

Choosing Your A-Levels

Choosing your A-level (or equivalent) subjects carefully is really important – especially if you have aspirations to study at a leading university. These universities (including Russell Group universities) look for students who not only have good grades, but grades in the right subjects for the course they want to apply for. If you already know what you want to study at university, you should think about choosing subjects which give you the best possible preparation for your chosen degree course. If you're not sure what you want to study at university yet, it's important to choose subjects which will leave as many options open as possible.

Many courses at university build on knowledge and skills which students gain while still at school. For this reason, some university courses require you to have studied a particular subject already. For example, for general engineering degrees, mathematics and physics are typically essential A-level qualifications.

Some advanced level subjects are more frequently required for entry to degree courses than others. These subjects are referred to as 'facilitating' because choosing them at advanced level leaves open a wide range of options for university study. These facilitating subjects are:

- Biology
- English literature
- History
- Modern and classical languages
- Chemistry
- Geography
- Physics
- Maths and Further maths

If you don't know what you want to study at university then it's a really good *rule of thumb* that taking two facilitating subjects will keep a wide range of degree courses open to you. However, this is only a guide. You should only choose these subjects if they are subjects you are genuinely interested in studying. Before finalising A level choices it is sensible to contact some universities to establish if your selected choices are appropriate for the university courses you are considering.

The Russell Group's guide *Informed Choices* provides students with information, advice and guidance about their post-16 subject choices. It can be found at:

<http://russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/>

While *Informed Choices* brings together advice about subject choices from across the Russell Group, each university and each course will have its own entry requirements. Some institutions publish a list of preferred A-level subjects which are acceptable for general admission, as well as specific requirements for individual courses. We advise students to check the guidance given by institutions very carefully. This information should be easily accessible on universities' websites or in their prospectuses.

The Russell Group's guide, *Informed Choices*, includes advice from admissions professionals on the best subject combinations for a wide range of university courses as well as the best choices for students who want to keep their options open.