

**A Guide to
Making Post–16
Subject Choices
2017 - 2018**

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A Guide to Making Post-16 Option Choices

Routes followed by our students following Sixth Form study include:

- University
- Gap Year
- Art foundation courses
- Employment
- RAF, Army, Navy, Police
- Apprenticeships

Whichever pathway you will take you need to spend time to research. To guarantee success ensure that you make informed, appropriate choices.

Careers advice and how to research

This is very important, as some students reach the end of their A Levels only to discover they haven't done the correct subjects for what they want to study at university. Sort this out and make sure you're doing the right subjects from the start so it doesn't become a problem later on.

- The website www.ucas.co.uk will give details of all university courses and the subjects that are necessary or desirable.
- Look out for Brian Heap's 'Degree Course Offers', an excellent book on choosing Higher Education courses.
- Look out for The Times' University Guide, The Guardian University Guide and Virgin's Alternative University Guide.
- Look on the websites of individual universities to find out which courses they offer that spark your interest. The websites will also give the subject specific requirements for the course and the grades required for entry to the course.
- Look at the website www.whatqualifications.co.uk for entry requirements for particular careers.

Other useful websites include:

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

www.bestcourse4me.com

www.university.which.co.uk

http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/the_subject_matters.pdf (If you are considering Cambridge University)

Who to ask for advice

- Careers appointments can be made during Year 11 for students who need specific careers advice.
- Do not hesitate to approach the member of staff in your school with responsibility for Careers Guidance. They will be able to help you to book a Careers interview and advise on relevant work experience, apprenticeships and future carer pathways.
- Students should discuss ideas with their tutor.
- Students should approach their subject teachers if they are considering selecting a subject they are already studying. They should ask for further specific details about the course and their suitability for a particular career route.
- Talk to current Sixth Form students to find out about the subjects you are considering studying.
- All students will be given advice regarding their options in the counselling interview in January/February.

Factors you SHOULD consider when choosing your Post-16 subjects

When making choices you should consider the following:

- Natural ability
- Subjects that you enjoy
- Subjects that might be a specific requirement for a particular course at university or career/employment
- Subjects that suit your own learning styles
- The amount of coursework involved
- Balance of workload
- Level of difficulty of a subject
- Subjects which complement each other

Natural Ability / Personal Strengths and Skills

If you have a particular talent or natural ability in a subject you are more likely to be successful and feel confident both in class and during independent study. It makes sense to select subjects in which you are making good progress and feel confident. Talk to your subject teachers about your strengths and weaknesses to assess your potential, allowing you to make more informed decisions about which A Levels you choose.

Remember one of the key aims of Sixth Form study is to achieve the highest grades possible and so ensure a place in Higher Education or employment.

Enjoyment

It's important to choose subjects you enjoy doing. Even if you are good at a certain subject, you might not actually enjoy it all that much. There's no point going through Sixth Form and never looking forward to lessons because you don't like them. This in turn may make you feel you can't cope with the work and make you feel stressed in the long-term.

If you look forward to lessons, chances are you will approach them confidently and do well in them.

Genuine interest in a subject

One of the greatest causes of lack of knowledge is lack of interest. You are more likely to be successful if you select the subjects you genuinely enjoy studying. If a subject is a chore to you now it is possible it will continue to be so in the Sixth Form.

Subjects that suit your learning style

- Find out about Sixth Form courses by talking to Sixth Form students and teachers. Ask about the style of lessons.

- Will you be involved in group activities, independent learning, lectures, writing notes, discussion, presentations, use of ICT?
- If you know that writing essays and meeting deadlines is not your strength then think carefully before choosing a course that has lots of essays.
- Find out how much coursework is involved. If coursework is one of your strengths you should try to include subjects that involve coursework.

Workload

- A good reason to read through the specifications of each subject you are considering is to check how they are assessed.
- You can find the specifications on the examination board websites.
- How much coursework is there? How many tests/exams are there? Are there any practical assessments? It's probably not wise to take all subjects where most of the assessment is coursework.
- If possible, try to balance your subject combinations so your work will be spread over equal amounts of coursework, exams and practical tests.

Are you considering a new subject you have not studied before? If so, do your research carefully

- Try to talk to students who are already on the course, and the teacher(s) that run it.
- Look at the syllabuses for the new subjects the Sleaford Joint Sixth Form is offering that were not available at GCSE, e.g. Sociology, Media Studies, Film Studies, Psychology, Health and Social Care.
- Some students find that they take these courses without looking into them properly first, and are then disappointed when they find it's not what they were expecting.
- Find out what exam board the department uses for these subjects, and download the specification from their website to read more about what it involves.

Are you considering English at A Level?

- Make sure that you research the difference between English Language, English Literature and English Language Literature combined courses. Talk to your English teachers who will be able to guide you according to your strengths and interests.
- Remember that if you are considering applying to do an English degree at a high ranking university you should ideally take English Literature. Another suitable alternative would be English Language Literature combined.
- It is not usually recommended to take both English Language and English Literature
- Research the subjects by finding the specification on the examination board website.

Are you considering History at A Level?

If you are considering studying History at A Level be aware that although the examination board is the same, the topics studied at Carre's, Kesteven and Sleaford High school and St George's Academy are slightly different. Use the subject choices brochure which is inserted inside the SJSF prospectus to find out which History course is most appealing to you

BTEC, CTEC or A Levels?

BTECs and CTECs are vocational qualifications suitable for a wide range of learners. They provide a more practical, real-world approach to learning alongside a key theoretical background.

If you perform better through completing coursework rather than a final exam then a BTEC or CTEC course could be the course for you. Be aware that you will have some examined content and continuous coursework with strict deadlines to meet - the pressure is therefore on from day one to produce outstanding work! BTECs and CTECs also give you the opportunity to develop a wide range of cross-curricular skills such as organisation, leadership, communication, team-work and ICT.

BTECs and CTECs are 2 year courses and, if it is not continued into the second year, you will not be awarded a qualification.

Are BTEC and CTEC qualifications accepted by universities? Yes.

BTECs and CTECs accommodate a broad spectrum of learner ambitions and are accepted by universities. BTECs are graded as Distinction, Merit or Pass.

Distinction* is equivalent to grade A* at A- Level and counts as 56 ucas points, which is the same number of ucas points as a grade A at A- Level.

Distinction is equivalent to grade A at A- Level and counts as 48 ucas points, which is the same number of ucas points as a grade A at A- Level.

Merit is equivalent to grade C at A-Level and counts as 32 ucas points, which is the same number of ucas points as a grade C at A- Level.

Pass is equivalent to grade E at A-Level and counts as 16 ucas points, which is the same number of ucas points as a grade A at A- Level.

Please note that for students applying to university for 2017 entry onwards, the ucas tariff changed. For full information please refer to the following weblink:

<https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/new-tariff-fast-facts.pdf>

Grade at A level	BTEC and CTEC	Ucas points
A*	Distinction *	56
A	Distinction	48
B		40
C	Merit	32
D		24
E	Pass	16

Here are some factors which should not influence your decisions when choosing Post-16 subjects

Friends – although you may not want to be on your own in a classroom with a group of students you don't know, it's important to realise that choosing subjects just because your friends are doing them is not a way of deciding what to do. You will either end up bored because you have no interest in the subject, or lessons will be just another time to socialise with your friends, and you will fall behind with the work.

Favourite Teachers – do not choose a subject just because your favourite teacher teaches it. Chances are they might not teach it to your particular class in the Sixth Form.

Teacher Expectations – Furthermore, don't pick a subject because your subject teacher expects you to take it and you feel you should please them. They may be disappointed when you tell them you're not doing their subject, but it's more important you pick the right combination of subjects than trying to avoid hurting the feelings of your teachers.

New Subjects – Do not choose a subject just because it is new, sounds interesting but in fact you know nothing about it. Fully research and take the time to find out if it is a suitable subject for you.

Subjects you might need for specific university courses

If you think you probably want to go to university but don't know what you want to study yet? You can keep your options wide open when choosing your A Levels by selecting a mix of the most commonly asked-for subjects in university entry requirements.

Taking certain A Levels, known as '**facilitating**' subjects, will open up more university course options. Take your pick from:

- English Literature
- History
- Modern languages – French, German, Spanish
- Geography
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Mathematics and Further Mathematics
- Physics
- If you have a talent for Art, Design, Technology or Music and think it could be an avenue you might pursue, taking the relevant A Levels will help that to happen.

Some university courses have very specific subject requirements.

This is particularly relevant to Science related degrees. Other university courses are less specific. You should research using the websites

www.ucas.com

www.russellgroup.org/Informedchoices

www.bestcourse4me.com

www.universitywhich.co.uk

http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/the_subject_matters.pdf

Below are a few examples of specific subject requirements for some degree courses.

- **Architecture** – Many courses prefer an Art or Design or Technology course. All require a portfolio. Some require or prefer Mathematics and / or Physics.
- **English** - if you are considering applying to do an English degree at a high ranking university you should ideally take English Literature, but you should check before making your choice.
- **Modern Languages** – At least one language, but two are sometimes preferred.

- **Law** – The traditional Arts and Science subjects with a significant academic content are preferred by the top universities. A modern language can be an asset. Surprisingly, Law is NOT a requirement to study Law at university. Some universities do not see it as an advantage or disadvantage to study Law. Some universities prefer students who have not studied Law at A Level.
- **Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine** - Chemistry A level is a requirement for all Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine courses. So if you wish to study these courses at university you will have to study Chemistry to A level.

Biology is a requirement, and very useful, for a number of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine courses.

- **Physiotherapy** - Biology is a requirement for all Physiotherapy courses.
- **Physics** - Mathematics is a requirement for the majority of Physics courses at university.
- **Chemistry or Pharmacy** - Chemistry is required plus one from Biology, Physics or Mathematics.
- **Sports Science** - Useful subjects to complement Sports Science are Business Studies, Human Biology or Psychology.
- **Engineering** - If you are considering Engineering at university you should include Mathematics and / or Physics. If you are a talented mathematician you could also consider Further Mathematics. You could also consider studying with a Modern Foreign Language.
- **Economics** - If you are considering studying Economics at university you should take Mathematics. Business and Economics is useful but not essential. You could also broaden your career options by choosing to study a Modern Foreign Language.
- **Primary Education** - At least one from Art, Biology, Chemistry, Design and Technology, English, French, Geography, German, History, ICT, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Physical Education, Philosophy and Ethics, Spanish. Other typical A Levels taken by current teaching students include Psychology, Sociology, Drama and Theatre Studies.

Level of challenge involved – are some subjects more difficult than others?

Traditional versus Non-Traditional subjects

Some high – ranking universities have recently stated that certain A Level subjects are less challenging. These include Dance, Sports Studies, ICT, Health and Social Care, Travel and Tourism, Business Studies, Photography and Accounting. Both Cambridge University and the London School of Economics have published lists of these subjects on their websites, as they believe they are “less effective” preparation for degrees at their universities.

If you are planning to apply to a top university (refer to the list ‘Top Universities’ on the final page of this guide) it is worth investigating whether your chance of being accepted into these institutions is reduced if you take one or more of these so called “soft” subjects.

To give an idea of which courses are known to be more challenging please refer to the information below which is taken from Cambridge University website. Although the information is from the Cambridge website, **it is known that many of the top ranking universities will expect at least one, if not two A Level subjects, to be from the subjects included below.**

Generally suitable Arts A Level subjects for top ranking universities

Are you inclined towards the Arts or Social Sciences?

If you think you would like to study an Arts or Social Sciences course at university but you are not sure which one, then **English Literature, History, Modern Languages and Mathematics** are good ‘keystone’ subjects: choosing one or more of these will provide a good foundation for your subject combination.

Other good choices to combine these subjects with include: **an additional language, Economics, Further Mathematics, Geography, Philosophy and Ethics, Sciences (Biology, Chemistry or Physics).**

Other possible subject choices: **English Language, English Language and Literature, Government and Politics, Law, Music, Psychology or Sociology,** are useful preparation for Arts and Social Sciences courses.

Generally suitable Science A Level subjects for top ranking universities

Are you inclined towards the Sciences?

If you think you would like to study a Science course at university but you are not sure which one, then you are advised to take at least two, and ideally three, of **Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics**. Some pairings of these subjects are more natural than others. The most natural pairs are Biology and Chemistry, Chemistry and Physics, and Mathematics and Physics. Some students will also study **Further Mathematics**.

Other possible subject choices, for instance **Computing, Design and Technology, Electronics or Psychology**, may be useful preparation for some Science courses.

A Level subjects which will be also be suitable (courses for which these subjects are suitable are in brackets)

Art and Design (Arts)
Design and Technology (Architecture)
Drama and Theatre (Arts)
Electronics (Engineering)
Film Studies (Arts)
Media Studies (Arts)

For more information refer to the websites:

www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/requirements

http://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/the_subject_matters.pdf (if you are considering Cambridge University)

http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/undergraduate>

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/undergraduate-study/application-and-entry/alevel-qualifications>

If you already have an idea of which courses and universities you might be interested in, it is important to research the preferred A Level requirements. You can do this by visiting the website of individual universities.

What happens next?

Make a provisional selection of subjects and submit an application by Friday 17 November 2017

- Details of all Sleaford Joint Sixth Form courses will be on the website so that students and parents can access this information at any time.
- Students submit a formal application for a place in the SJSF in November. At this point students select a provisional choice of subjects.

Individual counselling / guidance - January / early February

- Individual student interviews / counselling with members of the Sixth Form Pastoral team to help decide the most appropriate subjects for their ability and future career needs.
- Each interview is approximately 15 minutes.
- All students are interviewed and full details recorded and kept in files.
- Data on student progress in mocks, target grades and future career is taken into account when advice is given.

Sleaford Joint Sixth Form Induction Event - Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th June 2018 (provisional)

- All students who have submitted an application to the SJSF and intend to take up the place in September are **required to attend an Induction Event** at the end of June.
- The induction program is essentially the start of your Post-16 studies in the Sleaford Joint Sixth Form and consequently all students are expected to attend.
- The programme for the 2 day event is organised jointly with all schools in the SJSF and includes course information, sessions in your chosen subjects, information on additional courses including the Extended Project Qualification and enrichment activities that will be available to you in the Sixth Form. You will also be provided with an induction pack of work to be completed before September to aid your transition into the Sixth Form.

After the GCSE results are known

- Some students will need further counselling at the start of Year 12 if their GCSE results indicate that they need to make changes.
- Each subject studied in the SJSF has specific GCSE entry requirements. These can be found in the Sixth Form subject choice booklet inside the SJSF prospectus. Students must ensure that they know the specific requirements at GCSE for their selected subject choices.
- If a student does not achieve the entry requirements for a course they will be invited to attend a counselling interview at the start of the new academic year in September to discuss revised subject options.

Top British Universities

The Russell Group – self selecting

Birmingham*
Bristol*
Cambridge*
Cardiff
Edinburgh*
Durham*
Glasgow
Imperial College*
Exeter
Imperial College London
King's College London
Leeds
Liverpool
LSE*
Manchester
Newcastle
Nottingham*
Oxford*
Queen Mary London
Queen's University, Belfast
Sheffield
Southampton
UCL*
Warwick*
York*

Universities marked * are the Sutton Trust 13 –

In 2000, the Sutton Trust created a list of 13 UK universities which are research-intensive and ranked highest based on the average rankings of surveys by [The Daily Telegraph](#), [The Times](#), [the Financial Times](#) and [The Sunday Times](#). The universities are regarded as the UK's "most prestigious", "elite" and "most selective" universities offering around 30,000 places annually. The 13 universities are used as a benchmark for monitoring social mobility.

Sutton Trust 30

In 2011, the Trust updated its methodology to include the 30 "most highly selective" British universities, which were "also the 30 most selective according to the Times University Guide" for the purpose of illustrating the relative number of students from poor backgrounds enrolled here against the rest of the institutions. These are, in alphabetical order:

University of Bath, University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Imperial College, King's College London, University of Lancaster, University of Leeds, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics, University of Manchester, University of Newcastle, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, University of Reading, Royal Holloway, University of London, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of Surrey, University College London, University of Warwick and University of York.

