

Choosing Senior Cycle Subjects

Your choice of senior cycle subjects will, to some degree, impact on your choice of future 3rd level options. However, if you choose your subjects carefully with consideration towards what you genuinely enjoy and are good at, it stands to reason that you will choose a career that is somehow linked to these.

For example, if you don't like science and find it a struggle the chances are that you will not suddenly decide that you want to be a physicist at the end of 6th year! Keeping a subject that you don't like just in case you need it is never a good idea. Only certain courses have specific requirements as these days there are many alternative options available. If you aren't sure about subject requirements just ask. Please do not rely on speculation or things that you may hear from other students.

Making well thought out decisions at this stage will have a huge impact on your remaining years in school as well as life beyond school. It is vital to your happiness and success that you make the right decision for you.

What you need to consider:

- ☞ **Do I enjoy this subject?**
- ☞ **Am I good enough at it to maintain a high level of interest in it?**
- ☞ **Is it relevant to my future career choices?**
- ☞ **If I haven't decided what I want to do after I finish school will this subject help to keep my options open?**

General Requirements for 3rd Level

All colleges set minimum requirements known as **subject or entry requirements**. If you do not meet these requirements you will not be accepted into your chosen course no matter how many points you get in your Leaving Cert exams.

It is very difficult to set down definite guidelines as each college generally has its own set of requirements. If you are unsure what you want to do after school the best thing to do is to try to meet general requirements that would suit many courses in many different colleges. If this is your aim, you should be focusing on passing English; Irish; Maths; a third language; a science subject; and one other subject at Higher or Ordinary Level.

In general with regards to subjects I would advise students to maintain Higher Level subjects for as long as possible to widen their options after school as well as to yield best possible points in the exams. Ordinary Level is ok, but will limit options to Institutes of Technology rather than universities. Considering Foundation Level Maths or Irish should be taken as a last resort as it severely limits students' options when going on to 3rd level.

There are many different categories of 3rd level institutions, the main ones being:

1. **NUI Universities (UCC; UCD; Galway; Maynooth; NCAD; RCSI)**
2. **Other Universities (UL; Trinity College; etc)**
3. **Institutes of Technology (CIT; DIT; etc)**
4. **PLC – Post Leaving Cert Colleges (St. John's; College of Commerce**

1. NUI – National Universities of Ireland

NUI universities generally have the strictest requirements, though these are gradually being relaxed over the years to allow greater flexibility to students.

Standard requirements are that students must obtain a pass in at least 6 subjects, of which at least 2 must be Higher Level H5. For all faculties you will need to have English and Irish and most require Maths. A 3rd language is required for all faculties except Science and Engineering. At least one lab science is required for all science and engineering degrees; with two needed for entry to medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.

Depending on the degree, specific grades may need to be obtained in certain LC subjects. Further information including details of applying for language exemptions can be found at www.nui.ie

2. Other Universities

Universities that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the NUI set their own requirements.

Standard requirements for most faculties in these universities are passes in English and Maths, plus a pass in either Irish or another language. There are similar matriculation requirements as NUI for entry to science and engineering degree programmes. As with the NUI, these universities require a pass in six subjects at Higher or Ordinary Level including at least 2 H5.

Some of these institutes also accept Foundation Level Maths although it will not be counted in terms of subject entry requirements or points.

3. Institutes of Technology

IT's offer a great range of degree options at Level 7 (Ordinary Degree – typically 3 years) and Level 8 (Honours Degree – 4 years), and their requirements are generally less strict than those of the universities. Generally speaking, your subjects for entry must include Maths and either English or Irish, and you must acquire a pass in five subjects at higher or ordinary level for entry to Level 7 degrees.

Level 8 degrees have the same requirements as universities; students must have passes in six subjects with at least two of those being H5. Certain degrees may require a science subject or higher level maths.

4. Post Leaving Cert Colleges

PLC's are different to the above institutes as they select their students based on interview with the condition that they achieve at least five passes in the leaving cert exam. These passes must be at higher or ordinary level (not foundation), and there are generally very few additional subject specific requirements.

Certain colleges do put specific requirements on some of their courses (ie. Biology required for healthcare or maths required for business) but these are the exception rather than the rule.

Successful students are awarded with a Level 5 certificate. Students may use a PLC course as a stepping stone to university if their leaving cert exams did not meet points or matriculation requirements. In these cases they should be aware that the university or IT will still enforce certain subject requirements for entry to some of their courses.

Information regarding 3rd level entry requirements, subject choice, and lots of other useful info can be found here:

www.qualifax.ie

It has many useful links for younger students as well as 6th years; including one which allows students to research the impact of not choosing a particular subject for their Leaving Cert -

On the main home page click on the Leaving Cert and Junior Cert Subject Choice box and follow the instructions on screen.

www.cao.ie

This is the official site which LC students use to apply for third level courses. It can also be used as a link into the web pages of various colleges and many other applications.

www.careersportal.ie

Similar to Qualifax, this site is used frequently by Guidance Counsellors, and is very useful for researching different career types, courses, etc. It also has a very useful interest test which may help point you in the right direction in terms of future career.

www.education.ie

The home page of the Department of Education and Science. Very useful for subject and exam information; and includes many useful downloadable resources for students at all levels.

www.examinations.ie

A very useful resource for finding exam information such as past exam papers and marking schemes, as well as information on RACE and other related subjects.

Subject Choice for Senior Cycle

All students must study at least five subjects for the Leaving Certificate, but most continue with seven subjects. In the Leaving Cert exam, the grades from your best six subjects count towards your overall points total. There are three core subjects, English, Irish and Maths, and although not all are necessary to be accepted into 3rd level education, it is recommended that you keep on all three subjects at whatever level suits your abilities. The only exception is Irish, for which students may have an official exemption if they received their primary education outside this country, or if they have a specific learning difficulty which has been diagnosed by an educational psychologist. If this applies to you, please notify the Guidance Counsellor of this.

The subjects available fall into four main categories:

Language Group : English, Irish, French, German.

Science Group : Maths, Physics, Biology, Chemistry.

Business Studies Group : Accounting, Business.

Social Studies Group : Geography, History, Home Ec, Art,
Music.

All students are asked to select subjects from the list on the accompanying subject choice form; this initial choice is made freely without the constraints of subject blocks. Where numbers allow, classes will be formed and the blocks constructed from these according to the students own choices.

In cases where students cannot avail of their top choices, they will be consulted individually to enable them to reach a suitable compromise.

Quick Guide to Subjects for Entry Requirements

English – Required for university entry in general, though some will accept Irish in its place. HL is required for courses such as journalism and media studies.

Irish – Required for university entry; exemptions are granted to students who received primary education outside Ireland or those with diagnosed specific learning difficulties. HL is essential for primary teaching degrees; Irish degrees at Trinity and NUI Galway; and for any degree with Irish as a major component (ie. Law and Irish at UCC). FL is not acceptable at UCC.

French / German – NUI requires a third language for entry to degrees with the exception of most degrees in the Science and Engineering faculties. Most other institutes do not require a third language unless it is an integral part of the degree; in which cases students will need to obtain a H3 or greater. In some institutes (and for Garda entry) a passing grade in another language can take the place of Irish in order to matriculate.

Maths – Required for entry to almost all courses across universities and I.T.s. HL is essential for entry to all Level 8 Engineering and maths-based degrees, including accounting. OL will suffice for entry to Level 7 degrees; FL is not acceptable for any engineering or similar degrees. Foundation Level is accepted at a small amount of 3rd level institutes, though may not be counted for points. To date none of the 3rd level institutions in Cork accept Foundation Level Maths.

Biology / Physics / Chemistry – The majority of science degrees require just one science from this group at HL (though two would be preferable). Students considering engineering should give serious consideration to choosing Physics. Health sciences such as medicine and dentistry require two HL lab sciences; eg. UCC requires a minimum of H4 in Chemistry and either Physics or Biology (Ag Science not acceptable). Specific lab sciences may be required for certain degrees but these are usually self-evident from the degree title: i.e. Physics for Theoretical Physics; Biology for Genetics, etc.

History – is not necessary to matriculate for any 3rd level course but it is a good choice for students with strong reading/writing abilities and is very useful if considering a career in politics / journalism / teaching / law, to name but a few.

Geography – while it is not a specific requirement for any 3rd level course, HL Geography is accepted as one of the science requirements for some science and pharmacy degrees in Trinity. It is very useful if progressing to degrees in earth science / civil engineering / horticulture / forestry, etc.

Business Studies / Accounting – are not required for entry to 3rd level as even the business-related degrees all start from scratch (referred to as *ab initio* degrees). However, if a student is considering business as part of their 3rd level choices it would be very useful to study at least one of the related subjects to Leaving Cert level. (A portion of the first year of many business courses is similar to a condensed version of HL Leaving Cert syllabus).

Art – Apart from some graphic design degrees, it is possible to gain entry to colleges without LC Art. However most art colleges and various design courses have restricted entry, which means that along with achieving the requisite points and subject requirements, students must submit a portfolio to be considered for entry.

Home Economics – This is not a specific requirement of any courses at third level but is an excellent subject in companion with Biology or Chemistry at senior cycle. In St Angela's Sligo, it can be substituted for a lab science in some of their education degrees. Like Art and Music, Home Ec is an excellent choice for LC for those committed to working hard in the subject.

Music – There are a very small number of courses which have Music as an essential LC subject, though most Music degrees do not specify Music as part of their subject requirements. However, to study Music at 3rd level, it is vital to have a good understanding of musical theory as well as practical skills and training; all Music courses require students to pass an entrance audition in conjunction with meeting additional entry requirements.

LCVP – Leaving Cert Vocational Programme - is an additional subject which is available to all students who present with a qualifying selection of Leaving Cert subjects. Students will study enterprise modules, prepare for the world of work, and gain invaluable IT skills. Students can qualify for LCVP if they are studying a min of five subjects for their LC including Irish and a European language and one of the following combinations:

- Any 2 Sciences
- 1 Science + Home Ec
- Business + Accounting
- Home Ec + Art
- Home Ec or Art or Music + Business or Accounting

Additional Languages – if available, students may choose to sit a LC exam in an additional (native) language along with the rest of their subjects. Please check examinations.ie for a list of the current subjects available to candidates.

Senior Cycle

Subject Choice Guide



St Aloysius School
Sharman Crawford St.
Cork

Subjects and Career Choices

SUBJECT	USEFUL FOR
English	Teaching; civil service; law careers; marketing; journalism; politics; drama
Irish	Teaching; politics; journalism; careers in Irish government or voluntary bodies
French German	Tourism; teaching; journalism; international business; translating; careers with IT; HR;
Maths Applied Maths	Accountancy; engineering; careers in science; IT; actuary; banking; computing; careers with physics; industrial design
Biology	Science & Health careers; farming; zoology; teaching; medical research
Physics	Architecture; engineering; aeronautics
Chemistry	Engineering; careers in science & healthcare; laboratory research; pharmacy
Business Studies	Teaching; management; law; banking; advertising; entrepreneurship; finance
Accounting	Accountancy; management; quantity surveyor; teaching; taxation; consultancy
History	Journalism; politics; teaching; law
Geography	Engineering; teaching; surveying; scientific fieldwork; archaeology; meteorology
Home Economics	Teaching; professional cookery/chef; creative design; catering services
Art	Advertising; teaching; restoration; design; photography; professional artist
Music	Teaching; orchestral work; professional musician; musical theatre

New Points System for Leaving Cert Students

Pre-2017 Grade Scheme	% Marks		Grade Scheme from 2017
A1	90-100	90-100	H1/O1
A2	85<90	80<90	H2/O2
B1	80<85		
B2	75<80	70<80	H3/O3
B3	70<75		
C1	65<70	60<70	H4/O4
C2	60<65		
C3	55<60	50<60	H5/O5
D1	50<55		
D2	45<50	40<50	H6/O6
D3	40<45		
E	25<40	30<40	H7/O7
F	10<25	0<30	H8/O8
NG	0<10		

New Grades and Common Points Scale from 2017

H1 - 100	01 - 56	<u>LCVP</u>
H2 - 88	02 - 46	Dinstinction - 66
H3 - 77	03 - 37	Merit - 46
		Pass -
H4 - 66	04 - 28	28
H5 - 56	05 - 20	
		NB. 25 Bonus points for Hons
H6 - 46	06 - 12	Maths
H7 - 37	07 - 0	only for grades H6 and above
H8 - 0	08 - 0	