



Making informed subject choices

Activity overview

Give your students the tools they need to make informed decisions about what subjects they might like to study – covering A-levels, BTECs, Highers and more. You can also adapt this for choosing GCSEs for younger groups.

Learning objectives

- ▶ To enable students to make informed choices about what to study at an advanced level (A-level, Scottish Higher, Welsh Baccaulaureate, IB, BTEC etc.).
- ▶ To ensure that students understand the benefits of keeping their subject choice broad if they do not yet know what they want to study at university.
- ▶ To advise students to find out about the requirements for certain degree courses.

Activity

- ▶ Ice-breaker activity: ask students to complete Section A on the worksheet, coming up with a list of things to think about as they decide what subjects to study after 16.
- ▶ Ask students to read the article referenced in Section B: www.which.co.uk/aleveldecisions, completing the follow-on questions. Feed back on the key information as a whole class activity.
- ▶ Those who finish quickly can move on to Section C, where they can try out our tool to help them see what degrees they could do with the subject combinations they are considering studying at advanced level: www.which.co.uk/alevelexplorer. Students could share the favourite degree idea they matched, as well as the most unusual one that cropped up, feeding back on what they learned from the exercise.

AT A GLANCE

- ★ **Age group**
14-16
- ★ **Activity type**
Worksheet-based discussion
- ★ **Suggested subject setting**
Carry out this discussion during form time or a tutor period. Alternatively, deliver this activity as part of the PSHE/PSE/PDMU/Health and Wellbeing framework or Careers programme or adapt it for a year group assembly
- ★ **Student resources**
Worksheet: Making informed subject choices

Suggestions for 11-14

- ▶ Focus on GCSE (or equivalent) choices, talking about good and bad reasons for choosing a subject.

😊 You're good at it	😞 Your friend is doing it
😊 You enjoy it	😞 You like the teacher
😊 You want to study it at a higher level	😞 You find it easy but you hate it
😊 You like the way it is assessed	😞 You think it will be useful but you hate it
😊 You need it in order to study something later on	😞 You love the subject but you really, really struggle at it
😊 You think it provides a nice complement to your other subjects	😞 Your parents want you to do it
	😞 The teacher wants you to do it but you don't like the subject

Suggestions for 16-18

- ▶ Personal analysis of current advanced-level subjects students are studying – get them to analyse what they like and dislike about their current courses to help them formulate better ideas about what they might want to go on to study or do after school.
- ▶ Those students who do not know what they want to study can get some guidance and pointers here: www.which.co.uk/choosingacourseguide. For those who are confident in what they want to study, encourage them to start researching and comparing courses: www.which.co.uk/courses. This tool allows you to search by qualification and grades requirements including Scottish Highers, A-levels or Ucas tariff points, so they can hone their search towards their ability range. Students may also want to look at specific institutions: www.which.co.uk/unisearch.

Extension activities

- ▶ For 11-14 – Why are GCSE grades important? – ask students to come up with ideas in groups and feed back to the whole class, then show them the following article: www.which.co.uk/GCSEgrades.
- ▶ For 14-16 – For high-achieving cohorts of students, you could show this six-minute video from the Russell Group website about facilitating subjects: <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/> then ask students to feed back on what they had retained from the video and what they thought about this list of subjects.
- ▶ For 14-16 – Can you get into university if you're studying BTECs? For those more interested in vocational options, explore how universities

view and accept this growing qualification: www.which.co.uk/btecs.

- ▶ For 16-18 – Discover the real story behind university entry requirements. Start by asking students if they know what different types of offers universities give, then get them to read this article: www.which.co.uk/entryrequirements.
- ▶ For 16-18 – What is War Studies? Anthropology? PPE? Try this fun activity to introduce new courses to students. Their task is to research a new course title and present it to the class. Aim to get students to think beyond the subjects they are already studying when choosing a course. You could then look at this article on unusual university degree courses: www.which.co.uk/unusualdegrees.

Discovering more

- ▶ Look at subject combinations at advanced or higher level and discuss whether certain subject combinations are too narrow: www.which.co.uk/alevelmix
- ▶ Motivate students to think about how best to revise in order to get the best grades they can. Use this article as a basis for your discussion: www.which.co.uk/revisionbytweet