



# Guiding University Choice

## Session Two: What type of degree and university are right for me?

### Exercise: Reading

#### Type of degree

Alongside a wide range of subject choice you will also find different types of degree structures.

These can include:

**Traditional Academic Subject Degree** – such as English Literature, History or Physics which offers in-depth study of one particular subject.

**Professional Degree** – which would provide you with the knowledge and skills in a particular career area and also qualify you to start a career in this area on completion of the degree. For example, Building Surveying, some Engineering-based degrees, teaching and various health-based degrees including Medicine, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Radiography.

**Semi-Professional Degree** – this sort of degree would provide knowledge of a subject but would still entail further specialist training, for example Accountancy, Law and Psychology.

**Joint Degree** – offers you the opportunity to study more than one subject as part of the degree structure. Within a Joint Honours degree you would study two subjects. You will find a range of opportunities in this area. Some will be subjects that link closely together (Maths and Engineering); some will offer additional knowledge and skills to perhaps help with future career ideas (Business Studies with a language). Others on offer, like Chemistry and English, appear to have no direct subject link but offer students a breadth of study.

**Combined Studies Degree** – offers you the opportunity to study a range of subjects. If you are studying A Levels this sort of degree provides a continuation of multi-subject study over three years often allowing you to specialise in one subject in your final year. Apart from titles like Combined Studies, degrees in Humanities, Integrated Science, and Liberal Arts all offer this interdisciplinary subject choice.

**“Sandwich” Degree** – if you are looking at a vocational pathway then what are commonly known as “sandwich” degrees offer you the opportunity to gain experience of a particular job area. Sandwich degrees integrate placements (usually a year) in the workplace. These are very common in areas like Business Studies, Computer Science, and Engineering.

**Foundation Degree** – is a vocational course which focuses on a particular area of work (e.g. Crime Scene and Forensic Investigation, Restaurant Management, Sports Coaching and Exercise). They are usually 2 years in length and are not a full degree. However, they are not a dead end, many people transfer onto the final year of a degree or study a “top up” year to convert them into a full degree.

**New Opportunities** – opportunities in higher education are always expanding. For example, recent developments such as Degree Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to study for a degree within a work based environment.

### Different degree structures

Alongside the different degree structures you will also find that the way you learn will vary from degree to degree. You will probably have a vision of sitting in a big formal lecture theatre at university. But did you know that you could also be involved in learning through group work activities, seminars, project-based learning, as well as lots of independent study? Our student ambassadors shared some of their experiences about the variety of ways in which they’ve engaged with their degree subject, their course tutors, and their peers whilst at university.

### Type of University

What sort of university would interest you? You are going to hear an awful lot about “what is the best university to go to”. Everybody has their own ideas on this. For some it’s attending a well-known and historic university, whilst for others it might be a university with a good record of getting graduates straight into employment.

Not all universities are the same. The higher education sector has grown over the last hundred years or so to present you with a wide and varied choice of institutions to study at. Let’s take look a little more closely at the different types of higher educational institutions you might come across in your research.

Type of Institution		Example
“Ancient” Universities”	Have their origins stretching back to the Middle Ages.	Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews
“Red Brick” Universities	Founded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in major English cities.	Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester
“Plate Glass” Universities	Developed in the 1960s. Characterised by being “Campus” universities.	Brunel, Sussex, Warwick
“New Universities”	Prior to 1992 these institutions were Polytechnics and Teacher	Bournemouth, Kingston, London South Bank

	Training Colleges specialising in mainly vocational degrees.	
Traditional Specialist Institutions	Offering study in and related to a particular subject area particularly in the creative and performing arts but also in areas like agriculture.	Harper Adams, Royal Academy of Music, University of the Arts London
Private Sector Universities	Often offering 2 year degrees in areas such as Business and Financial and related subjects.	BPP University, Buckingham, Pearson College
Further Education Colleges	You will find that your local college will often offer the opportunity to study for a degree.	

When thinking about choosing a university to select a number of questions will be floating around your head. For instance:

- Its reputation
- Where is it located?
- What facilities does it have?
- What support will I receive?
- What is its record like for getting students into employment?

There may well be other criteria you want to use as well. However, the important question to ask yourself is whether that university offers exactly what you want to study.

### **Further Information on choosing courses and universities**

Best Course 4Me – [www.bestcourse4me.co](http://www.bestcourse4me.co)

WhatUni – [www.whatuni.com](http://www.whatuni.com)

### **Session Tutor**

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