

TIPS FOR CHOOSING A 3RD LEVEL COURSE

1 Self-Assessment

Before you begin researching 3rd level courses, it is important to first understand yourself. In other words;

- What type of person are you...what are your personal qualities, what do you love doing and what do you prefer to avoid?
- What skills do you have and what are your strengths?
- What subjects do you/did you like or dislike in school?
- What are your hobbies and interests?
- What type of learner are you, e.g. do you learn by doing or can you easily take in information from books?



TIP

Ask a Guidance Counsellor/ Careers Professional about the different learning styles and find out which one you are!

• Alternatively, check out <http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml>

• Also try out the interest test on the CareersPortal website; www.careersportal.ie

NOTE

The **CareersPortal assessment** will match your personal information to a wide variety of courses and career areas. Not everything on this list will be of interest to you so it is worthwhile looking through the list and picking out the ones that you would like to research. You might see something that you wouldn't have thought of before.

Once you know more about yourself; your preferences, strengths and abilities, researching courses will be easier to do and you will be able to make a more informed decision!





2 Research

Researching Courses

It is important to thoroughly research the courses in which you are interested. Follow the steps below to get the most out of your research.

1. For courses in Ireland search through the Qualifax website; **www.qualifax.ie** and the CAO website; **www.cao.ie**. You can also go directly to each of the college or university websites.
2. For courses in the UK search through the UCAS website; **www.ucas.com**.
3. Location is a major factor when choosing a course. Would you be happy about moving away from home and have you thought about the cost of this?
4. Be clear on the CAO or UCAS application processes for your chosen course, i.e. how do you apply and when are the deadlines?
5. Understand the entry requirements for the course;
 - a. What are the basic admission requirements for the course?
 - b. What were the CAO points or grade requirements (UK) for entry last year? Check **www.cao.ie** for last year's points and **www.ucas.com** for UK grades.
 - c. Do you need to have studied specific second level subjects for entry to the course?
 - d. Do you need to make additional submissions (e.g. a portfolio) or complete an interview (e.g. in Music) as part of the entry requirements?
6. Look at the subjects or modules for each year of the course, not just 1st year! (This will be available on the relevant college or university website.) You need to make sure that your expectations and the actual reality of the course are in line with each other. The objective is to enjoy the course throughout your time in college!
7. Also consider the following when you are researching the courses:
 - a. Will there be work placement during the course?
 - b. Will you need to pick a specialism as the course progresses, e.g. after first or second year?
8. During your research contact the relevant college or university department with specific questions about the course. Request a meeting or a tour of the department to ensure you are fully informed about the course.
9. Also talk to a Guidance Counsellor or Careers Professional about what to do in 3rd level.

TIP

If you are not entirely confident of achieving the CAO points (as per the previous year) for your 1st course preference, you should still put it down as your first choice on the CAO form. You never know what will happen around demand for the course and availability of places! However, always have a back-up plan with other course choices.

Researching Careers

It is also beneficial to know what the jobs market is like and to get to know where there is likely to be growth in the future.

Use the publications from Ireland's 'Expert Group on Future Skills Needs' to gather more information. Go to **www.skillsireland.ie/publications**

You can research different careers on **www.careersportal.ie**

For even greater insight into careers think about;

- **Talking to friends and family** members about the jobs they are doing.
- **Work Shadowing** – this involves spending a day or more with someone who works in the career area of interest to you. Observing them in their day-to-day job can help you to decide if that job/career area is right for you.

Begin your Self-Assessment

WHAT DO YOU LOVE DOING?

Name 5 things that you love to do...

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

WHAT ARE YOUR GIFTS?

List 3 skills that come naturally to you...

- 1
- 2
- 3

WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER DREAMS?

Name 5 careers that you think you would enjoy doing...

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

WHAT ENERGISES YOU?

List 3 areas where you get your energy...

- 1
- 2
- 3

WHAT HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN?

Name 2 areas that you have been involved in and committed to...

- 1
- 2

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT?

Name 3 areas that you have knowledge of...

- 1
- 2
- 3