

Year 12

Choosing A Degree Course

Wednesday 20th February 2019

1. * Student Ambassador01: Hi, my name is Adedayo and I am currently in my 3rd year studying Medical Sciences with a Professional Training Year (PTY). The theme for today's forum is Choosing a Degree Course. For those of you who are new to the forums, you are welcome to ask me questions either directly related to the theme or about any other aspect of university life. Anything I can't answer I will refer on and someone from the Exeter Scholars team will get back to you with a response in the next few days. For those of you that have logged on before, welcome back!

Before we start I just want to give you a quick overview of how the session itself works in case you've not used one before.

When you post a message it will be sent to me to reply to and will show on your wall as awaiting reply.

2. * Student Ambassador01: When you post a message it will be sent to me to reply to and will show on your wall as awaiting reply. When I reply to your message it will then post to the public wall for you and everyone else to see. Until I have replied, no-one else will see your message. Bear with me, as when it gets busy it will take me a few moments to reply - but don't worry, you won't have been forgotten! I will start all messages with the name of the person I am replying to just to make the discussion easier to follow and if I'm posing a question to the whole group I'll start the message with 'Everyone'.

3. * Student Ambassador01: Also answering your questions today is Luke and they will introduce themselves to you in a moment.

6. * Student Ambassador02: Hi everyone, my name is Luke and I am in my first year studying Zoology

7. Beth Hughes: what's zoology like?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi! Zoology is great fun, we learn about ecology, evolution, and cover most of the animal kingdom in our studies. If you love animals and the environment its great!

* Student Ambassador02: Was Zoology an area you were interested in yourself?

8. * Student Ambassador01: Hi Jack! Welcome to the Q&A. Feel free to ask any questions :)

9. Beth Hughes: I'm interested in medicine or something along those lines, I'm really not sure

* Student Ambassador02: That's ok you have plenty of time to think about it, biosciences can be a good gateway to veterinary sciences. Remember to think about what skills you have and what you enjoy doing, these are the best things to think about when deciding on a university course

* Student Ambassador01: It is a tricky one! I actually originally applied for medicine, and ended up loving the course I'm doing instead. Like Luke said, you have quite a bit of time left to decide, and this is one of the first decisions you'll be making where there's really not a clear wrong answer

10. * Student Ambassador01: Hi Hannah! Welcome :) Feel free to ask any questions!

11. * Student Ambassador01: Just to get everyone involved; has anyone thought about what course they want to do at university? I know Beth just mentioned Medicine

12. Hannah Voysey: Hi, with so many different degree options how did you make the decision on which one would both be enjoyable and benefit you?

* Student Ambassador01: I personally started thinking I would study something to do with subjects I liked and did well at in school, which were English, History, Biology, Chemistry, and Psychology. That leaves a lot of subjects to choose from! I found what helped was looking at the requirements each of them wanted, and the job options I would have once leaving uni

* Student Ambassador01: That narrowed it down to something to do with Chemistry or Biology, but then that's where your personal skills come in. If you're naturally a people person, you would want to lean towards a degree that lets you work in an area where you can interact with people as opposed to sitting in a desk or a lab. Likewise, if you're not that keen on socialising as a main part of your future, you could look at degrees that tend to lean towards jobs that don't require a lot of communication

* Student Ambassador01: Is there anything you really like to do in school Hannah?

13. Beth Hughes: It's hard to decide when there are so many degrees you can do and there are so many universities that differ with each course

* Student Ambassador02: What interests you particularly? For me I was interested in the environment and conservation so decided for a degree studying this area. It really comes down to what you enjoy doing and what interests you!

14. Beth Hughes: that's true, I've always loved helping people and animals, which sounds really cliché and I loved my work experience placement at a GP surgery, but then I also enjoy History and Biology

* Student Ambassador02: That's a great start! As Adedayo mentioned it's a great idea to research universities and courses that meet your interests and skills. It's great that you are doing placements, voluntary experience can be important in any potential career

15. Hannah Voysey: I do maths chemistry and history but would most likely lean towards something to do with maths or chemistry

* Student Ambassador01: I've opened up a UCAS link that is really helpful. Can everyone see it?

* Student Ambassador01: Maths and chemistry are both really good subjects to go into! There's lots of options for both as well as options that include both in one degree which is quite nice.

16. * Student Ambassador01: The UCAS page has a search tool that really helps narrow things down. You can click on a subject you currently like (i.e. Hannah and maths or chemistry) and see what subjects are available in that area!

17. Beth Hughes: I can't find the link

* Student Ambassador01: No worries, I've sent it through the chat instead. If you copy and paste into your browser it should work :)

18. * Student Ambassador01: <http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/explore-your-options/search-courses-and-training-programmes>

19. * Student Ambassador01: No worries guys :) Location is also a really important thing to consider that I personally wish I had thought more about before deciding which uni to go to. I live in central London, and when I was applying I didn't realise how expensive or time-consuming it would be to get to Exeter from London, so it's harder to see friends and family there.

20. * Student Ambassador01: Hi Zuzanna! Feel free to ask any questions :)

21. Zuzanna Jankowska: Hi, I do the IB course, so I have 6 subjects that I do, which is quite a range, however I'm unsure about what I want to do at university, because I'm equally good at all of them. I have no real preference, so I'd find it really hard to choose something that I like. Is there a better way for me to choose a degree, rather than just preference or how good you are at one of the subjects?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Zuzanna :) I did IB as well! Stay strong :D The nice thing about the IB is that it really gives you a chance to see what you like. However, some unis will require you to do their subject at HL for you to be able to apply, and if I remember correctly the difference between SL and HL didn't really come clear in most subjects until second year. Preference and ability play a really big role in uni choice, as usually doing a degree should be based on a mixture of what you enjoy doing enough that even when things don't make sense (which they will at some point)

* Student Ambassador01: Sometimes it helps to know what job you'd like to do in the future and work backwards to see what degree leads you there; do you have any in mind?

22. * Student Ambassador01: The thing a lot of people don't realise about choosing a uni is that it's not just about you making the grade for them, it's about them being a good enough fit for you. Without the students, there's no uni! So for example, if you're someone that likes having a campus and enjoys being in a town as opposed to a large city, Exeter would be a better fit than say Birmingham. If you're taking a class and you find yourself interested in a specific aspect of Maths or Chemistry, it's a good idea to look for Universities where that area is a big focus of their research.

23. Beth Hughes: How do you get involved with research programmes at university?

* Student Ambassador02: There are various schemes and voluntary opportunities here at Penryn for the Biosciences courses which allow us to pair with lecturers from our area and assist with their research, it can vary though depending on which course and area that you are studying as this is for Bioscience students only.

24. Zuzanna Jankowska: Haha thank you! I'm doing Biology, Psychology and English Lit, but I still have no idea what job I want to do in the future, but maybe something linked with travelling to different countries would be good. Are there any degrees that allow you to do more travelling than others?

* Student Ambassador01: Wow I did almost the same HLs as you! Chemistry instead of Psychology though. There are quite a few degrees that let you do travelling during the degree, but in terms of jobs that have travelling as an integral part of the degree I'm not entirely sure. I know for research there are quite a few opportunities to travel due to conferences

25. Beth Hughes: How many lectures do you generally have each week?

* Student Ambassador01: For Medical Sciences in first year, we had one or two a day, but uni is different in that the number of lectures you have a week doesn't usually reflect the amount of work you have to do at home. If you do go to an open day, it's good to ask about the number of 'contact hours' the degree typically has

* Student Ambassador02: As a first year student for Zoology I have around six lectures per week and one Lab practical :)

26. Zuzanna Jankowska: Also, do you think that open days for universities are of any help for deciding what you want to do?

* Student Ambassador01: The open day actually helped me decide whether or not to study at Exeter! I was deciding between staying in London and going here for the same degree, but being here in a town with two campuses was definitely a different feeling from being in London and I absolutely loved it. Open days also give you an opportunity to talk to your potential future lecturers as well as students doing the course you're interested in, so I would definitely recommend it if it's doable

27. Jack Reddicliffe: how long is your average lecture?

* Student Ambassador02: Most are around an hour long Jack, Lab practicals can last for up to two and a half hours for Zoology/Biosciences however it can vary and change year by year

28. Beth Hughes 2: Thank you! Sorry if this sounds stupid, but what are contact hours?

* Student Ambassador01: No such thing as a stupid question :) I should have defined it; my bad! Contact hours are the number of hours you would typically have in a week in direct contact with the module in your degree

* Student Ambassador01: So the number of hours you would have lectures, workshops, seminars, labs, for the specific subject within the degree

* Student Ambassador01: This varies quite a bit between degrees so it's definitely helpful to ask! It's also important to note that contact hours don't actually mention how much time you would need to spend on your own learning as that's quite subjective. But it can usually give you an idea of how much time you would spend each week with your lecturers.

29. Beth Hughes 2: Oh! Okay thanks, would this change much as you progress through your degree?

* Student Ambassador01: It definitely does. In third year you usually have less contact hours per week so you can get on with your dissertations and research projects, but the contact hours are usually packed into two hour chunks as opposed to 50 minutes. This does vary by degree though

30. Zuzanna Jankowska: Oh wow. How difficult are your medical studies compared to doing IB?

* Student Ambassador01: I think the IB prepared me to get things done quickly in a sort amount of time. Because of the EE and IAs (I've forgotten what they're now called), I had a lot more experience writing large amounts of text and working in the lab when I arrived. It also helps you learn to juggle many disciplines at once as well as find time for yourself, so I think if you do your best in the IB and develop the study skills you need you should be just fine :)

31. Jack Reddicliffe: what are the benefits of taking an MSci over an undergraduate and then a masters after?

* Student Ambassador02: MSci is a joint masters so allows you to study an additional year to improve your qualification to a masters degree but requires an additional year of study compared to a BSc. Some prefer to do a separate masters to allow them to gain work experience or take a gap year before they take their masters. An MSci allows you to complete a masters within a four year period. However some also prefer to choose a masters separately from their bachelors, so it really comes down to personal preference :)

32. Beth Hughes 2: Are the research problems similar to an EPQ?

* Student Ambassador01: Yes, very similar!

* Student Ambassador01: I know it seems like school and uni are worlds away, and in some respects they are, but a lot of what you do in school is done in uni but on a slightly bigger scale. Which is why it is fairly important to pay attention to what you like and don't like to do while you're in school, so you can make a more informed decision on a course :)

33. Zuzanna Jankowska: Okay thank you. One more question, how much time do you think I have to choose a university course (when do I have to apply for uni)?

* Student Ambassador01: I applied at the beginning of IB Y2, so that gives you about 7 months. But don't feel pressured! There are things like clearing and gap years, and it's better to make a thought-through decision than a rushed one that you now need to commit to for 3-4 years

* Student Ambassador01: No worries!

34. Beth Hughes 2: Do you have end of year exams?

* Student Ambassador02: Most subjects have May exams, for Zoology I have exams in May and also had January exams

35. Zuzanna Jankowska: Ah okay thank you very much for the help, bye!

* Student Ambassador01: No worries! :) Good luck with everything!

36. * Student Ambassador01: Thanks very much for taking part in today's online forum; I hope you've found it useful! Details of the next session can be found at www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/currentparticipants/liveonlineforums/. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact the Exeter Scholars team, who will be happy to help: www.exeter.ac.uk/exeterscholars/contact/currentparticipants/.

37. Beth Hughes 2: Thanks, one more thing: would you say that it's better to take a gap year if your UCAT doesn't go very well or you get rejected from medical school and then reapply the next year?

* Student Ambassador01: I have friends that did both. I personally didn't take a gap year and looking back, I wish I had so I could have made a less rushed decision

* Student Ambassador01: But like I said, this is one of the first decisions you'll make in life where there's no real wrong answer! As long as you make the best of whatever situation you're in and find yourself passionate about what you're studying, you'll be fine :) No one 100% knows what they want to do with the rest of their life at 16; it's okay to wait or apply for something else

38. Beth Hughes 2: it definitely feels like a huge turn around, no one in my family went to uni so it's a bit daunting!

* Student Ambassador02: That's ok Beth, no one in my family did either!

* Student Ambassador01: Well well done for choosing to go! It's definitely an experience. Whatever choice you make, make sure it's independent of what people think you should be doing or what you think other people want you to do. It's your life!

39. * Student Ambassador01: Goodnight guys! Hope this was helpful and good luck :)