

Choosing a University Course

In Six Easy Steps

Introduction

If you are reading this document, by now hopefully you have read through the following resources:

- Researching Occupations Activity
- What's Your Preference? Higher vs Vocational Study.

If you haven't, please do so to ensure you are making an informed choice about the occupation you are aiming towards and that university study is the right pathway for you.

Once you have identified an occupation (e.g., nursing) or a general interest area (health science), now you will need to choose which course/s you would like to apply for.

This resource aims to make the process simple for you. Examples and 'writable' sections have been included in the document.

Please don't hesitate to contact your career adviser with questions, or make an appointment time to them to discuss your future study options.

Steps

- 1. Understand key terminology**
- 2. Decide how you would like to structure your university program**
- 3. Pick your major/s and find suitable courses**
- 4. Assess your identified options**
- 5. Compare your identified options**
- 6. Develop your preference list**



Step 1 – Understand Key Terminology

This is a **very** basic list, but is what Year 12 students wanting to study at university need to know. Universities use terms that are very different to school, but don't worry, you will pick them up in no time!

- **Undergraduate:** When you start university, you will be called an undergraduate student. Once you graduate from a Bachelor Degree, you will be able to apply for graduate courses like Graduate Diploma and Masters.
- **Bachelor Degree:** This is the first degree that most students will undertake at university. It is also called an undergraduate degree. Depending on the area studied, the course will take between 3 – 5 years for full time students.
- **Associate Degree:** Some students undertake an associate degree, which is a para-professional two-year course. Once completed, you can often go directly into the third year of the relevant Bachelor Degree.

- **Subject/Unit:** Just like at school, you will undertake subjects at university. Subjects can also be called units and courses, but they are the same thing. You usually study 8 subjects per year, and 4 subjects per semester. For most degrees, you can choose your own subjects. For some professional degrees, the university will tell you what subjects you must study.
- **Major:** This is a sequence of subjects you take over the length of your degree, to give you a specialisation. A major is usually between 6 – 8 subjects. Some professional majors like psychology and actuarial studies have more subjects in the major. You can sometimes choose two majors or a major and a minor.
- **Minor:** This is the same as a major, but has less subjects – usually around 4.
- **Semester/Session/Trimester:** Semester and session means the same thing. Students usually undertake two semesters of study per year.

Example- Kellie would like to study a **Bachelor of Arts** with a **major** in **Geography** and a **minor** in **History**. This will take her three-years to complete full time.

The university will tell her what subjects she must take to study the major and minor, but she can choose her own electives. The **course rules** will tell her if she can pick electives from another faculty like business.

You will pick your subjects on a yearly basis (e.g., you would pick your first year subjects in February 2018), but you can change them mid year, which will enable you in some cases to change your major. Depending on the course and the university, you may be able to choose your major at the end of first year.

Year	Semester	Subjects			
1	1	Geography	Elective	History	Elective
	2	Geography	Elective	Elective	Elective
2	1	Geography	Elective	History	Elective
	2	Geography	Geography	Elective	Elective
3	1	Geography	Elective	History	Elective
	2	Geography	Geography	History	Elective

Step 2: Decide how you would like to structure your program

Before you apply for courses, you will need to decide how you would like to structure your program. Think about what will make you competitive in the job market once you graduate. The following are some of your options:

Single Degree

- You choose an Associate Degree or a Bachelor Degree and graduate with one qualification – e.g., Bachelor of Law.

Double or Combined Degree

- You combine two Bachelor Degrees together. You don't usually study any extra subjects per year, but it will take you one year longer to complete both degrees. E.g., Bachelor of Laws is four years. A Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of International Relations combined degree will take five years to complete.

Degree + Concurrent Diploma

- You can combine a Bachelor Degree with a vocational or higher education diploma at some institutions. For example- a Bachelor of Engineering with a vocational diploma in project management. Or, a Bachelor of Arts with a higher education diploma in French.

- A university diploma gives you another skill set, and a vocational diploma aims to make you 'work ready', can give you work experience, and is attractive to employers.



Vocational to Higher Education

You can start your studies somewhere that offers vocational education courses like a TAFE or Private College and then articulate into a degree course at university.

Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas can often provide credit towards a degree.

Each university has articulation agreements in place with TAFEs - contact them to find out which courses are eligible.

The benefit of this pathway is it:

- ✓ Boosts your chances of gaining employment.
- ✓ You can work in the area you are qualified in during your university degree.
- ✓ The vocational course is very hands-on and related directly to industry, so you will have a better handle on the theory subjects of your university course

Broad Degree to Graduate Studies

You can undertake a broad undergraduate degree first and then undertake graduate studies in an area you are interested in. This is great for students who are unsure about the pathway they wish to undertake

For example:

- Bachelor of Youth Work > Master Social Work.
- Bachelor of Arts > Master of Education
- Bachelor of Science > Master of Engineering
- Bachelor of Biomedicine > Master of Physiotherapy
- Bachelor of Food and Nutrition > Master of Dietetics

Student Examples

Nursing

Paul would like to be a Nurse- the ultimate goal is for him to be a fully qualified **Registered Nurse**.



Complete VCE

- Complete a Diploma of Enrolled Nursing at a vocational education provider and then complete the Bachelor of Nursing, starting at second year level. Has two qualifications, can work as an enrolled nurse whilst studying at university and will complete over 400 hours of work experience before even starting university. 4 years total.

- Complete a Bachelor of Nursing at University. 3 years total.

- Complete a combined degree in Nursing and another area of interest- e.g., Midwifery, Business, Paramedicine, Psychology, Counselling etc. Will graduate with two qualifications. 4 years total. Example 1: Australian Catholic University, Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Counselling, <http://bit.ly/2vF78a9>. Example 2: Deakin University, Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Psychological Science, <http://bit.ly/2w5VkhH>.

- Complete the Bachelor of Nursing with a Diploma in a field of interest, providing the University approves. This could be a Diploma of Languages. 3 – 4 years total.

- Complete a Bachelor of Science or related program and then undertake a Master of Nursing Practice. Example 1: University of Melbourne, Bachelor of Biomedicine majoring in Human Structure and Function, <http://bit.ly/2akuTfx> > Master of Nursing Science, <http://bit.ly/2f8rogp>.

- Complete a Bachelor of Nursing with graduate studies in an area such as Paramedicine, Nursing, Health Promotion, Public Health, Medicine, etc.

Student Examples

Engineering

Sarah would like to be a qualified **Civil Engineer**.



Complete VCE

- Complete an Advanced Diploma of Engineering Technology. Then complete a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) with credit from the TAFE course. Example: RMIT, Advanced Diploma of Engineering Technology, <http://bit.ly/2hn3jDo> > RMIT Bachelor of Engineering (Civil and Infrastructure) (Honours), <http://bit.ly/2jEn60Z> with up to 1.5 years of credit.

- Complete an Associate Degree in Engineering. Then complete a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) with credit. Example: Swinburne University, Associate Degree in Engineering, <http://bit.ly/2vnXY43> > Swinburne University, Bachelor of Engineering (Honours), <http://bit.ly/2vnY9fj> with 2 years of credit. 4 years.

- Complete a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil), then a Graduate Diploma in Business or Project Management etc. 5 years.

- Complete a Bachelor of Engineering with a concurrent diploma in management, project management, commerce etc. 4 - 5 years.

- Complete a combined degree in Engineering (Civil) and Business, Commerce, Management etc. 5 years.

- Complete a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Civil Systems or a related program and then undertake a Master of Engineering. 5 years.

- Complete an Engineering degree with a strong industry focus. Example: Swinburne University, Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) (Professional) majoring in Civil. Complete a year of paid industry experience, <http://bit.ly/2uk4QLI>

Student Examples

Social Work

Ben would like to be a qualified **Social Worker**.



Complete VCE

- Complete the two-year Diploma of Community Services, which will provide over 400 hours of work experience then start at second year of the Bachelor of Social Work. About 5 years.

- Complete the Bachelor of Social Work with a concurrent Certificate IV or Diploma of Youth Work. 4 - 5 years.

- Complete a combined degree in Social Work with another degree. Examples: Psychology - e.g., RMIT, <http://bit.ly/2ujFMV5>, Arts - e.g., University of Sydney, <http://bit.ly/2u3jewy>, Law - e.g., UNSW, <http://bit.ly/2f7RqAl>, or Criminology and Community Justice – e.g., Western Sydney University, <http://bit.ly/2ujxDzO>. 4 – 6.5 years.

- Complete an undergraduate degree first in an area such as Youth Work, Counselling, Health Sciences, Psychology, etc., and then complete the Master of Social Work. Example 1: Victoria University, Bachelor of Youth Work, <http://bit.ly/2u3RliB> > Deakin University, Master of Social Work, <http://bit.ly/2hnN750>. Example 2: Australian Catholic University, Bachelor of Counselling, <http://bit.ly/2u3Tss5> > University of Melbourne, Master of Social Work, <http://bit.ly/2vtfe8R> Example 3: Monash University, Bachelor of Arts majoring in Criminology and a minor in Human Rights, <http://bit.ly/2tZoxcj> > Monash University, Master of Social Work, <http://bit.ly/2wIA3PU>. 5 - 6 years.

- Complete an integrated Bachelor and Masters program. Example: La Trobe University, Bachelor of Human Services/Masters of Social Work, <http://bit.ly/23Y328R>. 4 years.

Step 3: Choose your major

Do I need to do this step?

Some degrees like Social Work, Architecture, and Nursing don't require you to choose a major. If you are looking at any of these types of degrees, go straight to Step 4.

If you are looking at a more general degree like business, arts, informational technology, engineering, science, biomedicine, music etc., you will need to narrow down what major you would like to undertake. This will also help you to narrow what Bachelor Degree you would like to study and where you can study it.

Sometimes a major and a Bachelor Degree provides you with the same outcome- e.g.,

- Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Science majoring in Psychology.
- Bachelor of Actuarial Studies and Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Actuarial Studies.
- Bachelor of Accounting and Bachelor of Business majoring in Accounting.
- Bachelor of Journalism and Bachelor of Arts majoring in Journalism.
- Bachelor of Nutrition Science and Bachelor of Health Science majoring in Nutrition.

How to find majors

THROUGH VTAC (Victorian Courses)

1. Go to www.vtac.edu.au and click on Course Search
2. Type in the course name or major you would like to study and tick the box 'include majors in your keyword search'. Use the advanced search facility if you would like to narrow down your options.
3. Under qualifications, select Bachelor and Associate Degrees.
4. The list that pops up will cover all of the government and some of the private institutions that offer that major in Victoria.
5. Search the courses that sound interesting and click Add to Shortlist. Please note that some majors listed in the major section aren't actually recognised majors – please double check with the university.

THROUGH UAC (NSW & Canberra Courses)

1. Go to www.uac.edu.au and click on 'I'm an Undergraduate'.
2. Click on 'Search for Courses'.
3. Enter what you would like to major in into the search engine. This will bring up all courses that offer a major in this area.
4. Click on the links for more information.

Student Examples

International Trade

Dan would like to work in international trade in the future. He would like to study in Victoria and undertake a single Bachelor degree.

1. Using the VTAC Course Search, he typed in Trade, ticked the majors box and under qualifications, he selected Bachelor and Associate Degrees.
2. As a result of his search, courses from 4 universities appeared. Looking at the course titles, Dan quickly worked out that many courses weren't relevant (e.g., sport and exercise science) and just had the word 'Trade' in the course description. He then cut out all of the double degrees.
3. Dan found 3 universities in Victoria with the words 'international trade' in the major section of the VTAC entry.
4. He researched the courses on the Universities websites and discovered that International Trade was a subject and not a recognised major at one of them. He then narrowed down his course options to two universities.
5. After looking at what each course could offer him and weighing up factors like did the course offer work experience and was there on campus accommodation, Dan selected the course that interested him most.
6. To find out more, Dan contacted the University using the Future Students contact page and asked questions.
7. He then attended the Open Day to ask questions in person.

Archaeology

Karen would like to work as an archaeologist. She is happy to study in Victoria or Canberra and to undertake a single or double degree.

1. Using the VTAC Course Search she typed in Archaeology and ticked the majors box.
2. As a result of her search, Karen found Archaeology listed at 2 universities. She explored both courses on the university websites and discovered that Archaeology wasn't offered as a major at one of them. She found 5 courses at the other university that had an Archaeology major and eliminated the double degrees, leaving her with one.
3. She then explored her options in Canberra by using the course search link in the UAC website. She found Archaeology offered at one university.
4. Karen printed out the course information from the two universities and compared factors like subjects, amount of work experience, ATAR requirement, global exchange opportunities, and on campus accommodation costs etc.
5. Karen narrowed down two courses that she is interested in applying for.
6. Like Dan, Karen will now email both universities with questions, and attend Open Days for both universities.

Task

Occupation/s I am interested in.....

How I would like to structure my program/s (e.g., single bachelor degree, double degree, vocational diploma then bachelor degree, concurrent diploma, bachelor degree > graduate degree).

.....

Course or major 1 I would like to search for

Course or major 2 I would like to search for

- Using the VTAC or UAC Course Search, enter the course/s or major/s.
- Looking at the results, click on the courses that appear to be relevant and print them out or email them to yourself.
- Research the courses more closely on the university websites.
- List the courses you are interested in below

Course examples for occupation 1:

Course	University	Meet Prerequisites?	2017 ATAR cut off

Courses examples for occupation 2:

Course	University	Meet Prerequisites?	2017 ATAR cut off

Step 4: Assess your identified options

Once you have identified a list of courses you are interested in, now you will need to assess your options. There are several things you will need to consider.



Location

- Is your course offered locally? If not, are you prepared to move away?
- If it isn't offered locally and you don't want to study in the city, you may be able to study the course via distance.

Deferring

- Can you defer this course if you want to take a gap year? You will be unable to defer courses that are highly competitive like Medicine.

Accommodation

- Does the university have on campus accommodation or a student residence nearby? If not, would you be happy to live off campus?

Entrance requirements

- Can you meet the prerequisite subjects? If not, is there a bridging course you can undertake?
- Don't let the ATAR cut off put you off- the ATARs on the Tertiary Admission sites are for the 2017 intake. The ATARs for 2018 could go up or down- you won't know until January.

If these considerations narrow down your course options, please list them below

Course	University	2017 ATAR cut off

Step 5: Compare your identified options

How does your university compare?

Now that you have a list of courses you are happy with, it is important that you compare what courses will best suit your needs.

You can do this by researching the Quality Indicators of Learning and Teaching (QILT) website.

You can compare the undergraduate study experience and employment data of universities through the independent research of graduates in areas such as:

- Median salary of grads
- Perception of teaching quality
- Learning resources
- Student support
- Full time employment of grads

The Task

- Go to www.qilt.edu.au/
- Using the 'Find a Study Area' or 'Find an Institution' search function.
- Select the courses or universities you would like to compare.
- You will then be able to view visual graphs comparing the ratings of the courses or universities.



Step 6: List final course choices

State:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

State:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....