**HIGHER EDUCATION – CHOICES**

Choosing courses at universities, college or apprenticeships can be quite daunting, like choosing a mobile phone, so many packages available. Even when you have decided on a course to study you will discover no two courses are identical even if they have the same name! Even at university courses with the same title will be different to.

**?????????? How do I choose ??????????**

We hope the following information and guidance will be of help

**CHOOSING A COURSE**

**What courses fit my predicted exam results/UCAS score?**

One of the quickest ways of narrowing down your personal choices is by making sure you choose universities/colleges which are asking for the grades/UCAS points which you are predicted. To help you find out points and subjects you are interested in the following sources will help you: - UCAS website [*www.ucas.com*](http://www.ucas.com): The UCAS Big Book.

**What style and approach would suit me best?**

Courses can be biased towards practical, theory based, traditional or contemporary. Teaching methods can also vary with some courses focused on small group learning (seminars/ tutorials) or others prefer large lecture groups with lots of student research. By now you should have built up a picture of what courses suit you as an individual, if you are still not sure why not contact Tutors, Lecturers or even discuss with friends to allay any anxieties.

**What methods of examination & assessment do I prefer?**

You’re not limited to just taking final exams when you go to university, some still adopt this approach. Others give you the opportunity to gain marks towards your final degree by projects, coursework, dissertations, even practical work experience in placements. It is useful to find out which examinations count towards your final year (i.e. it could be only exams from a certain year of the course

**CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY**

**Do I have a particular style of University in mind?**

You may want to go to a traditional university or perhaps of more cutting edge university with new technology and facilities. You can also choose a smaller university with 2,000 students or a large university with14,000 students. There are other instates of Higher Education such as Specialist Colleges, University Colleges plus Further Education Colleges each having a different approach and feel to learning.

**What About Mix of Students?**

You can find out about the ratio of female/male, mature students, disabled students from the university to help you understand the more about the university’s ethos.

**How Close to Home Do I Want to Be?**

This is an important factor to consider, you may want to be close to home i.e. weekend work arrangements, or still remain close to family, or you may wish to spread your wings and move further away from home.

Examples from here: - from Torbay

University West of England (Bristol) 1h 46mins

University of Chichester (Sussex) 3h 16mins

University of Nottingham 3h 59mins

There many ways in which courses vary, by using the sheet below you can decide what really matters to you and which courses suit you the best.

**Choosing a Course**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How important is it that your course......** | **Not**  **Very** |  |  |  | **Very** | **Rank** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |  |
| Allows time for practical work ( lab work, productions, outside work) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gives the option to study any additional subjects. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Does the course have flexibility in the subjects you study. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is it modular |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Are there opportunities to study abroad. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Offers the chance for work experience. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has well known tutors ( published articles & books) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gives you the skills which are transferable to further your career. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has a high graduate employment rate. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has a high Tutor/Student ratio i.e. 1 to 1 support/tuition. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Provides excellent facilities (i.e. laboratories, theatres, studios) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Offers a range of assessment methods  (not just exams) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has a good reputation for your subject. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is accredited for a profession e.g. Law  Psychology etc |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gives you the opportunity to change pathway/or direction. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is a sandwich course |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Gives you the option to do coursework or dissertations. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Choosing a University**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **How important is it that your University/College** | **Not**  **Very** |  |  |  | **Very** | **Rank** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |  |
| Has guaranteed accommodation for all first year students if required. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has affordable accommodation. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Have good facilities for students with disabilities. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Have a wide range of academic facilities i.e. libraries, |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has good transport links. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has a wide range of social activities, clubs & societies. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Have good leisure & sports facilities. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has a good reputation |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is accessible to a vibrant social scene. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Has a highgraduate employment. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Size of university and campus. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Number of undergraduates |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is in a large city\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Is on a campus\*\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |

\*Could be on one base or be multi-site. Accommodation may also be separate.

\*\*Campus universities are concentrated in one area with the majority of the university on one site – this often includes some accommodation.

**Now I have worked out the factors that are important for me, how do I find out information about course, exams, and facilities?**

There are many websites that can help you but do not rely on them too much.

[www.educationalguardian.co.uk/university](http://www.educationalguardian.co.uk/university) guide

the completeuniversityguide.co.uk – is a very comprehensive guide to universities, courses, fees and careers etc.

Working it out from there:

1. List your top 10 or more important factors (i.e. 5 Universities and 5 Courses)
2. Chart Universities you are interested in against these

Here’s an example for you to use:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | University Name |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | Total Ticks |
| **COURSE** | | | | | | | | | |
| Example: Has a wide range of choice of subjects. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| **UNIVERSITY** | | | | | | | | | |
| Example: Is accessible to a vibrant social scene. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Think big concept | | | | | | | | | |

**THINKING ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Why go onto Higher Education**

Higher Education can open doors to access many opportunities allow greater choice for the future and greater earning potential.

However it is not always the best option for everyone. Below are some things for you to think through:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Advantages:** | **Disadvantages:** |
| Allows access to certain careers e.g. law, medicine, and teaching. | Financial cost can vary re course and have to work whilst studying. |
| **Higher Salaries – the average starting salary of graduate can be from 16,000 upwards depending on career choice.** | **Will still have debts to pay when starting work.** |
| Improved promotion prospects. | Employment not guaranteed. |
| **Improved job security, having a higher education qualification reduces risk of unemployment.** | **Delays experience of full-time employment.** |
| Greater job satisfaction – wider range of careers. Chance to meet new colleagues. | May have to leave home and move away |

You can work out the advantages & disadvantages buy researching your study and course options before you decide if higher education is for the choose for you. It is well worth taking time to think your options through.

**What can I study?**

There are many different subject areas available with a wide range of courses you could study. With many degrees you do not need to have studied the subject before. You can choose from an A-Z list of courses i.e. Art to Zoology or unusual course like Wave Science. Don’t forget you can study subjects you have studied before i.e. Maths & English.

One way to decide what course choice:

* Whether the course is related to your interests
* Whether course prepares you for a future career.

(UCAS.com is a useful site on the many courses available)

**How can I study?**

Once you have some idea of what you would like to study, there are a variety ways of studying;

**Combining subjects –** you can do a **joint** degree (2 subjects combined), a **combined** course (2-5 differentsubjects) or a **major-minor** (75% one subject 25% of another).

**Modular Course** – Some universities allow you to add different course to your degree for greater flexibility i.e. IT, Languages.

**A Vocational degree** – This is linked to work applications to help you prepare in a specific area of work.

**Sandwich** – this could be spending a block of up to a year working abroad or in an industry.

**Studying** – via online learning or distance learning.

**Study part-time** – Many universities give the option of doing a full-time course part-time taking you 6 years.

**Is Higher Education about studying for 3 years to obtain a degree?**

No there is a wide range of level 3 qualifications.

**Degrees –** Usually are 3-4 years but could be longer i.e. law and they are called an Honours degree. At the end of your degree course you could be awarded i.e. BA Bachelor of Arts, MB Bachelor of Medicine.

**Foundation Degree -** Some universities offer foundation degrees to help students gain skills and qualifications to progress onto a full degree course.

**Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas –** These qualifications are either part-time (HNC) can take one year to complete or fulltime (HND) can take up to two years to complete. They are highly valued by employers and can count towards membership to professional employers of organisations.

**Higher Education other than a degree**

**Regulated Qualifications Framework –** (Old NVQ) they are based on recognised occupational standards and can be work based and or simulated work based assessment. There are 8 levels 8 being the highest competency – doctorate level.

**Where can I study?**

The range of universities and colleges now offering higher education qualifications has expanded giving a wide range of studying choice or you can study online.

**How can I find out more information?**

Attend open and research days

School career advisors

Discuss with teachers, friends & family

Libraries are a good source of information

The internet

**Useful websites**

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/thinking-about-uni

[www.savethestudent.org](http://www.savethestudent.org)

**Books**

HEAP 2016 University Degree Course Offers.

The Student Book

It is now time for you to start your research, to make your choices.

Writing an application will take time.

You need to apply early to some universities as they are quite competitive and a well thought out application can help.

You need to justify in your application as to why you have decided on your chosen subjects.

**YOU NEED TO START RESEARCHING NOW**

**PEARLS OF WISDOM re University**

**University is not the same as school.**

**No-one is going to chase you up if you don’t turn up for lectures or forget to hand in course work.**

**You are responsible for yourself.**

**Enjoy and make the most of your university experience.**