

Advice and information that can help you to find the right course

Choosing a subject and course to study can seem a daunting task. There are so many choices to make that you may feel overwhelmed by it all. Deciding upon a course which will suit you requires plenty of research. You may be lucky enough to know which subject you would like to study, but there are thousands of students who ask the same question: what should I study? Below are some points to consider before making that all-important decision.

Find a course which matches your interests, career aspirations and talents

There is no one course which suits everyone, so we know how important it is to find the right one for you. The best way to decide what you would like to study is to ask yourself the following questions.

- **Which subjects interest me?**
- **What are my talents?**
- **What job would I like to do after attending university or college?**
- **Which academic skills would I like to improve?**

Having an answer to any of these questions is a good starting point, but do not worry if you cannot answer them all. The **Stamford Test** is a short questionnaire which can help to match your interests and abilities to possible higher education subjects. Many students find this extremely helpful when trying to make up their minds.

Unistats is a website that can help you to research subjects and universities before deciding where to apply.

You can compare subjects, universities, colleges and UCAS points as well as look at student satisfaction ratings and explore the figures about getting a graduate job after completing a course. Unistats has the results of the National Student Survey and also statistical information on universities, colleges, subjects and teaching style.

Some professions require specific subjects to be studied at higher education level. If you know what career you would like to do in the future, research the job in detail to see if any qualifications are essential.

Choose the type of qualification that suits you

When people consider higher education, they tend to think of degree courses. There are, however, several other qualifications that can be gained at university or college. The main courses offered are:

- **Certificate of higher education:** the first year of a degree course;
- **Diploma in health:** a three-year course specialising in health-related courses, for example, midwifery and nursing;
- **Higher National Diploma (HND):** a two-year course, which, if completed with high grades, can lead to the third year of a degree;
- **Foundation degree:** the equivalent of the first two years of an Honours degree, may be studied full- or part-time, and consist of academic study integrated with relevant work-based learning

undertaken with an employer. It may be studied as a stand-alone qualification or upon completion you may progress to the final year of an Honours degree;

- **Degree:** a three- or four-year course where graduates obtain a bachelor's degree. There are different titles and levels of degree, such as:
BA - Bachelor of Arts
BSc - Bachelor of Science
BEd - Bachelor of Education
BEng - Bachelor of Engineering
Ordinary/Honours - this can vary between universities and colleges, although generally an 'Ordinary' or 'unclassified' degree may be awarded if a student has completed a full degree course but hasn't obtained the total required passes sufficient to merit a third-class Honours degree. In Scotland, an 'Ordinary' degree is usually a three-year full-time course, whereas an 'Honours' degree is usually a four-year full-time course.
- **Postgraduate:** courses for graduates, which involve one or two years' additional work after a degree and lead to a master's degree. A longer period of postgraduate study is required for specialist degrees, for example, graduate entry to medicine.

Consider combination courses if you would like to study more than one subject

If you are interested in more than one subject, you may be able to study a combination as part of your course, e.g. English literature and psychology. You can often decide for yourself how much time you would like to spend on each subject.

- **Joint:** the two subjects are studied equally, ie 50/50
- **Major/Minor:** the time spent is usually 75%/25%

Combine work in industry with study on a sandwich course

Certain vocational courses include a year of working within the industry as part of the course. This will usually be for the third year of a degree course or the second year of an HND and, depending on the employer, may be full-time paid employment. The purpose of this is to introduce you to the world of work, whilst gaining valuable experience in a profession you might consider after completing your higher education course.