

Choosing a University

How to help your son choose a university course

Choosing what to study after life at Dulwich can be a daunting experience, and the biggest pitfall for students is that they are afraid to go against the majority of their peers, or that they follow advice that is out of date. There are a vast range of courses and options out there and this article suggests some ways in which you can help your son navigate this complex landscape.

What does your son love studying? What subject will make him get out of bed in the morning, go to lectures and do his reading? University is a massive financial investment and there is no point in your son choosing to go to an institution because he knows someone there or because of the perceived prestige a university might have, over choosing the correct course for him. The level of degree, work experience and transferrable 'soft' skills learnt are the most important things for employers, so it's key that your son chooses a course that really motivates him. It is also important that you encourage your son to think beyond the rather narrow confines of his subject titles at A level - recent UCAS research suggests that 95% of independent school pupils applied to only 35% of available courses. Some questions to help start the conversation include:

- *What do you most enjoy at school?*
- *If your chosen course is something you currently study, will you still be interested in three years' time?*
- *If it's a new subject, do you know what it involves?*
- *If you have a career goal in mind already, do you need to study a specific undergraduate degree subject?*
- *Are there any combined honours degrees in the subject, or any employer sponsored degrees?*
- *Do your predicted grades fit the entry requirements for the course?*
- *Is there an option to choose some modules in the second and third year, and start to specialise in your area of interest?*
- *If it's a four year degree, is the fourth year entirely research based?*
- *Is the course a BSc or a BA? What's the difference?*
- *Will you have the opportunity to transfer to an MSc/ MA? Is the course an integrated Masters (like an MEng, MChem)?*
- *Can you study a language alongside the course?*
- *What employability skills does the institution teach?*
- *Will you have the opportunity to study abroad – if so, where do people usually go?*
- *For Science subjects, how much lab time will you have?*
- *What links are there with industry (sandwich courses/placements/internships/sponsored degrees)? Does the degree come with professional accreditation? Does this matter?*
- *How is the course assessed?*
- *Is the department on the main campus of the university?*
- *Will you actually get to study what you want (eg some courses in History will leave out parts of History)?*
- *How much contact time will you have? (Although remember Arts/Humanities courses require you to do lots of independent work outside of lectures)*
- *What is the teaching style – tutorial, lecture, lab, group work or presentations?*
- *What are the destinations of the graduates of that degree?*
- *Does a career in the City always have to be underpinned by a degree in Economics? What*

careers are available in the City?

- *Is Economics at x university the same as Economics at y? (for any course)*

The long-term goal is for your son to graduate as an employable young man, with transferrable skills so anything he can do during his degree that will make him 'stand-out' will be valuable. The job market into which he graduates will look quite different to the current landscape – there will be jobs available that don't even exist yet. Many universities work alongside employers to both shape and respond to future demand; these are often non-traditional universities. Creative industries will undoubtedly become more important with digital, programming, modelling and coding skills being sought after. It is likely that your son will have plural or portfolio careers which will involve working with small tech firms; the first year is the new third year and many students are securing internships whilst in their first year of study – make sure your son will be supported in this at university. There are also vast changes to more traditional professions, such as Law and Medicine, so make sure he is aware of the opportunities which will be available to him when he graduates.

There are many exciting alternatives to HE in the UK, and you should explore these options too. The HE and careers team will be happy to help.

