

Guidance Sheet for Students thinking of Leaving their Course

It's not unusual for someone to have doubts about going to university, choice of subject etc., and making an important first step to address any concerns you have around this will help you to move forward. There may be a variety of reasons why you may be thinking of leaving your course – some of the most common are often:

- Homesickness or loneliness;
- A sense of having chosen the wrong course or the wrong university;
- Fear of failing,
- Stress and anxiety;
- External factors e.g. debt, family problems;
- Not enjoying academic study.

Don't worry you are not on your own and there is a lot of support at the University to help you work through this difficult decision to try to come to a solution that will work best for you. The best thing you can do is to read through this leaflet and talk to as many people as you can to help you make an informed decision about the various options ahead of you.

At the Career Zone we offer confidential and impartial advice so a good first step can be to book a 1-1 appointment with a Careers Consultant to talk through your situation. To book an appointment you can drop in to the Career Zone, call or email us:

Streatham Campus Exeter:

Location - The Forum

Email - Careers@exeter.ac.uk

Telephone - 01392 72 4493

Penryn Campus, Cornwall:

Location – The Exchange building

Email – cc-careers@exeter.ac.uk

Telephone - 01326 25 3735

Who to Contact

Personal Tutors

This is another good first point of contact of someone to talk to about your decision to potentially leave your course. This person has an important role in discussing any concerns a student has regarding their course and may, for example, be able to advise on how you can improve your marks or feel more involved with your subject. You may also need their support for future references.

Course Tutors and Course Directors

Sometimes you may relate well to a particular course tutor or lecturer who might be able to advise on possible alternative modules.

Admissions Tutors

If you are thinking about changing course or university, you should contact the admissions tutors for the courses and Universities that interest you and seek advice about making an application asap.

Peer Mentors

It could be worth speaking to fellow students on your course; particularly if you have concerns about the suitability of the course. Peer mentors can help students who need additional support and a student may feel more comfortable discussing their concerns with another student prior to approaching University staff. It may be that other students are feeling a bit unsettled, or that one particular module is really tough – you might not be alone! Some colleges may have organised peer mentor programmes whereas others may manage this more informally. It could be worth discussing with your personal tutor if they are aware of any suitable peer mentors.

Family and friends

If possible discuss your situation with family and friends as they may be able to offer emotional support during this process.

Further help within the University

You may feel anxious about discussing your concerns with staff or students from your academic area, so you may decide to approach other staff in the university first.

Student Support and information on student finance, loans etc.

It's important to read all the information on the Student Support website about changing a course or university, interruption and withdrawal, including key information on the financial implications.

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/administration/changestostudy/>

Students' Union – Guild or FXU: Offer advice and support. For more information about the support available:

[Exeter - https://www.exeterguild.org/advice/](https://www.exeterguild.org/advice/)

[Penryn - https://www.fxu.org.uk/advice/](https://www.fxu.org.uk/advice/)

Accommodation Office: You may need to seek advice about the terms and conditions of your accommodation before making any decisions about leaving your course. For questions about transfers or withdrawals (or about negotiating to stay in your accommodation if you decide to leave university) you should contact the Accommodation Office at:

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accommodation/>

Student Support website and the Counselling Service

If you feel particularly distressed by the prospect of a course change or withdrawal, you may also want to look into the support provided by the Wellbeing Service – one-to-one appointments and workshops that may, for example, help you manage the stress or emotional impact of this change:

[Exeter - http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/)

Penryn - <https://www.fxplus.ac.uk/students/student-services/wellbeing>

Accessibility

Can provide help and support to students who have a disability or long term health issue that may be impacting their studies and life at University.

Exeter - <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/accessability/support/>

Penryn - <https://www.fxplus.ac.uk/students/student-services/accessibility>

Help for International Students

There can be are more complicated issues around funding and visa regulations for International students, so it is important to get in touch with the International Student Support Centre.

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/internationalstudents/livingintheuk/getinvolved/>

General advice

- **Prospects** have a useful section about changing or leaving a course <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/changing-or-leaving-your-course> It's particularly important that students read the information about student loans.
- **Job Options with degrees** - students thinking of changing to another course may find the Prospects job options with particular degrees section useful as it includes degree options not offered through the University of Exeter <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree>
- **For graduate and non-graduate level job profiles**– they should use <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/> This includes an advice line 0800 100 900 which they may find helpful if they decide to leave university.
- <https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/career-planning/434249-changing-or-leaving-your-course>

So what are your options?

Option 1 - Remaining with the University of Exeter

- **Transferring to a different course at the University of Exeter** – there are time scales involved in this so it is important to check with the course you wish to transfer to if this is possible and if they have space. You can contact the Admissions office here <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/undergraduate/contact/> . You will also need to discuss this with your current course. If you decide right at the start of your degree that you wish to change to a different course, this may be possible provided you meet the entry requirements. It's vital that you contact the admissions person for the course that interests you as quickly as possible and ask whether you can transfer. Although it's unusual for someone to be allowed

to transfer to a degree well into the year, it's always worth checking, particularly if there are similarities between the one you're registered on and the one you want to change to.

- **Changing to Flexible Combined Honours (FCH) at the University of Exeter** – this may allow you to adapt your course to something more suitable for your needs and interest without having to change course completely. FCH allows you to choose modules from certain courses to compliment your study. Not all modules will be available like this but more information can be found at: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/fch/>
- **Researching job options with different degrees** – you may wish to explore where a different degree could take you career wise
<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/research/degree/>

Option 2 – Transferring to a different University or Reapplying

Again there are time scales involved in this so it is important to check with the course and the University you wish to transfer to if this is possible and if they have space.

- **UCAS** have a lot of useful information on their site including key dates for applying to university <https://www.ucas.com/>. This will also be where you may need to go to apply for different courses at different Universities. Students should contact admissions tutors in other universities to seek advice about entry requirements, advice about changing course, etc.
- Distance Learning: The Open University offers distance learning options:
<http://www.open.ac.uk/>

Important factors to consider if transferring to a new course or reapplying

Student finance

Whether you decide to change course, transfer to another University or leave Higher Education, it is important to understand the steps you need to take regarding your student loan and the need to contact Student Finance.

References

If you apply for a new degree, you will need to re-connect with your referees and ask them to resubmit an up-dated reference when the time comes to make a new UCAS application. This usually means getting back in touch with your school or Sixth Form College.

Credit Transfer

If you are part-way through your degree and are thinking of leaving and applying for a course at another university, you could check if you can gain credits and dispensation from parts of the new course. However, this often isn't straightforward. For instance, a university may require the modules a student has studied to map perfectly onto the ones they offer.

Option 3 - Alternatives to University

If you have decided that University just really isn't for you or perhaps you'd like to explore what alternatives there are then the section below highlights some useful resources to look into.

- Apprenticeships - There are now a wide range of apprenticeships, including higher and degree apprenticeships. Apprenticeships exist in many different sectors including ones that are traditionally very difficult to get into e.g. Law and the Media. Information can be found:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>
 - Find an Apprenticeship: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
 - Another useful website is <http://www.notgoingtouni.co.uk/>
 - <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/>
 - <https://www.ratemyapprenticeship.co.uk/>
- UCAS has some good resources for students:
 - <https://www.ucas.com/alternatives-to-university>
 - <https://www.ucas.com/alternatives/apprenticeships/apprenticeships-england/what-apprenticeships-are-available/higher-apprenticeships>
- <https://www.studentladder.co.uk/>
- <https://www.milkround.com/school-leavers>
- <https://investment2020.org.uk/> - City of London jobs
- These are some finance and general school leaver schemes (it is not an exhaustive list so there may well be others out there worth looking into):
 - <https://www.mazarscareers.co.uk/undergraduate-and-graduate-programme>
 - <https://bdoearlyincareer.co.uk/apprenticeship/>
 - <https://trainees.grantthornton.co.uk/our-programmes/school-leavers/>
 - <https://careers.nationalgrid.com/new-talent/apprentices/higher-apprenticeship-programme>
 - <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/careers/apprenticeships/>
- Your local authority may also have internship/ apprenticeship training programmes.
- <https://do-it.org/> for volunteering opportunities which may help give you a feel for different types of roles if you are unsure what you may like to do.
- <https://www.allaboutcareers.com/careers-advice/university-life/dropping-out-of-university>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/student/career-planning/top-paying-jobs-you-do-not-need-a-university-degree-for-career-planning-indeed-a7205266.html>
- **FindFE** - try FE colleges for alternative academic or work-related (vocational) courses at different levels of study to those offered at universities
- **Get a Job/explore training opportunities:** (full-time or part-time) You could look for work - check local press, job centre and any places you might be interested in for vacancies. If you're not sure what you want to do, it is worth looking at various websites and resources to generate ideas:
 - Try working through Prospects Planner to generate ideas: www.prospects.ac.uk/links/pplanner
 - Also, icould which is aimed more at school leaver level but good for career info and also has the buzz test on it for personality profiling: <https://icould.com/>
 - Career Pilot: <https://www.careerpilot.org.uk/>
 - Jobcentre plus: <http://jobseekers.direct.gov.uk/>
 - Advice for young people: <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/Workandcareers/index.htm>

- The National Careers Service (NCS). <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/aboutus/contactus/Pages/default.aspx> Tel: 0800 100 900

Option 4 – Taking Time Out / Having a Gap Year

Sometimes it may just be that you need some time out to decide what might be the next best step for you. There is potentially the option to interrupt your studies which you will need to discuss with the University and further information on this can be found here -

<http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/administration/changestostudy/ugpgt/interruption/>

How you choose to use this time is up to you. Some people decide to work, volunteer, go travelling etc. Below are some links that may be useful, you may also wish to refer back to the 'Alternatives to University' section.

- Suspending or withdrawing from full time studies - <https://www.ucas.com/finance/student-finance-england/suspending-or-withdrawing-your-full-time-studies>
- [International Citizen Service](#) - Funded by DFID, and run by 6 placement organisations, this gives young volunteers (18-25) a unique opportunity to do voluntary development work abroad. An £800 fundraising target is required, but everything else is included (flights, visas, food & accommodation etc.)
- [Worldwide Volunteer Database](#) - comprehensive database of volunteering opportunities worldwide which meet [ethical criteria](#). Search by type of opportunity and country. From WorkingAbroad
- [European Voluntary Service](#) - funded voluntary opportunities in Europe, from 2 weeks to 12 months. Free accommodation, food, insurance and pocket money is included. Small part of travel costs might be payable. Includes a database of accredited organisations
- [The Year in Industry](#) - paid work placements in the year out before university or during your course
- Recruitment Agencies - <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/recruitment-agencies>
- Gap Year - <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/gap-year>