

## **Subjects and careers**

*(from the Careers Guidance Department)*

There are some myths about the necessity of having certain subjects for certain careers. Contrary to popular belief, you do not need Design & Communications to become an architect. Having said that, it is a useful subject to take at Leaving Certificate level if you are considering a career in architecture, architectural technician, civil engineering, interior design and technology.

You do not need a business subject to study commerce, or accountancy to become an accountant. However, it is extremely advisable to do a business subject, if you are interested in going down the business path. And, it is important you pick the one relevant to the college course or career you are interested in.

### **Essential subjects**

When you do settle on the career areas you might pursue after your Leaving Certificate, find out if any essential subjects are required and the minimum grades specified. Colleges have a two-year rule on essential subjects and grades, so there is no possibility of any new requirements being introduced once you have started on your Leaving Certificate course.

If you intend to study at one of the colleges of the National University of Ireland, you must choose a third language. It is important to have a modern Continental language anyway, so if you are good at languages include the one you enjoy most.

You should certainly consider taking a science subject. A science subject is essential for careers in medical, paramedics (physiotherapy, radiography, human nutrition, pharmacy, medical laboratory science) and nursing. You require a science subject if you are interested in a career in engineering and most faculties of science require you to have a laboratory science subject.

### **Check courses**

If you check the courses available in science, engineering and electronics in the Institutes of Technology, you will discover that many do not require a science subject. It really comes down to your interest in science to date. If you are struggling with science now it is highly unlikely that it will suddenly become your best subject at Leaving Certificate.

Biology is a desirable subject for nursing and for medical and paramedical courses.

Chemistry is essential for dentistry, medicine and human nutrition and dietetics.

Physics is a very useful subject for technical/engineering/scientific courses or careers.

Agricultural science is desirable for a career in agriculture.

For those that are so inclined, a good combination can be maths, applied maths and physics, but remember, if you are going to do applied maths you will need to be honours maths standard. Applied maths is a great grounding for careers or courses in engineering and science.

Home economics is important if you are interested in courses such as nutrition, social science and health and promotion, for example. It can also complement biology. It is desirable, though not essential, for further study in teacher training for home economics, hotel & catering, culinary arts and nursing.

### **Portfolio required**

Art is desirable, and for some courses essential, for art & design, architecture and industrial design. It can also be a very helpful subject for primary and Montessori teaching. Art is essential for most of the art & design courses as a portfolio is required in most cases.

Music is a wide-ranging subject that requires a natural aptitude. Music is essential for entry into several music-related courses and some colleges run entrance tests or auditions.

Geography and history are also popular subjects. Geography provides good background information for subsequent careers in town planning, cartography, surveying, tourism and meteorology.

History is another wide-ranging subject and a desirable background one for courses or careers in politics, law, journalism, broadcasting and teaching.

### **Check again**

When you have made your final subject selection, you should examine them very carefully to see that you have kept your career options open. You should check to see if you have the essential requirements for third-level courses in which you have an

interest. Trinity College, for instance, requires two science subjects for medicine and dentistry, while human nutrition requires higher level chemistry. It is too late finding out that you do not have an essential subject when you are filling out your CAO form. When you have made your choices, you should consult Ms S Tanner or Ms L McGinn.

### **Don't make rash decisions**

Subject choice should not depend on what teacher will be teaching the subject at Leaving Certificate level; neither should it depend on rumours as to what is an 'easy' subject or a 'difficult' one. If you are interested in a career that annually attracts high points, then it is natural to choose the six subjects that, in your opinion, will help you gain the points commensurate with your potential and your study.

Some students find out early in the year that a subject they choose is proving too difficult for them. This happens all too frequently at third-level as well. In order to avoid this happening, you should research each subject by getting a loan of the texts that are being used and talking to the teacher who teaches that subject, so that you have a good idea of what is involved before you start on your Leaving Certificate course. If, on the other hand, you find the course really beyond you, lose no time in getting the advice of the teacher involved and Ms Tanner or Ms McGinn.

It may also help to have a word with the teacher into whose class you wish to transfer to see if he/she has room and is willing to facilitate you. If you have a friend in the class into which you are transferring, get any notes and texts in use as you cannot expect the teacher to bring you up to speed.

Finally, it is important to remember that the Leaving Certificate is a two-year course.

Pay attention in class from day one, take good notes and devise a study plan for each night. Your overall plan should include keeping a balance between study and extra-curricular activities. To succeed you must have your priorities right particularly as regards part-time work and your social life. It will all prove worthwhile on the day you get that offer from the CAO of a place in college that you have dreamed about and worked so hard to achieve.