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CAMPION SCHOOL
Athens

IB CHOICES AND CAREERS FOR YEAR 11

A Guide for Parents and Pupils

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A. General Advice

There are many factors to take into account when considering your IB choices. Below is a quick overview of **factors that you should and should not take** into account before making your final decision:

Factors that SHOULD influence your decision:

- Talk with your subject teachers, the Year 11 Tutor, the IB Coordinator, the UCAS Adviser, present IB pupils and your parents – ask their opinion. ▪ Read the IB syllabus for each subject and consult the IBO website.
- Look at the www.ucas.co.uk website. Look at the degrees you are interested in and the IB entry qualifications required, especially for your Higher Level subjects.
- Try to achieve a sensible blend of IB subjects.

Factors that should NOT influence your decision:

- Do not be influenced by what subjects your friends choose.
- Do not be afraid to choose a subject that you have not done before. Just because you have done well in a subject at IGCSE, does not mean you will excel at IB; some subjects are different in content, or the way in which they are taught. A new subject may give you a new lease of life and freshness of perspective.

Summary:

In order to arrive at the right choice of IB subjects you must balance three important factors:

- Your academic strengths and weaknesses.
- Your personal abilities and aptitudes.
- The implications of your choices on your possible degree and career choices.

B. IB Choices and Entry to University

1. Sciences at University

Science degrees are becoming increasingly popular and as a result, popular universities have raised their IB and A level requirements. You will need to have good IGCSE grades in Maths and the sciences, and to take at least two sciences at IB Higher Level. Pupils who do not take sciences at Higher Level but then later decide they want to study sciences at university can apply to Foundation Courses at university (for 1 year) as a pathway to a science degree.

A quick overview of science subject combinations:

University Subject	Essential IB Subjects	Recommended IB Subjects
Biology, Zoology, Botany	Chemistry HL, Biology HL	Maths SL
Engineering	Physics HL, Maths HL (check whether A&I or A&A is specified) (for Chemical Engineering you need Chemistry HL)	Some departments will accept Maths SL alongside good scores in other subjects
Physics	Physics HL, Maths HL	
Medicine/Dentistry	Chemistry HL Some medical schools require Biology HL	Physics HL/SL and Maths HL/SL
Veterinary Science	Chemistry HL, Biology HL	Maths HL

2. Humanities at University

For some single honours humanities courses, a Higher Level subject is needed. For example, to do a History degree you need to have studied History at HL. Therefore, if you wish to study a single humanities subject at degree level it is strongly recommended you study it at Higher Level, e.g. English Literature, Geography, History.

The conditions for languages are stricter. To study a mainstream foreign language e.g. French or German you should study **at least one** of the languages at Higher Level.

3. The Social Sciences at University

Entry to the Social Sciences is reasonably flexible. The Social Sciences are: Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Business Studies and Management etc. However, a strong performance at IGCSE, including good grades in Maths and English, is necessary. These courses tend to be competitive in the popular universities and high IB grades are required.

There are certain subjects that are advantageous:

University Subject	IGCSE Requirements	Recommended IB subjects
Pure Economics	Maths grade B or above	Maths HL/Economics HL
Management and Business Studies	Maths and English Language grade B or above	Maths at SL, some Management courses prefer Maths HL
Psychology BSc (science based course)	Maths, Biology, grade B or above	Psychology HL, Biology HL, Maths SL
Politics	Maths and English Language grade C or above	History HL or SL
Law	Maths and English Language grade B or above	English Literature, History, Economics, Foreign Languages HL

4. IB Choices – balancing your choices

Universities are looking for specific IB Higher Level subjects and there are also certain requirements in English and Maths at Standard Level for a number of different degree courses. However, universities are also interested in pupils who offer a strong mix of subjects at Higher and Standard Level. It is now quite usual for **potential engineers** to take a foreign language (at any level including *ab initio*) with Maths and Physics (e.g. for mechanical engineering). Many engineering degree courses offer a year abroad as an industrial placement. This is known as a 'sandwich' degree. A foreign language at IB will appeal to universities offering these 'sandwich' degree courses.

Pupils who are interested in the **natural sciences** e.g. Biology and Biomedical Sciences should take Biology and Chemistry at Higher Level, while Maths Standard Level is recommended, and Maths Higher makes for a very strong application to the top ranking universities.

For some Humanities and Social Science courses, a science at Higher or Standard is also an advantage. Psychology requires a reasonably good understanding of Maths and Biology. For some degree courses therefore, there is a requirement of at least one science subject at Higher Level. The most popular Economics degree courses require Maths at Higher Level.

Law does not require any particular subject at Higher Level but universities are looking for evidence of essay writing and critical-thinking skills therefore, English Literature and History have always been traditional subjects taken at Higher Level. However, pupils with 3 sciences at Higher Level can still apply for Law.

Medicine/Dentistry and Veterinary Science are highly competitive courses. Therefore, offering 2 sciences at Higher Level, usually Chemistry and Biology, makes for a stronger application for some universities.

Art, Design and Architecture courses are very popular. Art degrees require pupils to have taken Visual Art at Higher Level. Most applicants to Architecture will take Visual Art usually at Higher Level and some of the top universities also require Physics or Maths at Higher Level. A strong application to quality universities will have Visual Arts at HL and either Maths or Physics at either HL or SL. Please note students wishing to study Fine Art usually complete a BTEC Art and Design Foundation Course after completing their IB Diploma.

Most Business Studies and Management courses do not require Maths or Economics at HL. However, a pupil who offers Maths Standard and a foreign language (HL/SL or even *Ab initio*) will be considered a strong applicant.

Theatre/Drama applicants do usually take Theatre Arts at Higher Level, but traditionally they will also take English Literature at HL.

5. IB and University Entrance

Universities accept the worth of the IB qualification realising that there has not been the grade inflation that has occurred in recent years in the British A Level courses. This is even more so with the introduction of new A level syllabi in the UK introduced from 2016 onwards.

The nature of **conditional offers** from universities varies but usually takes 1 of 4 forms:

The university will ask for

1. A Diploma pass and a Higher Level points score only e.g. 7, 6, 6, in Higher Level subjects.
2. A Diploma pass, a Higher Level points score and overall points score e.g. 5, 5, 5 in Higher Level subjects with total points' score of at least 34 points.
3. A Diploma pass, an overall points score with a specific points score in one subject e.g. 34 points with a 6 in English (for someone wanting to study English Literature).
4. A Diploma pass and a total points score out of 45 which includes the 3 bonus points from TOK and Extended Essay e.g. 36 points in total.

BEWARE:

When asking for total points some universities are asking for total points from the 6 subjects (3 Highers, 3 Standards) i.e. out of 42.

When looking at university IB points offers, you must check if the offer of 34 points (for example) will include the bonus points from TOK and EE or not.

If it is not clear in the university literature contact the university department via email or phone for further clarification.

6. Entrance Standards to University

The IGCSE and IB requirements demanded by universities depend on a number of factors including the popularity and academic reputation of the university and the popularity of the degree course.

Although there are some universities with a reputation for overall academic excellence, that does not mean that other universities offering the same courses are offering a lower quality education. League tables give a rough guide only to the quality of degree courses.

Some universities do not necessarily rank high in the overall rankings, yet they do have centres of excellence in specific areas of study. Some of the newer universities have excellent degree courses in the more vocational fields (e.g. computing, tourism, music production).

Most universities require pupils to have a minimum of 5 IGCSE passes including Maths and English Language. Passes have to be a grade C or above. **It is advisable that if you did not pass Maths and English Language with a grade C that you resit the exam in November or June.** See the IB Coordinator and the Exams Officer.

For **Medicine**, the medical schools expect a very strong IGCSE record as well as excellent IB grades. Therefore, most medical schools recommend that pupils should have at least 6 A grades at IGCSE. Some require a minimum number of A* at IGCSE. Pupils applying for medicine and dentistry must be aware that 36 is the minimum offer at IB and that most pupils average 38 to 40 points.

Universities with reputations for excellence in the sciences and Engineering are currently asking for a minimum of 36 points at IB with A grades at IGCSE in maths and sciences.

7. Applications for Oxford and Cambridge

Applications to these universities are highly competitive. You will be expected to have achieved a minimum of A in all your IGCSE subjects. **At least 5 to 6 A* at IGCSE is the average for most applicants.**

Pupils will also need to achieve outstanding IB points and require a minimum of 38/39 points, 40 to 42 being the average IB points offer. Standard offers at Higher Level are usually 7,7,6.

Pupils will also need to have shown evidence of excellence in extra-curricular activities, such as music exams, involvement in Forensics, Debate and MUN clubs, extra Maths exams and excellence in Classical or Modern/Classical Foreign Languages (e.g. Latin, Ancient Greek, French, German, Spanish, and Italian).

Applicants will also have to sit (and pass) aptitude tests run by these universities.

If applying for Economics, you must take Maths Higher.

If applying for Languages, you must have 2 Foreign Languages at Higher.

If applying for Medicine, you must have Chemistry, Biology, and Maths at Higher.

C. Other Factors to Consider

There is a belief that certain subjects require specific IB subjects. While that is true in some cases, it is not for all. For example:

History and English are not essential for Law. Any subject combination, including the sciences, but not Visual Arts, is acceptable. However, competition is very strong and pupils must be able to prove they have excellent essay writing, critical thinking and debate skills.

For the sciences and medical courses there are specific IB requirements.

Engineering requires Maths at Higher Level with at least one other science depending upon the type of engineering you wish to study.

The Russell Group universities, which are considered the leading UK universities, have published a document online called '**Informed Choices**'; appropriate IB subject choices for specific degrees are outlined, so pupils can choose which subjects to take to ensure a smooth transition to university.

<https://www.informedchoices.ac.uk/>

1. Degree choices and the job market

To some extent, the current economic climate will influence IB and degree choice subjects. Pupils must be aware of the need to acquire academic qualifications that will not only get them onto their degree choice, but also to meet the skills requirements of prospective employers.

Pupils need to acquire strong English Language and Maths skills. The ability to write clearly, concisely and to present a logical argument at length are considered key assets, as are mathematical skills.

Employers are also looking for competence in foreign languages (French, Spanish, German, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic for example) and excellent IT skills.

In addition, universities and employers want to see evidence that candidates can manage their time effectively, not only achieve academic excellence, but to also acquire life skills and develop a well-rounded personality. Therefore, IB pupils are encouraged to take part in sporting, creative and volunteer activities (both inside and outside of school) and to acquire work experience.

2. Art and Design

Anyone wanting to follow a career in Art/Graphic Design/Interior Design is advised that one of the required Higher Level subjects is Visual Arts. It is recommended that artists and designers complete either a one -year BTEC or foundation course at university. For pupils interested in Industrial Design, Automotive Design then Maths or Economic at HL or SL are useful complementary subjects.

3. Work Experience

Many of the vocational courses at university (e.g. Medicine, Law, Architecture, Accountancy/Management, and Engineering) are the most competitive. In order for your application to make an impact on university admissions tutors, it is essential to acquire some work experience during your IB course. This work experience can be undertaken in the Easter and summer holidays of IB1. Medicine and Dentistry require at least two weeks' work experience. The other subjects are not so prescriptive. A pupil can arrange a day or several days in an office over the holiday.

D. **University Fees and Brexit**

As a result of Brexit, there have been a number of significant changes that affect EU students applying to UK universities:

1. Fees – now international fees (EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals will no longer be eligible for home fee status at UK universities, which also means they do not have access to student loans).
2. Visas – students will need a visa (https://www.gov.uk/student-vis_a)
3. No more Erasmus for students in UK – replacement is called Turing Scheme

For students starting a degree in 2021-2022, average fees are approximately £20,000 per annum but vary from university to university; for example, tuition fees for a degree in Engineering at Cambridge University are £33,825 per year. Whereas, at King's College London the amount is £28,050. However, fees can also vary within the same university depending on the subject. An undergraduate degree in Economics at Cambridge is £22,227 per year.

E. **Useful Links and Reference Material**

1. <https://www.ucas.com>
2. www.thestudentroom.co.uk
3. <http://university.which.co.uk/>
4. www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk
5. <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/for-students/school-and-college-in-the-uk/subject-choices-at-school-and-college/>
6. Choosing Your Degree Course and University by Brian Heap, Trotman Publishers
7. <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/loans-and-grants>
8. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>
9. The most up-to-date information on fees is published on UKCISA (www.ukcisa.org.uk), which provides advice to international students.