

Year 12

Choosing A Degree Course

Wednesday 26th February 2020

1. * Student Ambassador01: Hi, my name is Callista and I am currently in my 3rd year studying Law. 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. 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'.

Also answering your questions today is Kerenza and she will introduce herself to you in a moment

3. * Student Ambassador02: Hi, I'm Kerenza and I'm currently in my 4th year studying a Sustainability Solutions Masters, but I did my undergraduate (first degree) in Biology with Geography at Exeter too :)

4. * Student Ambassador01: I hope that all makes sense. To get us started, has anyone thought about what course they want to do at university?

5. casey phillips: hey, yeah I was thinking of taking medicine at uni, would you say Exeter would be a good uni for that?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Casey, I have many friends doing medicine in Exeter and they've all enjoyed their courses so far. There are numerous opportunities to gain real-world experience, whether it is part of a professional training year placement on our Medical Sciences programme or as part of our BMBS programme, where students can gain placement experience from the first few weeks of the programme which will be highly valuable to you as a medicine student

6. Emma Coumbe 2: I am interested in business, but I am not currently taking A Level maths. Could I do this course at university without this A Level?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Emma, Every course at every university is different! For my course, some universities required chemistry and some didn't. Essentially, you have to look at every course you think you

might want to do and click on the 'Entry requirements'. Here it will say what subjects you need at A Level and anything else you might need! So I did a quick search of BSC Business Management at Exeter and there are no required subjects at A Level, therefore, you could apply to this without doing Maths! Hopefully that helps and don't be put off as the first year of university helps bring people who have all done different subjects up to the same level :)

7. (Deleted) Daisy Stevens: I'm interested in journalism as a future career but am not sure whether I should do journalism as a postgraduate or study another subject first, like Sociology or Politics.

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Daisy, this will depend entirely on your personal preference. Doing an undergraduate degree in a different field such as Sociology or Politics may not be directly linked to journalism however, the skills you acquire from the degree will be highly transferable to a postgraduate degree in journalism, such as research and writing skills. You will need to consider factors such as the length of time you want to dedicate to your academic life, the job scope you want to get in, and the prospect of having options available to you. Hope this helps

* Student Ambassador01: Thank you for your questions so far everyone!

So has anyone thought about what they want from their course at university? (e.g. specific part of subject, learning method etc.)

8. lauramo: Hi Kerenza, I'm thinking about taking Geography, what other universities were you interested in for the course apart from Exeter?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi lauramo, I actually didn't start out looking to study geography at all! I originally applied for Biology and after my first year realised I missed the subject, so I changed my degree title to have both of my favourite subjects :) However, lots of my friends went on to study Geography and looked at Birmingham, Manchester and Kings College London! But I recommend looking at what each course is like as it really depends on the expertise of the lecturers at each university. For me, the more varied the modules in second and third year, the more I felt I could specialise further down the line, because when I was applying, I didn't know what I might be interested in! Hopefully that gives you an idea of what I was looking for in courses :)

9. laureng2003: Hi there guys, I'm thinking about possibly studying English as a degree course but I would also like to add in drama and creative writing, how could I do this?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi laureng2003, so what you're describing is exactly what happened to me in my first year! I realised I missed Geography and so decided to pick it back up. There are some courses at universities like Exeter called 'Flexible Combined Honours' that allow you to pick modules from loads of different courses, so that you can help tailor your degree to your interests, so that might be worth considering. However, in general every university I looked at allowed some flexibility in modules, so you can take a few modules from a course outside your own. For example a friend of mine did Biology but took a few modules in Italian alongside. With a degree like English, creative writing modules are often available as part of the course, so be sure to check whether modules like this are available on the course outline page. But you

could take a few drama courses should you have the right grades or requirements like my friend did, a small amount outside of your main focus! Hope that answers your question :)

10. Daisy Stevens: Can you change the course you're doing if it's not a good fit and switch?

* Student Ambassador02: Generally, I think universities don't encourage changing. But especially in the first few weeks I know of people who have changed course. This depends on if there is space available and whether the student has the right A Levels etc. to be qualified for the course. Are there a few courses you are struggling to choose between? I found that picking my favourite subject really helped because there is so much within a subject that you become exposed to at university. Some modules I haven't enjoyed but others have been so good that they outweigh the bad ones. Essentially, I believe the answer to be yes, you can change, but it is best to think hard about what course you want to do now and maybe try and find one that has a broad range of interests, or flexibility to add other modules. This would be easier than trying to allow the university to change your course at a later stage, which might be unsuccessful! Hopefully that helps :)

* Student Ambassador02: Also Daisy, I think (though it might have changed since I applied) that UCAS provides up to 4 years of funding. I had one friend who decided he didn't like his course and after the first year, he was able to restart his degree, going back to year 1 in a different course. So hope is not lost, if you do realise you don't like it!

11. Emma Coumbe 2: Would a degree make you more employable? For example: studying business at university help me get a specific career?

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Emma, a degree will definitely make you more employable as it allows you to have a higher qualification that most employers now seek as a prerequisite to gaining a job. However, in relation to a degree leading to a direct career path, this varies from degree to degree. For Business, as it provides for a large range of modules being taught throughout your undergrad, it leads to a variety of job prospects and career. Employers will look at the transferable skills you have gained from this degree and connect it to the relatability of the job. If you are looking at a specific career, my best advice would be to do a more in-depth research of the career and see if there are any prerequisites or any certain degree needed in order to get into that career. For example, In order to be a lawyer, you could either do a 3 year law OR non-law undergraduate, followed with a professional training course which is mandatory to become a practicing lawyer. Hope this helps.

12. Amber Rogers: I understand there is a library on campus, but am not keen on the idea of carrying heavy books around with me. Is there a way to access books online?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Amber! Yes there is! Universities sign up to things called journals, essentially these provide access to online books and papers written by academics. University students use these ALL THE TIME and they're really useful. But occasionally, I've found a book from the library to be really helpful with my course, so I've definitely taken some home with me. You really can tailor your studies to suit you at university, some people will work in the library all day and some will work at home and some will do a bit of everything :) So there's no need to carry books home if you really don't want to...but you're right, some university books are really heavy!!

13. casey phillips: can you take A Levels alongside your degree for example if I was doing a medical degree would it be possible for me to do a psychology A Level through the uni?

* Student Ambassador02: Hey Casey, do you mean that you would want to do some psychology alongside your degree or would you specifically like to do an A-level? My friends that study medicine regularly have aspects of psychology on their course - to treat a patient is more than just the physical pain but sometimes the emotional or psychological. Many medical students do something called (I think) an elective, where they take an extra year out of medicine and study something that interests them, so you could study psychology at that point? But in theory, I don't think there's a reason you couldn't do an A level alongside your degree but degrees are very busy, so it might be quite difficult to do. Hopefully that answers the question, if not feel free to ask further :D

14. Emma Coumbe 2: Did you base picking a degree on what you are good and what you enjoy? Or there other factors that you considered?

* Student Ambassador01: HI Emma, this is a really good question. I chose to do law because I realised I was good at public speaking and wanted to use this to my advantage and build on it as a profession. I also enjoyed reading and researching, all of which are factors that are important in a law degree. I realised that though I may find my course tough at times, because I like what I do, I put in extra effort to get the best results. My advice to you is to choose a degree you enjoy as you will be investing your time, effort and money for the next 3-5 years and you don't want it to be wasted on a degree you don't enjoy. Throughout uni, you will learn new things and this may seem daunting at first but don't let this put you off! When you enjoy what you do, you will automatically put in more effort into the work given and this would result in you achieving the best possible result and outcome you can. However, do take into account other factors such as the duration of the degree course, the work-experience you can gain, and the ...

* Student Ambassador01: the profession you want to get into.

15. lauramo: Thanks for the reply, expanding on your point, is there any way to find out the teaching styles of professors before taking the course? Also, does Exeter uni offer access to facilities and career opportunities from the Science Park for its STEM and geography related courses?

* Student Ambassador02: Great questions! I didn't think about teaching styles of lecturers when I first started university, but some are definitely more engaging than others! Strangely, I've found that some lecturers aren't the most engaging but the content that they teach really is. So I really recommend focussing on what topics you think you'll like more than the lecturers. However, there is a site called 'Rate My Lecturer' and students sometimes use this to identify good lecturers and you could research specific courses and universities. Remember that lecturers change frequently, so it's no guarantee you'll get the one you wanted, unfortunately :/ Also, going to open days and offer holder days and actually speaking to students and staff about whether they like the course really helps you identify the universities with good lecturers.

* Student Ambassador02: Generally, I've found that the further I get into my studies the more interesting lecturers are. This is because in second and third years they teach their latest research, which because they

find it fascinating, they tend to be more engaging as teachers. First year is about covering the basics and bringing everyone to the same level so lecturers tend to be more passive in first year...still good but not as passionate.

Bear with me whilst I answer the second half of your question :)

* Student Ambassador02: Universities have partnerships with charities, governments and companies all over the world. The longer I study, the more I realise that universities are connected with the rest of the world! I wouldn't be surprised if the University has links with the Science Park but a quick Google Search will clarify. Exeter has been great at helping me get internships and jobs as it has an excellent Careers Department called, 'Career Zone' with experts at writing CVs and applications etc. They also use the university's links with other companies to help. For example, I'm in the middle of securing an internship with a big sustainability company through the help of the uni. Although a friend of mine found a company with no links and the university helped her make contact. They really do want to help you, but it's about being proactive and asking for help. Hopefully that answers the second half of your question :)

16. Em Turoczy-Eggins: I am interested in becoming a clinical psychologist but I am unsure of whether I should study Psychology to begin with and then study Clinical Psychology after or if I should go straight into clinical psychology. Would you recommend choosing a broader subject such as psychology before specialising in case my future plans change or is it better to fast track my education by going straight into clinical psychology?

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Em, my boyfriend studied psychology at Exeter! It's a particularly hard one because there are so many different areas of psychology. My personal advice would be to really look at the Clinical course and see if that's definitely what you want to do. If you're unsure, some courses allow you to specialise as you go along, so be sure to check the information on course websites. Also, I started by doing Biology and wanted to study parasites. By the time I graduated, I knew I wanted to work in Sustainability. My undergraduate course was in the right area, so it was easy to apply to a slightly different field! I enjoyed having the variety to help me be sure of my interests. But I promise you, even after graduating, most people still don't know what they want to do for a career, so it's all a learning process. I recommend finding a degree that allows you to specialise in maybe the second or third year, but just be sure that there's no rush - you have your whole life to work in the field...

* Student Ambassador02: an extra year or two won't be a disadvantage and might make you even more employable :)

17. Alice: I'm interested in taking a degree in English, but not sure whether to specialise in literature and creative writing or something else relating to English. Also been suggested that I do a degree in Art and English combine as I want to become a teacher, would this make me more employable, or would it be better to specialise in English? How did you know what the right course was for you, any advice appreciated!

* Student Ambassador01: Hi Alice, how I knew which was the right course for me was by doing some mini work experience prior to choosing my course. This allowed me to gain some exposure into the working field related to my course and became my decisive factor as to whether I liked what I was potentially getting myself into. I also did a lot of research prior to picking my course and went to open days where I got to talk to the lectures and students. Also, I looked at how my course was assessed as I preferred to do more

assignments and practical work than exams, which played a huge decisive role for me. Unfortunately, I won't be able to advise you on which to specialise in, however, I would recommend doing more research on what is needed to be a teacher and what transferable skills you can gain from the course. Hope this helps x

* Student Ambassador02: Hi Everyone! Thanks for the great questions, we hope this has been helpful! Good luck with Yr 12 and applying to universities. All the best, Kerenza and Callista

18. Amber Rogers: Would you recommend doing a three course with an extra placement year compared to just the standard three years?

* Student Ambassador02: Hey Amber, I really would recommend it! If you apply and decide later on not to do it, it's easy to cancel the extra year. But in general, placement years provide a bit of a break from uni and allow you to be sure about which career sector you want to go in. They look great on the CV and give you something to talk about at interview. However, you can also get the same skills and experience from internships. So no one route is necessarily better than the other, the more effort you put into finding placements/internships in your second year, the better. However, be sure to check as often entry requirements are higher for placement years! But it's good to push yourself and universities can be lenient and let you in for the lower grade, should you not meet the higher one...but it's best to check with each university if they do this! :)

19. * Student Ambassador01: HI everyone, thank you all for your questions so far, they have all been great! There's 10 minutes left, so if anyone has any last minute questions, do get them in and we'll try to get to them as soon as possible! Thank you :)

20. * 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/liveonlineqaforums/. 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/.

Open Questions (3)

21. Emma Coumbe 2: Ok, thank you!

22. laureng2003: Thank you, that's really helpful!

23. Em Turoczy-Eggins: Thank you for your reply, that has really helped me. I think that psychology can allow me to have a broader accessibility in more areas of work so specialising later on in the course is ideal. Thank you again :)