

For details of undergraduate courses offered by Maynooth University see -

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/undergraduate-studies>

The Maynooth University Arts degree (MH101) along with many other MU degrees, allows students to select from a diverse range of subjects, giving flexibility to those who want a degree in the Arts but may not yet know where their exact career ambitions lie.

An Arts programme provides students with an opportunity to gain an education in their chosen discipline and develop a wide range of skills – such as critical thinking, working independently, communication, adaptability, problem solving – all of which can be transferred to the workplace and are sought after by employers. In fact, employers of Arts graduates are more likely to focus on the academic achievement and the graduate's ability to demonstrate these “employability” skills than on the content of the degree itself. Apart from professions requiring specialist training such as engineering, science or teaching for example, in reality most occupations are open to Arts graduates – currently about 40% of graduate jobs are for graduates of any discipline.

However, choosing subjects within Arts is a cause of concern for many students and a question they frequently ask is “What are the right subjects to choose?” Unfortunately, there is no definitive answer to this question – the best advice is to choose the subjects that are “right” for **YOU!** So, how do you know what is right for you? Well, ask yourself what is your main **reason** for studying the subject or course – is this mainly interest/passion for subject, career objective, to develop a specific skill set? Alternatively, a mixture of all three? Once you have a clearer idea of **why** you are studying, ask yourself **how** can you best plan your subject/course choices to achieve this goal?

In addition, set out below are some points to consider when faced with subject choice.

The subject itself

When choosing subjects/courses, the general advice is to choose them based upon your level of **interest** in the subject. When you **enjoy** and are interested in a subject you are more likely to be **motivated** to work harder, resulting in higher academic grades. In addition, if you have an **aptitude** for a subject, chances are you will perform well in that subject and achieve good results. If you are thinking of taking subjects you are already studied, consider your academic performance in these subjects to date, your level of interest, skill and enjoyment in them and consider these factors. Do not think that familiar subjects will be the same at University - **research** the course content. See below for ways to do this.

Maybe you have not studied a particular subject before. University gives you an opportunity to try new subjects such as Anthropology, Philosophy and Sociology for example. During your first few weeks, you are encouraged to sample different subjects by **attending various lectures** before making your final decision, although it is important that you do not overload yourself and remember to keep up to date with your course requirements in the initial few weeks.

Students may think that some subjects are “easier” than others are but this is a myth. The level of difficulty of subjects can depend on your interest and aptitude for them. In addition, if it is a new subject you will need time to adjust to the content, terminology, etc.

Research the course content

Take an in-depth look at the contents of the courses and modules that you are considering -for each of the years of study. Details of these can be found in the college prospectus and at the following link:

www.maynoothuniversity.ie/current-students and select *Course Finder*.

Of particular importance, here is the link to the course **structure** and a breakdown of what is studied in each year of the course. You can do a comparison of what is involved.

Each course has a **handbook, which** has detailed information on module content. You can obtain a copy of the handbooks by contacting the relevant Department (executive assistant, course director or first-year coordinator) and request a copy from them.

Talk to the course director or **year/subject coordinator** if you have any specific queries about the course or subjects.

Ask the course director where have previous graduates gone on to – postgraduate study? Where, what courses? Employment? Where, what type of jobs? Call into the Help Desk in the Career Development Centre for further information.

Look at the textbooks involved, assignment or projects topics, examination papers.

Current students can be another useful source of information. Remember that these will be their opinions only – what one student considers difficult, another might find easy. Think about **your** interest and ability in that subject/course.

Career choice and Employability

When making decisions about subject choice or a career path, there is no definitive answer as there are many factors that go into this entire process – essentially, the Career Planning process involves four steps (self-assessment, opportunity awareness and assessment, decision making and action steps). These are outlined on our website at: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career> and each of these steps has a myriad of influencing factors also.

Internal factors include our values, interests, personality, skills, our learning style, our levels of motivation and self-confidence. Our interest/preferences for certain **subjects** also falls within this category.

External factors include friends, family, role models, the economy, the labour market, our experience of life and work, network, our personal circumstances and finances, to name but a few. Once you are aware of all these influences, you can examine them in the light of the information you are discovering about yourself and opportunities (see below) and this may help you to make the best career decisions and plans for yourself.

Some people wish to tie in their course choice with a suitable career path. Some courses are more vocational than others are. Therefore, you can examine your chosen course/subject with this in mind. How clear are you about the **career area** you wish to enter? Also, bear in mind that over the course of our working lives, many people change career and jobs a number of times, using their job as a stepping stone as their work experience and skills increase.

As previously mentioned, some professions/careers **require** you to have certain subjects in order to join that profession. **Teaching** is an obvious example: If you want to be a teacher in a recognized state secondary school or some adult education settings, you must be registered with the Teaching Council. This organization sets out specific rules about subject requirements so this will have implications for the subjects and modules that you choose as part of your degree if you want to be a teacher in these areas.

Some degrees/subjects will provide a more direct entry route to certain career areas e.g. social work, psychology, economics, accountancy, law, IT. However, for many careers and professions (such as those just mentioned) it is possible to do a **conversion** or a preparatory course following a cognate (similar) degree or **even any degree discipline** at all. However, relevant experience may be necessary for entry to these courses and careers.

There are some careers where your degree is an advantage - examples would be a geography degree leading to a job as a regional and urban planner or an environmentalist, or a politics degree leading to journalism.

There are also careers where your degree is a broadly based foundation (for example, jobs within the Civil Service, accountancy and finance, management consultancy) and careers where the degree is unrelated to your job. In these cases, it is the intellectual development proved by your degree and your skills, rather than the subject, which the employer is looking for.

So, if you have a definite career direction or if you are thinking about what career areas are of interest to you, consider what subjects are essential and/or desirable. Then, choose a combination of appropriate subjects to enhance career prospects. As already mentioned, it helps if you have an interest in the subjects and the motivation to apply yourself to the course.

In order to help you to find out what career areas you may be suited to, have a look at our website on <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career/step-1-know-yourself>
Complete one (or more) self-assessment exercise, which can be accessed at the above link.

You can then follow the links given to research the various **occupations** suggested that fit your profile, and any others that you may be interested in together with **industry** sectors.

Research the career options open to you with your **degree** and your particular **subjects** at the following link:
<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career/step-1-know-yourself>

Find out ways to research **occupational opportunities** at the following link:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career/step-2-know-your-opportunities>

Identifying occupational opportunities can include activities such as:

- information interviewing
- job shadowing or volunteering
- researching labour market trends
- networking – family, friends, contacts
- Work Placement as part of course
- Opportunity to study abroad for a year as part of course
- Attending relevant career related seminars, events, activities, fairs, company presentations
- Internship
- Talk to employers in areas of interest to find out what courses/subjects and experience they would value most

All of the above can enhance your knowledge and experience of occupations and career paths and help you to make a more informed decision about where you would like to go in your career. You are advised to begin the Career Planning process as early as possible during your academic studies so that you can use your time in college to research opportunities, gain appropriate experience and in general maximize your time in college to develop personal, academic and employability skills – while gaining a high quality degree!

Most students and graduates want a degree that makes them **employable**. In considering your employability, employers take into account such factors as:

Your **grades** (particularly your overall degree result but some employers are interested in seeing your progressive results e.g. accountancy firms)

Your **skills**. Your studies will equip you with a range of skills, which can be transferred to the workplace. Skills can be developed in a variety of ways – through college work, work experience, volunteering, placement and extra-curricular activities. See <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/careers/discover-your-career/step-1-know-yourself/skills-values-interests-personality> for more information on skills.

Your **qualities**: e.g. enthusiasm, motivation, drive, energy, leadership.

Use the Career Development Centre

The Career Development Centre can help you to navigate through the above steps by providing you with a range of resources, activities and services, which will help you to make an informed decision for yourself to enable you to take the most appropriate career and study steps for you at that particular time. Unlike previous times, where graduates chose one career and in many cases one job for life, in today's world of work, career paths can be wide-ranging, varied and temporary, requiring ongoing referral to the career planning process described above. The aim of the Career Development Centre is to teach you about these steps so that you can develop career management skills and thus manage your career throughout your life.

The resources we provide include on-line and paper based material, relevant to all the career-planning steps. Activities include company presentations, job and study fairs, career-related seminars and many more. Our services include our help-desk and one- to-one meetings and contacts where you can explore and discuss the career planning process, what you have discovered and researched about yourself and about opportunities available, and practical help to take the next step that you have decided is right for you