

Careers' Advice

HOW DO I CHOOSE MY SUBJECTS



ADVICE:

When choosing your subjects for "A" and "AS" Levels, you should use EXACTLY the same criteria as you did when you were choosing your subjects for GCSE i.e

1. Choose Subjects Which You Like

You will be studying subjects in considerable depth: therefore, it is only sensible to choose subjects which you will enjoy.

2. Choose Subjects Which You Are Good At

Your school reports will provide a good guide. Nearly everyone performs better when he/she is doing something he/she enjoys and is good at. You should take this into account, but always keep in mind your preferred course or career when you leave school.

3. Find What Studying The Subject Really Involves

There are big differences between Key Stage 3 and GCSE. Look carefully at the subject information in this booklet – look at the way it's taught and assessed. If projects are your forte, for example, a predominantly coursework based GCSE might be a good option. Talk to your current teachers for an honest, informed assessment of your potential in individual subjects.

With new subjects check out whether they share any similarities with other subjects, or with extracurricular activities you currently like. Talk to year 11/12 students about their experiences.

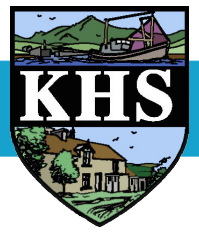
4. Check Your Combination of Subjects

Ensure that the combination of subjects you choose meets the requirements of any careers or courses that you are considering. You can do this and still keep your options open – very few careers or courses specify more than one or two subjects within the overall requirements.

5. Choose Subjects Which You Will Need For Your Career

If you know what you want to do there is no problem. If you have not yet decided on a career, you should try to keep your options open.

WHAT'S ESSENTIAL, PREFERRED & USEFUL?



Bear in mind that some careers and courses need particular 'A' levels.

- Engineering/Technology requires Maths and Physics.
- Medicine requires Chemistry, plus at least one other science – preferably Biology.
- Health care professions such as physiotherapy look for Biology.
- For many degrees like English, French, Maths you will normally need an A level in this subject.
- For others like law, psychology, or economics, no prior knowledge is required, though it's useful to study a similar subject to show your aptitudes and interest.
- For many careers or courses, no subjects are specifically required but some subjects could be useful.
- Vocationally linked 'A' levels in subjects like Business Studies are not required for careers or courses in that area, but can be a useful way of testing out and demonstrating an interest without totally committing yourself to one occupational area.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Check out the prospectus on the following sites.

- Queen's University, Belfast – www.qub.ac.uk
- University of Ulster – www.ulster.ac.uk
- Stranmillis University College – www.stran.ac.uk
- Agricultural College (Greenmount and Loughry.) – www.cafre.ac.uk
- Southern Regional College (Newry Tech) – www.src.ac.uk
- South Eastern Regional College (East Down Institute) – www.serc.ac.uk
- Good advice can be found at www.careersserviceni.com

WHAT IS THE RUSSELL GROUP? WHAT ARE FACILITATING SUBJECTS?

The Russell Group is a collection of 24 British public universities which are committed to the highest standards of academic excellence in both teaching and research. Queen's University, Belfast is a member of the Russell Group. The Russell Group has published *Informed Choices*, a guide for students making decisions about their education after the age of 16 (<http://www.russellgroup.org/InformedChoices-latest.pdf>).

Some courses at universities require applicants to have studied certain subjects already, so you should be clear how your choices at school and college may close off certain subjects at university. Within *Informed Choices* they list subjects that are usually considered by universities to be helpful and/or required at A-Level for particular courses. Some A-Level subjects are more frequently required for entry to degree courses than others. They call these subjects "**facilitating**" because choosing them at advanced level leaves open a wide range of options for university study.