge (Trotman publishing) and <https://university.which.co.uk/advice/ucas-application/oxbridge-applications-five-things-you-might-not-know>

The Complete University Guide: <http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses>

For information on Foundation Diploma in Art & Design (route into practice-based undergraduate courses): <https://www.whatuni.com/degrees/courses/Foundation-Degree-UK/qualification/A/list.html>

[https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/art-and-design-foundation-diplomas-\(art-foundation\)/](https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/courses/art-and-design-foundation-diplomas-(art-foundation)/)

### **Useful websites:**

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) University and Colleges Admissions Service- (UCAS) British admissions service for people applying for Higher Education at University and College and an on-line database of HE courses in the UK. Use the search tool to find courses of interest. UNISTATS [www.unistats.direct.gov.uk](http://www.unistats.direct.gov.uk) Compare official course data from universities and colleges. [www.bestcourse4me.com](http://www.bestcourse4me.com) - shows link between what you study and earnings

[www.russellgroup.ac.uk](http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk) Russell Group represents the 24 leading Universities. You can download 'Informed Choices' from their website that gives information on choosing A-levels and specific subject requirements for entry onto their degree courses.

Which University - [www.which.co.uk](http://www.which.co.uk) Articles on how to choose GCSEs, A-levels and university courses <http://university.which.co.uk/advice/help-i-dont-know-what-course-to-choose-what-do-i-do>

Medical Schools Council: List of UK Medical Schools: <https://www.medschools.ac.uk/>

Admission to the BA in Law at Oxford University:

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/admission-requirements/uk-qualifications?wssl=1>

[www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/jobprofiles](http://www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/jobprofiles)- information on specific careers and career families with links to relevant websites. This site also offers careers advice via web, email and a telephone helpline for 13-19 year olds.

[www.totalprofessions.com](http://www.totalprofessions.com)- includes links to [www.icoud.com](http://www.icoud.com) and [www.careersbox.co.uk](http://www.careersbox.co.uk) - careers videos and information on Professional careers and training.

<https://www.gov.uk/student-finance> - <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance>- for information on how much University will cost, repayment loans, etc.

Fulbright Commission – Studying in USA: <http://www.fulbright.org.uk/>

[www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com) and [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk) - vacancies and information on the benefits of voluntary work and 'The Young Achievers Award' to boost entry to Higher Education.

<http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/> - Women into Science & Engineering & Construction - Mind maps for A-level & Degree subjects and careers in science, maths & technology.

You will get support with your degree choices at further education colleges/Sixth forms. 3 main points to remember when choosing your higher education course options:

- Research HE options: Degree? HND? Foundation Degree? (this is a two year course that includes one year industry placement, can be topped up with an extra year to attain a full degree and can be studied full-time or on a part-time basis. Consider Higher Level Apprenticeships or Degree Apprenticeships. Where would I like to study - close to home or further afield, or abroad?)
- How much support will I require, what level of input from tutors will I need - check this carefully - it varies a great deal from University to University and from course to course. How do I deal with pressure and deadlines? Check the full course content/programmes - check lecture and study time, some courses have big gaps after exams - how do they help students find work experience/internships? University allows you to specialise in a subject, you will meet new people and build social and business networks, and a degree is essential for entry to some careers, however, not everyone is suited to it. A website that may help to think all the options through including Degree Apprenticeships: [www.notgoingtouniversity.co.uk](http://www.notgoingtouniversity.co.uk)
- If you are thinking about a vocational BTEC course, research this just as carefully as A-levels. If you prefer a more practical approach to learning, completing coursework and assignments and work experience, as opposed to lots of exams, this may be a better route for you. Most vocational courses at college require a work placement. It is important to find out about the sorts of work placements students have gone onto, and also how the timetable is scheduled (how many days of the week in college, work days and study days and how many free periods there are) as this will help to plan bus journeys and what to do in the amount of 'free time' you are likely to have. Sometimes only three days attendance is required at college (with study periods included on those days). Half a day a week of the timetable may also be taken up with retaking Maths or English GCSE for some students.



Good luck with your research! Claire Easterbrook, Careers Adviser