Wouldn’t it be amazing when you’re older to have a job that you love? It’d be fantastic to have a long list of careers to choose from - but without the correct qualifications it can be difficult to get the job that you really want. To make your dreams a reality you need to work hard - and that starts now. This booklet explains why, and answers some questions about the choices you’re making.

For further information you can talk to teachers in your school, or alternatively you can contact the Social Sciences Outreach team using the details below:

www.sheffield.ac.uk/schools/outreach-programmes/socialsciences

The departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences are:

- Architecture
- East Asian Studies
- Economics
- Education
- Geography
- Information School
- Journalism Studies
- Landscape
- Law
- Management School
- Politics
- Sociological Studies
- Urban Studies and Planning
- Sheffield Methods Institute

Decisions
Decisions.
Choosing your options in year 9 and beyond In Social Sciences
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Year 9 options – your chance to study the things that you enjoy the most, whilst also studying the subjects that will help you to be successful if you go on to further study such as A levels. You need to work hard in order to progress to the next level.

A level selection – all of your hard work has paid off and you can now study for your A levels. You’re able to pick 3 or 4 subjects that you really enjoy. Obtaining your GCSEs and A levels is the most traditional route into university although you can go down vocational routes if you prefer.

Degree selection – after successfully completing your A levels you are able to go to University. Now you can choose the one or two subjects that you want to study for a considerable amount of time. You’re A level choices can limit your study options at University, so it’s important to consider what you might want to do in the future. You can study most subjects at A level and still find yourself ready to study for a degree in one of the Social Sciences. You can focus on studying the subjects you love and you’re not fixed to these for the rest of your life. For example you can study a degree in geography but go on to a career in teaching maths.

What you decide to do after University is completely up to you, but on average graduates have many more choices of career than people who don’t have a degree.

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Choosing your options in year 9 and beyond In Social Sciences
How should I choose my year 9 options?

The process of learning can continue beyond GCSEs to A Levels, degrees and lifelong learning. The key at this stage is to do as well as you can, and therefore we’d advise you to pick the subjects you enjoy and think you can succeed in.

Does it matter that I don’t know what I want to do when I’m older?

This is completely normal; a lot of people don’t know what they want to do for a job. If you continue to study and go to university, you will have lots of options available to you. Some careers require a specific degree subject, like architecture; some employers may prefer a certain range of subjects, like economics or finance. But the majority of graduate jobs are open to people with any degree subject. And even areas like law are open to non-law graduates, after a conversion course. So you can choose from a vast number of roles. A degree gives you the opportunity to choose a job that you really enjoy.

Do I have to study my year 9 options at A level or university?

No, you’re aiming to get the best results possible so pick subjects that will allow you to do this. If you decide to continue your study past year 11, you can choose completely new subjects, or stay with some of your GCSE subjects, or take a mixture of old and new.

Are there degrees where I need specific A levels?

Most social science degrees can be studied for the first time without an A level or equivalent qualification in that area. You don’t need a geography A level to study a geography degree. There are lots of options with social sciences. There is an exception with a BSc Economics degree: this requires a maths A level.

Are there careers where I need a specific degree?

In most cases a social science degree can lead you into a wide range of careers. There are exceptions: if you wanted to become an architect or landscape architect, you would need to study a degree in this subject. But you don’t need an accountancy degree to become an accountant, or a sociology degree to be a social researcher – these careers can be entered from a wide range of degree subjects.

Why should I go to university?

University can be as fun or as serious as you want it to be. Unlike school, you are completely in charge of your life, your attendance, what you wear and what you eat. You make friends, grow in confidence, and learn more about life in ways that you can’t imagine. All of this in addition to learning more about something you love and you gain a fantastic qualification at the end. Also there is the added bonus that university graduates generally go on to earn more in their careers than those who don’t study at university. Better still, Dr Wendy Piatt, Director General of the Russell Group, states that graduates of Russell Group universities typically earn 10% more than those from other universities. Russell Group universities are committed to the highest levels of teaching and research therefore this statistic doesn’t come as a surprise.

Can I afford to go to university?

Yes, University is available to everyone, regardless of your background or situation. There is financial support available to ensure that no one is priced out of going; the biggest challenge is making sure you achieve the grades to get into your chosen university.

Alumni examples

Helen Jones

Job: Trainee solicitor.
Degree: Law degree at the University of Sheffield.
A Levels: History, French, English, Psychology.
GCSEs: Maths, English, Science, History, French, IT, RE, Design Technology, Drama.
Advice you’d give to those choosing their options: Choose a subject you enjoy because you’re going to be learning a lot about it.
Initial career ideas: Originally I wanted to be a teacher but then decided to study Law at university and from there I chose a career path.

Ben Rattenbury

Job: Senior Policy Advisor at Department of Energy and Climate Change.
Degree: Sociology degree at the University of Sheffield.
A Levels: Maths, Geography, Economics.
Advice you’d give to those choosing their options: Choose something that fascinates you, otherwise all those hours of hard work will be torture.
Initial career ideas: I wanted to be an airline navigator until I realised they were replaced by computers.
Final thoughts: I had my horizons genuinely broadened by a range of excellent teachers. Studying at Sheffield was one of the best decisions of my life. I had a wonderful experience.

Social Sciences

The Faculty of Social Sciences offer degrees in subjects that you have studied during your time at school, and some that you haven’t. Our degrees are widely recognised by employers because of the transferable skills and knowledge you develop whilst studying with us. They’re concerned with society and the effects changes can have on people and the world we live in, which is why Social Science graduates are highly sought after in the workplace. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency 94.2% of Social Science graduates were employed three years after graduating, compared with 79% of arts and humanities graduates and 71% of graduates with science degrees.

How to find out more about university

To help you consider your options for the future, the University of Sheffield Faculty of Social Sciences Outreach team offer free taster days throughout the year. You can experience the University and enjoy a day with one of the departments (subjects) and learn what it would be like to study that particular subject. On these days you’ll have the chance to speak with our student ambassadors, who will share their experiences of university life and answer any questions you have.
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