

HIGHER EDUCATION GUIDE 2011



Welcome to the SEEVIC Guide to Higher Education 2011. Hopefully you are reading this because you are interested in continuing your education beyond SEEVIC. As this is such an important decision to make this guide is intended to remind you of the main things that you need to consider when choosing your higher education course.

I have tried to keep the guide as brief as possible, but choosing a higher education course is a very big decision; it can have major implications for your future career and will require a great investment from you in terms of both time and money. With increased competition for places it is more important than ever to research your choices thoroughly.

Please weigh up what is important to you and ensure that the courses you select will deliver the required results. Whether this is attaining a high level of knowledge in a subject you enjoy, or ensuring that you have suitable qualifications for the career you wish to pursue, or perhaps in many cases both, you need to carry out the research outlined in this booklet.

Please remember that the careers staff are ready and willing to guide you through the process and if you have any query, big or small just ask! We may not be able to give you an instant answer, but we usually know where to start looking and with such important decisions to make it is important to make sure you are well informed.

Because of the time it takes, I would urge you to start your research sooner rather than later and if you would like an individual careers interview come up to the Careers Centre in the West Building and book one now, so that you can get your research well underway before the end of the Summer Term.

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WHY GO ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION?

- * Research suggests that graduates have **greater career opportunities** than non-graduates, which could mean some or all of the following: - **better promotion prospects, higher levels of job satisfaction, higher earnings**, although of course none of this can be guaranteed.
- * Subjects of interest can be studied in great depth. Teaching should be available from experts in those subjects, actively engaged in researching them further.
- * Higher education offers an opportunity to leave home with accommodation and the company of other young people readily available. Although, for those who prefer to stay put there are many higher education institutions within daily travelling distance.
- * Higher education offers opportunities to enjoy many new experiences, both academic and social, with the chance to meet people from a wide range of backgrounds.

To sum up, choose your course and institution wisely and higher education can be an investment for your career, much hard work, but a great experience.

WHERE CAN I STUDY?

There are approximately **200** educational institutions offering higher education courses in Britain, of these 100 or so, are called universities, whilst others are described as colleges of higher education, or are specialist colleges such as those catering for Art and Design or Agricultural students. It is also possible to take some higher education courses at colleges in the further education sector including SEEVIC College.

Part-time study is another option; and as well as this being offered at many educational institutions that offer full-time courses, it is also possible to study at home. The Open University is the most obvious example of this method of gaining a degree (and despite it's image as an educator of mature students, it has many young students), and there are other institutions that are now offering distance-learning packages.

Throughout this guide, the word university is used to mean any institution in the higher education sector.

WHAT CAN I STUDY?

With 40,000 plus courses to choose from, there should be something of interest. Fancy a degree in Rock Music or Herbal Medicine? The choice is yours.

Some courses will require you to have studied a subject before, but others do not.

A few courses cater for students who made the 'wrong' choices at advanced level, so it is possible for a non-scientist to become an engineer or even a medical doctor.

COURSES CAN BE:

Specifically vocational, with a named occupation as their intended outcome, e.g. a degree in Midwifery would allow the holder to work as a midwife.

Generally vocational, e.g. a Business Studies degree could lead to many occupations, within the wide business area, so a student need not be totally committed to one career at the outset of the course.

Non-vocational, e.g. an English Literature degree could give career advantages in some vocational areas, for example publishing, but would also be acceptable for many careers which do not specify degree subject. However, such graduates may have to undertake some form of post-graduate training.

Combined courses, allow students to take various combinations of two or more subjects, often described as joint honours or combined honours

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS CAN I GET?

FIRST DEGREES – A majority of students study for these.

Many degree level courses require at least 3 A levels (an increasing number of courses require an AS at a specific grade as well) or BTEC National Diploma. The minimum qualifications required are usually 5 GCSEs at Grade C and above, plus two full A levels (AS + A2 in two subjects) or a BTEC National Certificate.

English and Welsh universities usually describe their degree courses as Bachelor degrees, e.g. B.Sc. - Bachelor of Science, but there are exceptions, e.g. LLB for Law degrees and there are some Masters degrees available: e.g. MMaths, MEng, although they are undergraduate qualifications.

Scottish universities offer some first degrees with Masters in the title, reflecting the different educational system in Scotland.

A standard first degree lasts for three years, but can be longer in certain cases.

Modern Language degrees usually involve an additional year studying abroad.

Sandwich degrees are found mainly on vocational courses, they involve either a one-year work placement: a thick sandwich or several shorter placements a thin sandwich. Placements are usually paid job positions.

Courses that confer professional qualifications, e.g. Medicine, Veterinary Science and Architecture last at least five years.

Teaching degrees can be either three or four years. Alternatively prospective teachers can take a subject degree and follow this up with a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate of Education) qualification.

Most degrees offer '**honours**' status, but there are a few courses which offer '**ordinary**' degrees, usually with opportunities available to convert them to '**honours**' status, by undertaking supplementary work or courses.

At the end of the course, students can expect to come out with, either a **first, upper second, lower second, or third class of degree**, some lower achieving students can get a '**pass**' degree without honours whilst on an honours programme.

HNDs – Only available in vocational subjects e.g. Engineering, Business Studies, Hotel and Catering, Journalism.

Minimum qualifications usually required- one full A level (AS + A2), or BTEC National Certificate.

HND stands for Higher National Diploma, lower entry requirements and strictly vocational nature of courses means they involve less theoretical study than degrees, but can usually give credit towards a degree, if the student is prepared to study further.

A standard HND will last two years, but longer if sandwich placements are involved.

FOUNDATION DEGREES – Not to be confused with ‘normal’ degrees that include a foundation year they are intended for people who may not have the academic qualifications for a normal degree or who would prefer a work based learning route. The number of subjects now available is growing rapidly and they are supposed to reflect labour market shortages. As well as academic study they will involve periods of work in the industries concerned and last two years. They can then be used towards accreditation for a full degree if the student wishes to continue their studies to a higher level.

DIPLOMAS OF HIGHER EDUCATION – These courses are uncommon today in non-vocational subjects, but are still available for non-degree qualifications in Nursing. Entry requirements vary, so there is a need to check course information carefully.

PROFESSIONAL COURSES - Such as foundation training for accountancy are also available, but the funding situation needs to be checked carefully. It is also possible to gain these types of qualifications as part of a degree or HND programme.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A COURSE?

There are many factors to consider when choosing your higher education course.

First you need to find out what is available.

The UCAS WEBSITE – www.ucas.com is probably the easiest way to locate courses as it provides a search facility and gives instant access to all the university websites.

If you have no idea what you want to study try www.ukcoursefinder.com, or the Stanford test which you can find on the UCAS website.

Then you need to find out what the course is all about.

The easiest way to find out about courses is via the UCAS website in the first instance. When you have found a course you are interested in the UCAS website provides information on entry requirements and in most cases Entry Profiles which describe the sort of person who will find the course suitable. Titles of courses can be misleading as to content; you must go to the **prospectus** to find out what they are really about. Prospectuses are now available on line, can be borrowed from the Careers Centre or you can request your own copy via university websites. In addition most universities provide detailed course information on their websites or via information leaflets.

Courses with the same name can have little in common when being run by different institutions. For example a Media Studies course at one university, might be mainly concerned with the influence the media has on society, whilst at another it could be a very technical course concerned with media production techniques.

Courses with similar sounding names such as Environmental Studies and Environmental Science could lead to completely different career outcomes.

You need to consider how the course is organised.

Some courses, particularly those which run a **modular system** can be very flexible in their structure, allowing students to almost 'pick and mix' a degree, others are much more rigid with a **fixed syllabus** to be followed. Again you need to check which structure serves your interests and career intentions best; the **Careers Advisers** are always willing to offer advice on this.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A COURSE?

Do you want to gain work experience during your course?

If so, consider sandwich degrees.

Do you want the option of studying abroad?

Many courses offer opportunities to exchange with foreign students for a year, so that you can study your subject at their university and as English is spoken in many countries you need not face language problems.

How do you want to be taught?

Most courses offer a variety of teaching styles, dependent on the subject being taught.

- **Lectures:** - Usually involve large numbers of students, with little student participation other than listening and taking notes.
- **Seminars:** - Much smaller class size groups, where students should get the opportunity to present their ideas and work to fellow students as well as the lecturer.
- **Tutorials:** - Small groups of students, can even be one to one, when work can be discussed on a much more personal basis.

Science courses should provide sufficient time for **practical laboratory teaching**, and other specialised courses should also provide relevant teaching.

Art courses should have **studio space** available for you to use, some charge for this.

How do you want to be assessed?

Exams or coursework? Final year or throughout the course? Most courses have a mixture of coursework and exam assessment, but it varies from institution to institution and from subject to subject. Vocational subjects may have practical tests to pass. Group projects and presentations are also becoming popular opportunities for assessment, particularly on vocational courses.

Although few people like to be assessed, you can at least look for courses that offer methods you prefer.

HOW DO I CHOOSE A COURSE?

How can I find out what qualifications are required to be offered a place?

THE UCAS TARIFF

About 70% of universities use the UCAS tariff which awards points for grades gained in qualifications e.g. an A grade at A level is worth 120 points. UCAS has produced a table on its website where you can view all the points scores for various grades of qualification, there is even a UCAS tariff calculator that you can use to add up your expected scores. Once you know what your likely points score is you can compare this with the requirements that the universities set for their courses and choose ones that you are likely to be considered for. However, you also need to check for specific subject requirements or exclusions.

Other universities ask for specific grades sometimes in specific subjects.

Many courses will use a combination of the two, so for example if you wanted to study a Maths degree you may be asked for a set number of points, but these would include specific grade in Maths at full A level. Also if you are taking BTEC qualifications you will need to check that these are acceptable for the course you are applying for; most courses which accept BTECs, want them to be in a relevant subject.

The BTEC National Diploma and Certificate is now included within the tariff, but students need to be particularly careful; there are some courses at some universities where a BTEC qualification is not acceptable. If the prospectus says that BTECS are considered on an individual basis, this means that you must contact the university for further guidance on what the exact requirements for the course are.

The **UCAS website** (www.ucas.com), and the book '**Degree Course Offers**' by Brian Heap will give you a general indication of the grades required for particular courses. However it is important to remember that stated grade requirements are only a minimum so you may end up with an offer which is higher. Also qualifications are only one of the requirements for courses; universities may require work experience, extra exams, a relevant personal statement etc. before considering your application.

Some admissions tutors will not accept points or grades gained from **General Studies** others will. The same is true of **Key Skills**; you will need to consult individual prospectuses for details and remember there can be variations of opinion between admissions tutors for different subjects at the same university.

Specific GCSEs are often required; so check the prospectus before applying, particularly if you do not have English Language or Maths at grade C or above. Some of the more sought after courses now specify grades higher than a C at GCSE in certain subjects, so check carefully because if you do not have the required GCSE grade your application will be rejected. Some universities will accept alternatives to GCSEs such as Adult Literacy or Numeracy at Level 2, but not all.

SELECTION TESTS

In addition to requirements for grades for qualifications studied at SEEVIC many courses now have additional entry tests that students have to undertake. Details will be found in prospectuses, but include:

The UKCAT or BMAT test for Medicine, Veterinary and Dentistry courses

The LNAT for applicants to law courses

Please investigate these tests early if you are thinking of applying for a course which requires them, as they have to be booked in advance.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS, ENTRY TESTS ETC. PLEASE CHECK WITH CAREERS STAFF.

When choosing courses, be realistic, there is no point applying for courses requiring grades that you are unlikely to achieve, as you will immediately be rejected.

PLEASE DISCUSS YOUR PREDICTED FINAL GRADES WITH YOUR SUBJECT TUTORS, AS WITHOUT THIS KNOWLEDGE YOU CANNOT BE SURE THAT YOUR CHOICES ARE APPROPRIATE.

HOW DO I CHOOSE WHERE TO STUDY?

Once you have decided on the type of course you want, you need to sort out where you would feel happy studying for three or more years. If you decide to leave home to study the following factors need serious consideration.

You need to think about the following:

Size - Institutions can vary greatly in size and number of students.

Location - Are you a confirmed townie, who needs ready access to plenty of shops, cinemas, theatres etc.? Or, do you prefer the countryside?

How near home you want to be - Travel can be a big expense and if you feel you will want to make fairly frequent trips back home, consider the distance involved.

Campus versus non-campus. Campus universities offer all student facilities on site, including at least some student accommodation, great for those who want to fall out of bed and face no more than a gentle stroll to lectures.

Student accommodation is not usually available for the whole course, so at some point you will have to mix with the local population and get up earlier!

If you would prefer not to be so student based, look at institutions that have their facilities more integrated with the local community.

Accommodation - Most institutions have at least some university owned accommodation and priority for this is usually given to first year students. Standards and types of accommodation can vary considerably, as can the costs.

Halls of residence can provide board as well as lodging, whilst much accommodation is **self-catering**, with students having study bedrooms and shared kitchens.

After the first year, most students will move into privately owned accommodation, perhaps sharing a rented house with other students, most universities will have lists of approved landlords etc., but the situation is variable so check this out.

Leisure activities - Higher education is not only about studying; you should have some free time for leisure pursuits. Although for many students this will mean propping up the **student bar**, universities also offer many other facilities; some have their own **theatres** and most have **sports facilities**. **Societies** of all types, from political to theatrical should flourish and remember participation in extra-curricular activities can play an important part in your future career prospects.

Information on these factors can be found in the resources in the Careers Centre try 'The Guide to UK Universities,

Finally, visit places you are interested in; information on open days is available in the Careers Centre and on the website www.opendays.com and on individual university websites.

HOW WILL I SURVIVE FINANCIALLY?

Details of student funding arrangements for 2010 can be found on www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance, however details of funding arrangements for 2011 will not be available for some time yet.

Information on what individual universities are offering in the way of financial support can be found on the UCAS website and in university prospectuses.

Apart from the government system of loans, grants etc. other sources of income for students can include the following:

Sponsorship and Scholarships - Some large companies will sponsor students through certain degrees and HNDs; Engineering predominates, but there are other some others available. Some universities offer a limited number of scholarships, if students meet certain conditions. Go to www.scholarship-search.org.uk for more information.

Part-time and vacation jobs - Most universities now accept the need for students to earn some money in addition to their grant and loan. Many universities have set up their own employment agency for students. This approach means they can try and match some students with relevant jobs to enhance their eventual job prospects and ensure that their part-time employers do not pressurize students into working excessive hours.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Students apply for higher education through UCAS.

Students must register through the College Careers Centre – full details will be supplied at the appropriate time.

UCAS acts as a central distribution point for the completed applications, sending them out to the institutions the student has applied to, and then keeping records of all the offers and the acceptances made.

You can apply for up to 5 choices on UCAS forms.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

In order to meet the external UCAS deadlines students must meet SEEVIC College internal deadlines for the receipt of forms in the Careers Department. This is because once the student has completed their form a reference must be prepared and checked before the form is sent to UCAS.

Early application for courses is recommended, especially now entry to higher education is so competitive.

OXBRIDGE, MEDICINE, VETERINARY SCIENCE AND DENTISTRY

INTERNAL DEADLINE - 20 SEPTEMBER 2010

Students intending to apply for any of the above who have not yet contacted the Careers Centre should do so without delay

RECOMMENDED INTERNAL DEADLINE FOR 'IN DEMAND COURSES (E.G. PRIMARY TEACHING, PHYSIOTHERAPY, HIGHLY RANKED UNIVERSITIES AND COURSES)

INTERNAL DEADLINE - 5 OCTOBER 2010

FINAL INTERNAL DEADLINE TO ENSURE APPLICATION REACHES UCAS ON TIME

23 NOVEMBER 2010

Applications for Art and Design Courses

Some Art and Design courses have a later application deadline than the main UCAS deadline of 15th of January. This will be indicated on the UCAS website.

OTHER APPLICATION PROCEDURES

There are a few courses, which require applications to be made directly to institutions; most notably specialist courses in subjects such as **Drama and Music**. In these cases you need to be guided by the prospectuses of the institutions concerned. **PLEASE SEE THE CAREERS STAFF IF YOU WANT SOME HELP.**

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There is a huge range of resources available in SEEVIC to help you select your higher education course, listed here are some of the main ones to get you started

If you cannot find what you want please ask the Careers Advisers, they usually know where to look.

WEBSITES

The most useful one is the UCAS website www.ucas.com; here many of your questions can be answered and it links to many other useful sites including individual university ones.

GENERAL HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUES

www.opendays.com for open day information

www.nusonline.co.uk National Union of Students website information on all aspects of student life

CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY COURSE

www.ukcoursefinder.com includes a questionnaire that suggests courses that may suit you

www.uni-uk.co.uk UCAS points search for courses available

www.unistats.com teaching quality site, also includes student survey information

www.qaa.ac.uk - quality assurance reports on individual subject areas for individual universities

www.EducationGuardian.co.uk go to rankings on list on right hand side of page for subject league tables compiled by the Guardian newspaper

STUDENT FINANCE

www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance details of student finance system

www.scholarship-search.org.uk Scholarship details

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

www.skill.org.uk

BOOKS, DVD AND CD ROMS

University and college prospectuses and course guides

Degree Course Offers – Brian Heap

Degree Course Guides

What do Graduates Do?

There are many, many more, just come and have a look!

COMPUTER PROGRAMMES

Access these via the Careers Section of the VLE

E-Clips Information on virtually every career available

KUDOS –Generates career ideas and gives you detailed information

FAST TOMATO - Careers advice that you can build into your own personal on-line file