

A Level Options 2011

Overview

- This presentation is aimed at making you think about the link between your A Level Choices and the Degree that you want to study. Some A Levels will be “required” to secure a place and some will be “preferred” or described as “useful” by universities. In an increasingly competitive environment these should be seriously considered too.
- The first 6 slides contain some useful general advice and then these are followed by 30 slides showing the requirements for the different degrees. These are in alphabetical order.

Uncertain about your degree choice? Maximise your choices:

- If you have **not yet decided on a course** that you would like to study at university, we recommend that to maximise your potential course choices you select at least *three* traditional academic subjects among your 4 AS Levels.

Myth of so called weaker subjects

- “The list below details the A level subjects that together provide a *less* effective preparation for our courses. To be a realistic applicant, a student will normally need to be offering two traditional academic subjects (ie two subjects not on this list).” Cambridge Admissions.

The list

- Art
- Design
- Drama/Theatre Studies
- Media Studies
- PE
- Critical Thinking A levels will only be considered as a fourth A level subjects and will not therefore be accepted as part of a conditional offer.
- Psychology, Law and many vocational courses
- It does not mean that you should not study any of these courses but doing more than one may limit your range of choices. However, these subjects may be ideal for your degree choice.

Warning!

- There is a lot of variety in course requirements / preferences between universities and between colleges within universities: You will find some courses that do not require the combinations that follow.
- What follows is a general guideline based on the courses that Latymer students have applied for. It is only a sample of available courses. If you know that you want to apply for a specific course at a specific university then you do some research. It is your decision.....

Archaeology & Anthropology

- No particular subjects at A level are required for Archaeology & Anthropology. It may be helpful if your subjects relate to the area of the course in which you are hoping to specialise, eg Biology for Biological Anthropology, History or Sociology for Social Anthropology, Geography for Archaeology etc. However, most subjects are relevant and a mix of science and arts subjects is positively welcomed.

Architecture

- There is no prescribed combination of A level subjects required for the Architecture course. Applicants with backgrounds in either the humanities or the sciences have been successful, although a combination of arts and science subjects is considered the best preparation. Many have studied Art or Design. Cambridge prefer Art. Mathematics at A level is also encouraged. A strong interest and commitment to the discipline is essential and all applicants are expected to show a portfolio of recent work at interview.

Biochemistry

- Always Chemistry. Some degrees will ask have for as well. Others will ask for Chemistry, plus one of Maths, Physics or biology. Doing Chemistry, Biology and Maths or Physics will keep all Biochemistry courses open to you

Biology

- **Biology and Chemistry essential and Maths or Physics useful.**

Chemistry

- Chemistry and usually Maths or Physics. Some courses ask for Chemistry, Maths and Physics while some prefer Chemistry, Maths and Biology.

Classics

- Latin at A level is an essential requirement for the Classics (3 year) course. Further to this, no particular subject combinations are more desirable than others. Subjects that offer a grounding in the skills required for the course, such as languages, essay-based subjects, such as History and English are useful.

Computer Courses

- Maths and possibly Further Maths. Physics and Philosophy useful.

Dentistry

- Chemistry and Biology and some prefer those two plus Maths or Physics

Drama and Theatre Studies

- Drama and English are recommended

Economics

- It is now essential that applicants have A level Mathematics. (You can still study Economics at degree level without it.)
- Further Mathematics is considered useful by some very competitive universities.
- Economics is seen as useful preparation

Engineering

- Maths and Physics A-levels for admission to read Engineering. Chemistry is also required for admission to read Chemical Engineering via the Engineering route. (There is an alternative route to Chemical Engineering via Natural Sciences.)
- The document *Recommended Mathematical Background for Prospective Students: Information for Schools* gives advice to help applicants choose a suitable A-level Maths course and options within that course. This is available on-line or from the Teaching Office (teaching-office@eng.cam.ac.uk).

English

- It is essential that applicants should have English Literature as one of their A level
- Modern/classical languages and History are also useful subjects though not essential and many successful applicants have studied Mathematics and science subjects.
- Although Drama or Theatre Studies may possibly be accepted as a third A level subject, some universities tend to prefer applicants to show more range in their skills and interests.

Geography

- There is no single combination of subjects that is especially good for students wishing to study Geography. It is highly desirable that you be taking Geography A level.
- If you are particularly interested in contemporary human geography or historical geography, then economics, English literature, history, and sociology are helpful.
- If you are interested in physical geography, then biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics and physics are useful supporting subjects.
- Wherever your interests lie, knowledge of a foreign language will help you understand developments in this international discipline, and to gain a greater insight into regional geographies.

History

- There is no single combination of subjects that is especially good for students wishing to study History. It is highly desirable that you be taking History A level. Successful applicants take all sorts of subjects from Mathematics and the sciences, to arts and social sciences. All of these teach skills that can be useful to the undergraduate historian. It may be useful to have a second essay-based subject alongside History.
- At many universities there is a preference for applicants to have, in addition to History, at least one further essay-based A level in a traditional arts or social science subject. Performance-based subjects and some of the newer A levels that contain less individual essay work for assessment would be acceptable as a third A level.

History of Art

- No particular subjects at A level are required for the History of Art course but subjects should be primarily academic. Subjects like History, English, Modern Languages, History of Art, Religious Studies and Classics are ideal, and Mathematics and experimental sciences are acceptable if accompanied by one or two arts A levels.

Land Economy

- No particular subjects at A level are required for the Land Economy course but a combination of arts and science subjects is recommended. Economics, Mathematics and Geography are particularly useful.

Law

- Many A level subjects provide a good grounding for the study of Law at university and they have an open mind about the subjects that are a sound preparation.
- Good applicants tend to have taken subjects at A level that develop a careful, analytical approach to reading and which require them to present information in a way which is well structured and thoughtfully argued. Eg English/History. Applicants with backgrounds in Mathematics and science subjects perform as well as those whose background is in humanities subjects. Many universities are pleased to see applicants with a mixed background in these subjects.

Maths

- Maths and consider Further Maths
- Some universities prefer Physics

Media

- For courses with a high level of practical content like **Film + TV Production**, *at least one* of the following creative/analytical subjects would be the norm - Media Studies, Art, Drama, English Lang/Lit - and many applicants study two of these at A level
- The most competitive courses have high expectations of proven academic *and* practical ability
- For theory based courses like **Film Studies, Communications/Cultural Studies or Journalism**, A levels in Media Studies, English, Sociology, Politics and the Humanities are ideal.

Medicine

- Biology and Chemistry plus another science? (inc maths)
- Maths not essential
- A “broadener” – a foreign language? Economics?

Modern & Medieval Languages

- Applicants to all Colleges for the Modern & Medieval Languages course should be studying that language at A level Beyond that there are no required subjects. Whilst it is always helpful to be able to demonstrate linguistic aptitude at the same, or lower, level, many combinations of subjects provide a strong basis for Linguists. It is also helpful to be able to demonstrate critical engagement with the literature and culture of the societies where the languages to be studied are spoken. This may emerge from curricular studies in History, Media, Literature or society of the country; or it may come from extra-curricular study.

Music

- After Music no particular subjects are more desirable than others. Modern Languages and History are useful but so are virtually all other subjects, including Mathematics and sciences, in different ways. Applicants should be acquainted with at least some of the standard repertory and have experience of writing about music. You are likely to have a good musical ear, some facility at the keyboard, and some proficiency in harmony and counterpoint.

Natural Sciences

- To make full use of the flexibility of the NST you will find it helpful to have a strong knowledge base across a wide range of science and mathematics subjects.
- Most of our students have three science and/or mathematics subjects at A level
- Two A levels out of Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics are the minimum provided that you are happy with a restricted choice of courses in the first year.
- An additional science or mathematics subject at either AS or A level is helpful
- You can't study a combination of three biological subjects without GCE A level Chemistry
- A level Mathematics is essential for the physical sciences and Computer Science

Philosophy

- No particular subjects at A level are required for the Philosophy course, however, a combination of arts and science subjects is considered useful. Applicants must be able to demonstrate a capacity for clear-headed logical reasoning and abstract thought. RE (Philosophy and Ethics) is recommended.

PPE: Philosophy Politics Economics

- You may apply for PPE having done any combination of subjects at school; it is not necessary to have studied politics, philosophy or economics. History and mathematics are useful backgrounds, but are not essential. However you will find it easier to show a genuine interest and develop understanding if you do study some of the subjects above too.

Psychology

- No particular subjects at A level are required for the Psychology course, however, a combination of arts and science subjects is considered useful. Maths in particular.

Sociology

- Sociology plus some of the following:
History, Politics, Geography and Media

Sport and PE

- PE and one of Biology, Chemistry, Maths or Physics

SPS: Social & Political Sciences

- No particular subjects at A level are required for Social & Political Sciences (SPS). SPS is a broad course, therefore a range of subjects provide a good background: from Mathematics to social sciences (eg Economics, Politics and Geography) to arts (eg English, History and modern languages).

Theology & Religious Studies

- No particular subjects at A level are required for Theology & Religious Studies. Subjects such as Religious Studies, History, English and modern languages can be helpful, but so can any subjects that encourage clear, logical thinking and careful analysis of evidence. Students with a completely science background study Theology and Religious Studies and do very well. At least one essay-based subject is useful.

Veterinary Medicine

- A Levels in **three** of the following:
Biology; Chemistry; Physics;
Mathematics.