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 (University) 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. In English school sixth forms and colleges, all A Levels are now examined at the end of a (typically) two-year course and AS Levels are stand-alone qualifications. For the purpose of applying to university, where an AS Level is accepted it will be worth 40% of an A Level. Universities no longer accept two AS Levels in place of one A Level in their offers. It is important, therefore, to check your subject choices with the colleges/sixth forms you would like to apply to and the degree options you are aiming for. 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. Check the UCAS tariff table on the UCAS website:
www.ucas.com https://www.ucas.com/file/63536/download?token=sxmdfCS-
www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points

- There are over 50,000 degree courses at more than 300 institutions! You will get help and advice in Year 13 (second year of your A Level studies A2) 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 (E.g., 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 (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 at a leading university, the Russell Group advise that you consider the combinations of A Level subject choices carefully to ensure the subjects will equip you with the right skills and knowledge required for their university course that will show an aptitude for a particular subject. See the 'Russell Group's 'Informed Choices' website www.informedchoices.ac.uk for degree choices and www.informedchoices/subjects.ac.uk for further information on 'facilitating subjects' that keeps a wide choice of degree options open.

What to Consider When Making Your Choices:

- You should have a genuine interest in each of your subjects. You must, under no circumstances, choose a collection of subjects simply because they were the ones in which you achieved your best GCSE results. A realistic approach to choice is required, and advice and guidance should be sought. There is no hard and fast rule which helps to determine subject choices. Engineering will require Mathematics and Physics, but, on the other hand, it is now possible to study Law with almost any combination of A Levels. Given that language graduates are the most employable in the current job market, it may help to consider a language as an option.

- Some universities prefer a contrasting fourth subject, whilst others simply look for achievement at the highest possible level.

- When you come to make your Sixth Form (Yr 12 & 13) choices, you may already have a Higher Education course or career in mind. If this is the case, you will need to use your knowledge of what you want to do to ensure that you choose the subject combination which makes this possible. If it is a university course which you intend to do, check out the university 'Entry Profile' on https://digital.ucas/search as well as individual university websites, to find out what the entry requirements for the undergraduate degree courses that interest you are. The courses may specify certain subjects, as well as grades or points.

- It is particularly important if you want to enter a highly competitive university or to study a competitive subject, such as medicine, that you check whether there are any subjects which the institution **does not accept** for particular courses.

- If you are not so sure about what you want to do after school, it can be more challenging to choose your A Level subjects. You will need to consider what your interests and aptitudes are and what will motivate you to study the subjects for

two years. Otherwise, you might need to rely on family, teachers and friends and Careers Adviser to give you a sense of where your strengths may be.

- Consider carefully the balance of subjects which you choose and the work each one entails. Are you best suited to essay writing or problem solving? Do you wish to spend time doing practical work or would you rather spend it researching information?

- Make sure that you have the capability to study the subjects which you choose. A subject may be very different at A Level than at GCSE. Do make sure that you ask your subject teachers' advice, and fully research each subject choice.

- You may have an ambition to follow a certain career path but, if it demands skills which you do not possess, you will make yourself unhappy striving for something beyond your reach. Do talk to your subject teachers at your Yr11 Consultation Evening about your likely grades.

- You do not have to choose all facilitating subjects for entry to a Russell Group University, however, they do 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.

- Think about whether the course, teaching, environment etc., feel right for you or would you prefer a University that has more flexibility on their course offer e.g., with the option of 'add on' modules available, languages, work placements in the UK and abroad, and research projects etc. 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. Please note that you DO NOT need 4 subjects at A2 (full A Levels), only 3 A-levels are needed for entry to University (or one BTEC L3 Extended Diploma with Merits/Distinctions), **but** most applicants for Oxbridge **science courses** will have attained four full A Levels,

including further maths. Further maths is also required or highly desired for some computer science and economics degree courses.

- 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.

- Business Studies and Economics are quite clearly related "If Economics focuses on the big picture of the world's finances, then you can say that Business Studies have a more specific vision, preparing you with skills to manage a specific company or organisation. ... Studying Economics, on the other hand, will give you a broad understanding of past and present economic processes."

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 up to date with industry demands particularly in digital technology and computer science fields e.g., A-level Design Engineering). 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/Economics:** 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:** Medicine (essential), 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 English 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.
- **Teaching:** Education Studies, Education and History, Deaf Studies and Education, Education and Psychology, Mathematics with Secondary Education (QTS), Primary Education, Education and Sociology, Physical Education and School Sport.

Confirm your subject choices: 

Make sure you have chosen the right subjects! The Russell Group 'Which Degree Should I Take?' will help with this: https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/which-

degree. 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.

Suggested resources and useful websites:
Which A-Levels? The essential guide to choosing A Levels and other post-16 qualifications by Alison Dixon (from Prospects Education Resources) check if copy available in school or local public library.

'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 into Oxford and Cambridge (Trotman publishing)

Trinity College Cambridge - advice on A-level subject combinations: https://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/applying/a-level-subject-combinations/

Oxford: A-level subjects required for course entry: https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/admission-requirements/admission-requirements-table?wssl=1

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

For information on Foundation Diploma in Art & Design (route into practice-based undergraduate courses): http://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/foundation--preparation-courses/foundation-diploma-in-art--design/

What Uni? www.whatuni.com/degrees/courses/foundation-degree-courses

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.

The Uni Guide: https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/ has an A-Level Explorer page to help match your A-level subjects to degree possibilities.

https://discoveruni.gov.uk/ (this site has replaced UNISTATS) https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/discover-uni-and-unistats/ Compare official course data from universities and colleges.

Russell Group www.russellgroup.ac.uk The Russell Group represents the 24 leading Universities in UK www.informedchoices.com information on choosing A-levels and specific subject requirements for entry onto their degree courses.

Which University – 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

https://www.medschools.ac.uk/studying-medicine/medical-schools Medical Schools Council Entry requirements for UK Medical Schools

If you don't think you'll have the grades to get into medicine, there are many different careers which require similar skills and lower grades. Have a look into these ideas: anatomy, audiology, biomedical science, chiropractic, deaf studies, dental technology, dietetics, health science, hygienist, medical lab science, medical technology, mental health, midwifery, neuroscience, nursing, nutrition, occupational therapy, ophthalmic, optometry, orthotics and prosthetics, pharmacology, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, radiography and radiotherapy, speech therapy and toxicology.

The Medic Portal is a great resource for all aspects of applying for medicine, from interview advice to UKCAT questions https://www.themedicportal.com/

The Lawyer Portal covers everything needed to enter Law School:
www.lawyerportal.com
Law at Oxford University and Oxford & Cambridge University admissions:
www.law.ox.ac.uk
https://oxbridgeadmissions.com/

LMI Information – Employment trends and skill demands/shortages:
https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/our-people/evidence-base/
https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/
http://www.lmiforall.org.uk

www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/jobprofiles- information on specific careers and career families with links to relevant websites. Has a section on CVs, templates and

helpful tips. This site also offers careers advice via web, email and a telephone helpline for 13-19 year olds.

www.prospects.ac.uk very comprehensive information on a wide range of Job Profiles and general Higher Education and graduate schemes, degree apprenticeships and employment information.

https://icould.com/ and www.careersbox.co.uk – careers videos and information on Professional careers and training.

Student Finance: 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.

Erasmus programme – studying in Europe: https://www.erasmusprogramme.com/

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

Volunteering: https://www.gov.uk/volunteering

https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/volunteer

www.do-it.org.uk - vacancies and information on the benefits of voluntary work and 'The Young Achievers Award' to boost entry to HE and www.gov.uk Volunteering for advice.

http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/ https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/news/wise-calls-on-industry-to-inspire-girls-to-choose-stem-roles/ – Women into Science & Engineering

What Higher Education options are there?

You will get support with your degree choices at further education colleges/sixth forms but you can start your research now and look at your HE options: Honours Degree? HND? Foundation Degree? Diploma? Higher Level Apprenticeships or Degree Apprenticeships? And think about where would you like to study – close to home or further afield, or abroad?

- Foundation Degree – Are training degrees of a less academic nature and relate to vocational areas. Want to do a course but unlikely to get the grades? You can apply to do a foundation degree which will often allow you access to the degree course at the same university. It is usually 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. Diploma courses are also at a lower level than a degree course; successful completion of the first year or two can lead to entry onto a full honours degree.

- A three Year Full Time honours degree in one subject
- A Sandwich Degree Course – students have a year of work experience in UK or abroad in the middle of the course, either a 'thin sandwich' of two separate six month placements or a 'thick sandwich' of one year.
- Modular courses – some universities offer modular degrees where students can build their course by selecting modules of their choice which could span the arts, sciences and social sciences.
- Joint Honours degrees, for example French and Computing, Economics and Law see list of combined courses available on ucas.com.
- Some degree courses will exempt you from taking certain professional exams (e.g., law and accountancy) after graduation.

- Think about how much support you will require, what level of input from tutors you will need – check this carefully – it varies a great deal from University to University and from course to course. How do you deal with pressure and deadlines? 'Student Minds' website helps you to think about personal support you may require and how to get it. Check the full course content/programmes – 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 www.prospects.ac.uk www.apprenticeships.gov.uk https://www.studentminds.org.uk/

Alternatives to studying A-levels:

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 a mixed programme e.g., one A Level subject or a BTEC 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. It is also possible to study two A Levels with a BTEC Extended Certificate, but careful consideration should be given to this option and advice taken as it does mean mixing two different learning styles, vocational and academic and not all universities would accept entry with this combination, but this option does work well for some individual cases.

A BTEC Subsidiary Diploma is equivalent to one A Level and a BTEC Extended Certificate is also equivalent to one A Level, a BTEC Diploma is equivalent to two and a BTEC Extended Diploma counts for three so you can usually study a mix (either of BTECs or BTECs and A Levels) which suit you. These qualifications have been redesigned to better prepare students for university and it is becoming more common for students to take a mix of vocational and academic qualifications. Some universities will only accept BTECs in certain subjects and you may also be required to have studied other qualifications such as A Levels alongside a BTEC qualification.

- If you are thinking about a vocational BTEC course, or the new T-Levels (on which students spend a minimum of 45 working days in the workplace), it is best to research these options 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.

  Covid-19

  The current pandemic has had a big impact on further education colleges and higher education institutions. In view of this, it is important to ask each institution what changes have had to be made to their courses, particularly as many tutorials (lessons) are now taking place remotely online via Teams/Zoom and live interactive webinars. A lot has changed with 'non campus delivery' so it is a good idea to ask about the extra support available for students.

- Good luck with your research! Claire Easterbrook, Careers Adviser

UCAS

UCAS Tariff

Qualification and grade	Tariff points
A level grade A*	56
A level grade A	48
A level grade B	40
A level grade C	32
A level grade D	24
A level grade E	16

www.ucas.com/tariff-calculator

New Tariff points – examples of grade combinations

BTEC Extended Diploma		
Grade	**Old Tariff**	**New Tariff**
D*D*D*	420	168
D*D*D	400	160
D*DD	380	152
DDD	360	144
DDM	320	128
DMM	280	112
MMM	240	96
MMP	200	80

A-Levels and Highers:
Ucas Points

	A-levels	AS levels	Scottish Highers	Advanced Highers
A*	56			
A	48	20	33	56
B	40	16	27	48
C	32	12	21	40
D	24	10	15	32
E	16	6		

Which? University