

A Structure for Your University Research – Step by Step: A Summary of the Year 12 PSHE on 22 March

This provides an overview to the 22 March session but note the other resources used, e.g. Powerpoint, Activity Briefing, Key Resources to Explore Your Subject and Spreadsheet Template are also to be found on the webpage. In time, it will be prettier but for now, please persevere as it's a really great way to structure your university exploration.

Choosing and Researching Your Degree

- Look at subjects you currently study and enjoy, since this is a good indication of what you will enjoy and do well in at university. Remember 2/3 of careers can be entered with any degree; often it is performance (ie. 2.1 or above) that is more important for accessing competitive graduate careers.
- For new subjects, including new vocational subjects, more exploration here is required since you do not have the luxury of previous study to inform your choice. See below on what you can do to develop understanding.
- If the subject is vocational, universities may expect some research into the related destination career(s) (including within the personal statement). Note that the extent to which research and evidence of vocational suitability will be required will vary. For healthcare related degrees like medicine, it will likely be significant. For something like law or engineering, while some evidence of work experience and reflection on vocational competencies can be useful, for the purposes of university admission and the personal statement, these subjects are often more like traditional academic courses in this respect. Of course, you may wish to do this “career” research in order to decide if you want to pursue the related career even if it is not required for university entry. In short, for vocational degrees, check with individual courses what they require, particularly for things like healthcare degrees.
- At PSHE, we discussed other ways you can find out about different degrees such as speaking to people and taking advice from your career interviews. However, be mindful of who you listen to, since they are not you, so their preferences may not be yours, and you need to be careful of how biased and informed the person you are speaking to is.
- We also discussed using your Morrisby webspace for a number of things (see **Screenshots at bottom of this guide**):
 - For those who want more degree ideas, see your degree suggestions section (based on your Morrisby report) – screenshot 1
 - For those who want to get an overview of what a degree is about, see the subject descriptions – see screenshot 2
 - For those who want to explore the related degrees in a particular field, see the “Similar Areas” tabs in the degree descriptions – see screenshot 3
- The Morrisby university search function.
- We also discussed other search tools you can use since no one tool is perfect. The UCAS search engine is probably the most comprehensive and so I would use this in conjunction with something like the Morrisby, although UCAS lacks the ability to filter by factors I know are important to girls like entry requirements and university ranking. Once you have identified a degree area you are looking at at a particular university, be sure to do a UCAS search by that degree and the university you want to look at. Keep your search broad initially so you can get an idea of the range of courses in a particular area at a particular

university. For example, if you see slide 6 of the above mentioned powerpoint, a search for Engineering at Liverpool yields 46 courses within their Engineering Department.

- Next, I encouraged students to burrow down on the universities' Departmental websites themselves, either by following a UCAS link or a simple google search such as "Liverpool Engineering".

What are you looking for on the university websites?

Here are some of the things you might look out for:

- **Entry requirements.** Grades and subjects obviously but anything else? For example, do they lower a grade if you offer an EPQ at A*/A? Do they look for volunteering/work experience? Are there any special entry tests?
- **Careers Prospects.** What do their graduates go on to do? As I said at the talks, statistics such as 96% in graduate employment may not tell you much so you may want to probe further.
- **Module content.** What modules can you do? Module titles alone may not tell you much so are there videos on the website you could watch? Maybe sample lectures?
- **Study style and assessment.** How much coursework can you do? Are there new ways you will be assessed that you have not encountered at school? For example, on a law degree a significant proportion involves problem questions, a style of study and assessment you do not encounter at school. Does the study/assessment style suit you?
- **Breadth v. specialisation:** Within a Department, consider the range of courses on offer and who suits what? Further, if you embark on a broad-based degree in the Department and they also offer more specialised degrees, are you able to switch to another course or to what extent can you specialise in later years of your course? This is relevant as a girl may embark on a general engineering or biological sciences degree, say, and develop an interest in a particular field; to what extent is specialisation possible or a switch to a more specialised degree?
- **To what extent can you study your subject with other subjects?** Girls may be considering Joint Honours, ("Subject with" option (e.g. French with English) or within a Combined Honours degree (sometimes called different things like Liberal Arts, Arts and Sciences, Natural Sciences, etc.). However, what is not always clear on the website is that some allow you to pick a significant number of modules from Departments other than that which your degree is in even if you are studying a "Single Honours" subject (i.e. one subject).
- **Is there an Industrial Placement or Option for a Year Abroad?**
- **If relevant, does the degree offer exemption from parts of professional training?** For example, for a Psychology Degree, is it BPS accredited so it counts towards training? Note: "conversion" options are often available if you do not "hold" a qualifying degree.

Need to know more? Phone or email then visit!

You may get the answers to these and the other questions you have from the website. However, often it can be difficult to ascertain or get the depth of answer you like. My advice is to think about your questions, whatever they may be, and speak to the Admissions Department and the Department (more course specific questions are often better answered by an academic in the Department). I personally feel you get more from a phone call, but email is an alternative.

If after this exploration, it seems like a course appeals, find out about Open Day opportunities and if you cannot make a scheduled event, ask about a bespoke option.

Understanding In-Depth: Confirming your Interest and then Demonstrating Your Passion

Subject websites, phone calls and open days can tell you a lot. However, when you are really looking to understand what it is like to study a subject, particularly a new subject, and then looking to demonstrate your passion, more depth is often required. Therefore, at the HE Evening and at the Y12 PSHE, I talked about further things you could do to get this “real” flavour and demonstrate your passion (in the link mentioned at the outset, these are chiefly covered in the documents “Key Resources” and “Subject Specific Resources”). They included:

- **Reading books beyond the A Level Syllabus.** Try reading something in your subject and particularly for competitive courses, try not to make it too clichéd. For new subjects, seek an introductory book. Ask teachers for recommendations or what about an academic in your chosen subject when you call them with your suggestions?
- **Don’t restrict yourself to “book” reading.** What about articles? A great way to burrow down into a specific issue. See Google Scholar and JSTOR.
- **Public access lectures** – many universities run these but remember you do not have to go in person; many are online. You will find subject specific ones on many Departmental websites.
- **MOOCs** – online courses in your subject (or a specific area of your subject). FutureLearn and Coursera are two big portals for exploring these.
- **Subject Competitions** – a great way to develop your interest in a specific area and, if successful, demonstrate an achievement (although it is the learning from taking part that matters most).

Please see the link above for more detail and links to resources. Doing this will do wonders for exploring and confirming your subject choice and then demonstrating understanding and passion, particularly in your personal statement and, if relevant, at interview.

Exploration and Writing Personal Statement: An Approach

There is no one way to write a personal statement but at the PSHE and HE Evening, I gave an exemplar of one way I would go about doing the research for a degree (law in my example) and how this would lead neatly into writing a personal statement. For me, I did two things:

- succinctly mapped out my understanding and interests in the subject (in this case as it was not a school subject, I read an introductory book on law and did a mini online introductory law course (MOOC)). Of course, if you studied the subject at school it may be easier to map out your interests in the subject because you will have studied it already.
- I then identified an issue that really interested me (in my example it was ‘is the English law actually just?’) and explored that issue in more depth through, for example, a very relevant lecture on the 2011 London Riots (found by googling “Public Law lectures”) and an article on Marxist views of the English legal system (from Google Scholar). By showing how your research develops, what you have learnt and what more you want to find out, you will show your engagement with the subject.

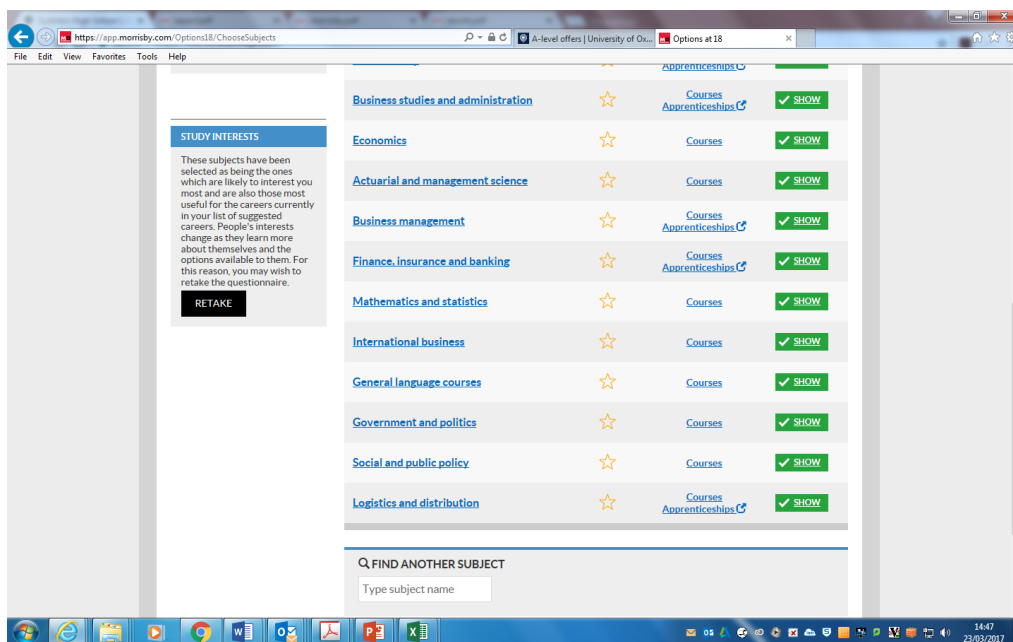
Together with a short introduction, conclusion, a part on the relevance of your other A level subjects and a bit on your extra-curricular activities (if desired), you will often produce a strong personal statement. Specific personal statement training will follow in the Summer Term but I wanted to reassure that looked at like this, personal statements should not be too daunting. As I said earlier, note that for *some* vocational subjects, particularly things like medicine, the personal statement may

follow a different format as there is more emphasis on demonstrating vocational competency but you will receive advice on this.

Spreadsheet Template

You will see at the Link given at the outset, I have provided a spreadsheet template which shows your daughter how to capture the exploration and learning discussed above. The first tab of the spreadsheet contains a hypothetical law example and you will see how this ultimately leads to writing a vital part of the personal statement. Your daughter can create new tabs using the format for the subject(s) she is considering.

Screenshot 1: Getting More Ideas For Your Degree Subject (refine by retaking your questionnaire)



Screenshot 2: Using Morrisby to get an overview of the degree

ACCOUNTANCY

Level 4+ - Higher Education ▾ PRINT ADD TO FAVOURITES

DESCRIPTION

Courses are for those who want to develop the skills and knowledge needed for a career in accountancy. Accountants summarise a company's financial performance to help the company's management make appropriate decisions, to enable shareholders (or owners) to determine their value, to determine the amount of tax due, and to ensure that all the financial regulations are being followed. Courses cover financial records and management accounts, recording conventions, tax and other liabilities, company structure, auditing, legal responsibilities and duties. Some courses offer a work placement either in the UK or abroad.

Destinations

About 47% of accountancy graduates go straight into accountancy or business straight after graduation. They enter jobs as trainee chartered accountants, auditors, financial analysts, management accountants, accounting technicians, financial and accounting technicians, finance and investment, analysts/advisers, certified accountants, tax consultants and business analysts. Typical employers include accountancy firms, investment and retail banks, insurance companies, building societies and the public sector. Those

Screenshot 3: Finding Out About Degrees Related to One You Are Interested In

ACCOUNTANCY

Level 4+ - Higher Education ▾ PRINT ADD TO FAVOURITES

DESCRIPTION **STUDY TOPICS** **SIMILAR AREAS** **RESOURCES**

SIMILAR SUBJECTS

- [Finance, insurance and banking](#)
- [Business studies and administration](#)
- [Actuarial and management science](#)
- [Business management](#)
- [International business](#)
- [Economics](#)
- [Mathematics and statistics](#)
- [Retailing and management](#)

RELATED CAREERS

- [Accounting technician](#)
- [Civil service: finance service \(HMRC\)](#)
- [Chartered secretary \(professional administrator\)](#)
- [Accountant: public sector](#)
- [Accountant: private practice](#)
- [Accountant: Management](#)
- [Revenue executive / Tax inspector](#)
- [Costs lawyer / draftsman](#)

Screenshot 4:

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following elements:

- Browser Tabs:** "General%20engineering/all-locations/russell-group", "A-level offers | University of Ox...", and "Options at 18".
- Page Header:** "Found 1 courses at 1 institutions" and a "Map View" link.
- Filter Panel (Left):**
 - SUBJECT SEARCH:** "General engineering"
 - JOINT COURSES:** "Type another subject OF Include all joint courses:
 - UNIVERSITY:** "Enter university name"
 - TOWN / POSTCODE:** "Town or postcode"
 - LOCATIONS:** Europe, Scotland, Wales, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, North West, North East, West Midlands, East Midlands, South West, South East, London, East Anglia. A "View International Links" button is below.
 - UNIVERSITY TYPE:** All, Traditional, Specialist, Vocational, Russell Group.
 - UCAS TARIFF:** All, Foundation: < DDD, Incoming: SCC - DDD, High: ABB - BBC, Premium: A*AA - AAB.
- Search Results (Right):**
 - The University of Liverpool:** Website, ugrecruitment@liv.ac.uk, 0151 794 2000, View map.
 - Engineering:** H100, Hon, 3-4FT, [Typical Grades](#), [ABB](#), [UCAS info](#), and a star icon.
- Taskbar (Bottom):** Windows taskbar with icons for Outlook, Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and a search bar.