

5 STEPS TO CHOOSING YOUR COURSE

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By Matt McGinniss

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Contents

Introduction	4
Step 1 – Understand Your Reasons for Studying.....	7
1.1 Why Do You Want to Study?	7
1.2 Who Is Deciding What You Study?	8
1.3 What Are You Good At?	9
1.4 What Type of Work Environment Are You Interested In?	10
1.5 What Job Role Are You Interested In?.....	10
1.6 Action Steps.....	11
Step 2 - Choose the Best Qualification	12
2.1 Qualification Levels	12
2.2 Pathways to Study.....	13
2.3 Qualifications for Specific Jobs	13
2.4 Understand Time Commitments	14
2.5 Can You Complete the Course?.....	14
2.6 Action Steps.....	16
Step 3 – Choose the Best Study Location.....	17
3.1 Location Choices.....	17
3.2 The Power of Study Location.....	19
3.3 The Rise of Online Study	19
3.4 Studying in Your Home Country	20
3.5 International Study.....	20
3.6 Action Steps.....	22
Step 4 - Choose the Best Education Provider.....	23
4.1 Research Your Choices	23
4.2 Find Out Which Course the College Is Famous For.....	23
4.3 College Open Days.....	23
4.4 Read the List of Units That Make Up the Course.....	24
4.5 Compare Colleges.....	25
4.6 Action Steps.....	26
Step 5 - Prepare for Study Success.....	27
5.1 Apply to the College Early	27
5.2 Prepare Yourself With Subject Knowledge.....	27
5.3 Build Your Academic Skills.....	27
5.4 Make Extra Preparations for International Study.....	28
5.5 Make the Commitment to Complete the Course	28
5.6 Action Steps.....	30

Introduction

What course do you want to study? Where do you want to study? Will you be able to finish your course?

These three questions are critical for deciding your future. In fact, you could say these are some of the most important decisions of your LIFE!

Think about it. The decisions you make when it comes to studying will have affects for ten, twenty, even forty years from now. These decisions are long-term decisions, so you need to make good ones.

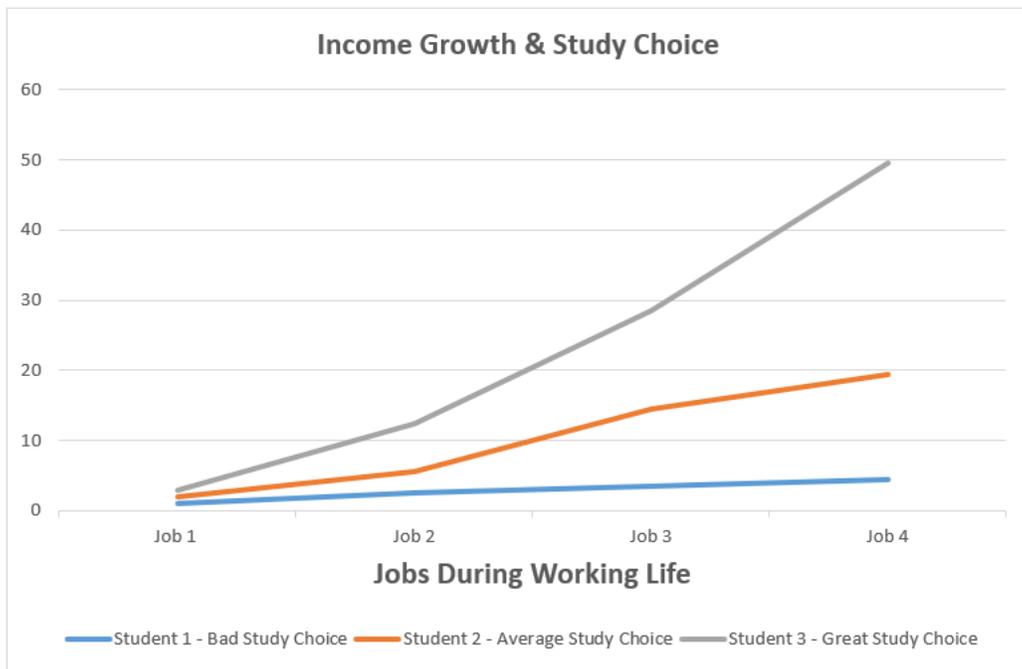


Figure 1: The income growth of three students who make bad, average and great study choices

Looking at Figure 1 above, it's clear that income growth is affected by making positive study choices. While a person who chooses poorly (blue line) has very little growth during a career, a person (red line) who makes and average choice will experience much better gains. A great choice of study (grey line) can have a very large positive impact over the lifetime income of a person, as can be seen by the growth over a working life.

This eBook will help you understand the different options you have when it comes to studying. It will help you reflect on your situation. It will help you think about the different opportunities there are out there; not just the ones that you've heard of from your parents or your friends, but the courses that will lead to a career that suits you, while resulting in the income you need to live a great life.

When you think about the future, you need to think about your family. Will you have children? If so, how many? And where will you live?

**The course you choose can influence your life in
ten, twenty and forty years in the future.**

This book will look at five main areas when it comes to making these critical decisions for your life.

In the first chapter, we look at how to choose the best subject. We ask questions such as, "Why do you want to study in the first place?" We ask, "Who is making the decision? Is it your choice, or is it somebody else's choice?"

You need to reflect on your strengths and passion. Perhaps it's business, engineering, IT or health. Maybe you want a skill that can help you work in carpentry or childcare. It's important to understand your goals when we're making these decisions.

In the second chapter, we look at how to choose the best qualification level to study. We help you understand what the different qualifications are. These might include short courses or certificates, diplomas, university degrees or postgraduate qualifications.

You might have these ambitions to study in a certain course, but how do you get there? It might not be possible to start studying that course straightaway. You might need some extra preparation with the English language, or around getting the basic skills required to allow us to enter that next level of study. The concept of pathway courses is explored to help you understand the bigger picture with this.

You need to think about being job-ready. What type of work can you do with each type of qualification? If you do a diploma, what level of job can you get? If you do a postgraduate degree or go to attend graduate school, what will this enable you to do?

Consider your time commitments. How long will you be a student? Will you study part-time or full-time? Indeed, the following questions get to the heart of the matter:

**Can you complete the course? Is it too expensive? Is it too difficult?
Do you have the right skills?**

In chapter three, we look at how to choose the best location. Perhaps you will choose to study online? If so, it may be 100% online, or a blended course you are looking for, which means part will be face-to-face and part will be online. We also look at the decisions required for staying in your home country to study or traveling internationally to study.

In chapter four we look at the choice of college. There are thousands of colleges out there, so it's important to understand the range of choices, all the way from short online courses

through to online degrees, and then actual degrees where you sit at the institution and attend in class.

You need to think about what each college can offer. Which college has the best reputation, and should you choose based on reputation? This requires research, and we'll step you through the ideas of research, including online, social media, and using testimonial research such as videos.

Importantly, when you're choosing the best college, you need to look at the Open Day. Open Days are a time when the campus is on display for all to see, and you can walk around and experience the facilities for yourself.

In chapter five, we talk about how to get ready for study success. How can you prepare yourself with the subject knowledge that you need? Many courses are very intense. They require complex study so you may have to do extra study before you start the course.

So how can you get the skills that you need to ensure your success? What about your academic skills? What do you need to do to be able to write? Are you a good writer? If not, how can you improve? What type of research do you need to be able to do? What type of report writing do you need to do? Do you have the right vocabulary? These are important things to be able to understand before you start a course.

If you're going to study overseas, you need to think about visas, accommodation, transport, banking, and overseas student health insurance. We'll discuss some of these and give some ideas for how to move forward.

Getting ready for student success includes committing to complete the course. Many courses have up to 50% of students who do not finish for various reasons. They say the work is too hard. Often, they cannot commit to all the lessons. Sometimes they get a job instead and then their studies fall away.

You need to think carefully about this fact in advance. Is this going to be you? Are you going to be the one who doesn't complete the course?

You need to be super-organized before you start any course. You must make sure you attend the orientation sessions and be prepared as possible so that you are ready from day one.

Of course, you need to be friendly, and that's not just with the other students, but also with the teachers. When you can develop that nice, clear communication, success will certainly follow.

We thank you in advance for taking time to read this eBook and we wish you success in your future studies!

Step 1 – Understand Your Reasons for Studying

“Know yourself to improve yourself”. *August Comte*

1.1 Why Do You Want to Study?

It’s amazing how many people don’t have a strong reason for studying a course. It’s also shocking to see how many people drop out after just a few months because they don’t have a career goal based on what suits their personality, style and ambition.

**So many students drop out. What a waste of time and money!
Please, don’t let this be you.**

So what is your number one reason for studying?

Is it because of money? Are you choosing what to study so you can have a career that enables you to earn a large salary?

Or are you a person who wants to help others? Is this reason you are studying to become a nurse or a teacher?

Perhaps you’re concerned about status. In other words, your reputation, the way people think about you and the way you are perceived in your community.

Maybe you’re studying a course to help you fulfil an ambition. For example, you might want to be a great scientist who discovers brilliant breakthroughs in the field of quantum physics. Or you might want to be a business person who is the CEO of a company.

Alternatively, you might be interested in a stable job such as nursing or accounting or being an IT professional. These are the types of jobs that are in high demand and allows you to continue working from year to year without much threat of losing your job.

Future technology might also be helping you choose. You might be targeting a job that grows into the future, such as robotics, or artificial intelligence.

Understanding your key motivator is certainly a good start on the track to choosing your course wisely.

Setting a goal for study is also a great way to keep you motivated throughout the process.

1.2 Who Is Deciding What You Study?

Where is the decision to study coming from? Firstly, it could be your choice. It could be something that you have wanted for a long time. Perhaps it's something that you pondered when you were a child after a random conversation, and you have decided to do that job and study that course ever since.

In contrast, it could be something that you've only recently discovered. Perhaps you've read an article online, and you've seen that this is the next big area to get involved in. Is this a decision that you've just recently made, or is it something which is deep inside of you, an intrinsic decision which is part of you?

It's also important to think about a decision which might not be your decision. Perhaps it's your parents' choice. Perhaps your father or your mother strongly suggested that you get into this area of study.

Be warned!
**Studying a course that you parents want you to
study could lead to disaster!**

If this is the case, it's important for students to understand that the parents may not have the same understanding of the industry, or different career choices and opportunities which are happening in the 21st century.

In other words, the parents may be deciding based on the wrong information. Having your parents choose may be a bad situation and can lead to disappointment and years of wasted effort and money.

In many cases when students don't complete their study, the reason is that the decision is not theirs. A parent made the decision to study that subject.

Alternatively, friends may be the deciding influence on a person. Friends may be the ones who set the trend and who make suggestions that this a better type of study, that you must study accounting, or you must study engineering because other people are studying it.

Again, you need to think carefully. Is this the best source of information? Friends are there for social reasons and for having fun but are they the best people to give career advice, and ultimately determine what you will study?

Social media is another influential factor. With so much emphasis on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other social media outlets, people are bombarded with information about what's cool, about what's good, about what's happening now.

But seriously, you should ask yourself...Is this the best way to decide about your course?

Because often, social media follows trends and looks and the short-term, rather than the long-term.

Therefore, it's essential to think carefully about who is making the decision. Is it your decision, or is it somebody else's? This will lead to the amount of motivation that you have, in the end, to complete the course.

1.3 What Are You Good At?

Okay, you're an intelligent person with life experience and skills. You should have a good idea by now about what are you are good at.

Do you have a mind for business? Can you imagine yourself having meetings with people to discuss prices, expenses, profits and company assets?

Or perhaps you're interested in engineering, where you have more of a scientific frame of mind, that you use maths to solve problems and you are process-driven.

**Seriously, think about it carefully.
What are you good at? Can you turn this into a great career?**

Alternatively, you could be interested in information technology. Perhaps you want to work with a virtual team working on cybersecurity or apps and websites. Or you could be working in computer programming and other areas where information technology is required.

Maybe you're a caring person and you like the idea of going to work and getting that interaction with people, with people who need help, and that you can provide help for. This could be in the form of being a doctor or being a nursing practitioner, or a registered nurse or an enrolled nurse or a midwife. Perhaps you could work with aged care or disability care.

Some people have a more scientific frame of mind. They're interested in physics, or chemistry, or biology, and they use those skills to solve real world problems and to come up with new hypotheses and solutions.

Or you might be interested in working in vocational jobs. These might include being a chef or an auto mechanic or an aged care worker. Other jobs include being employed as a childcare worker or disability care worker or graphic designer. Vocational jobs are not seen as highly professional jobs, but jobs that can be completed with less study and can be started faster by the person who is taking these jobs.

Other people might be interested in being in construction. They might want to work on a building site, or they might want to work building roads and bridges and tunnels and these types of things. Again, this requires skills and information that can be learnt in a formal educational setting.

1.4 What Type of Work Environment Are You Interested In?

Some people have the ambition to work for a large company. They love the idea of working for a multinational organization, which has branches all around the world, and which offers great opportunities for career advancement. People who work in these large companies often have choices. They can have excellent facilities where they spend their day to day work. They can have the best offices, use the best computing equipment, and have access to services that people who work in other companies might not have access to.

There are medium sized companies, which offer some of the similar benefits to large companies; however, there may not be the scope for finding specialized roles in a medium sized company.

Alternatively, at small companies, people tend to be allrounders. They tend to have skills which enable them to fulfil several different functions at work.

Other people enjoy the idea of working at a facility or a specialist area. This might be just one building where they can get to know people and work with clients directly. Other people might want to work outside. They might want to work with their hands. For instance, they can work in construction or areas where they are in an outside environment and don't have to have a more formal situation when they go to work each day.

1.5 What Job Role Are You Interested In?

Some people have a strong ambition to be a leader. In other words, they want to be the chief executive officer, or CEO, of a company, or they might want to be the CFO, the chief financial officer, or CIO, chief information officer. People who are very ambitious like this are often extroverted; they have a certain personality that allows them to climb the corporate ladder, to build the skills to build the network of relationships required to be able to fulfil those job roles. Does this sound like you?

People who work in IT, on the other hand, may work in an area where they can communicate online via written communication and not have to deal in day to day, face to face situations with other people.

So, again, it's important to think about what type of job role you'll have in the future because this will influence your study decision.

1.6 Action Steps

The following table presents options for the key questions. Place a circle around the options in each column. It is okay to circle more than one option in each column.

Why study?	Who is choosing?	What subject Interests?	What Work environment?	What Job Role?
Money	Your choice	Architecture & Design	Large	CEO / Leader
Career	Parents' Choice	Business	Medium company	Manager
Status	Friends	Computing	Small company	Team Member
Ambition	Social Media	Engineering	Government	Advance over time
Stable Job	News	Health	Mobile	Highly skilled worker
Help people	Next big thing	Science	Home office	Low skilled worker
Future technology	Not sure	Teaching	Home	Not sure

Step 2 - Choose the Best Qualification

“College was such a pivotal time for me. It's a time when you have so much growth and can choose one of many different paths”. *Blake Griffin*

2.1 Qualification Levels

There are several different qualification types available which can often confuse people who have not studied beyond high school.

Firstly, there non-accredited short courses, which are informal and may only take a few hours or a few weeks to finish. These days, these short courses are often done online. For short courses like these, you might get a certificate of completion, but this is not a formal qualification.

If you're looking to get a formal qualification that can allow you to show your employer that you have a certain level of skill, you might look at a certificate-level course, or a diploma-level course. These courses often come from community colleges, or TAFEs, or other local colleges. Often, these certifications will take three months to six months, sometimes a year, depending on the type of skills you are looking for.

The advantage of doing this type of qualification is that they are usually highly relevant for industry, which makes you job ready once completed. In other words, they do not have the theoretical content that is often found in university courses.

If you're planning to go to university, the most common qualification is a degree, sometimes called an undergraduate degree. An undergraduate degree is three to four years of study, if you choose to do it full-time. Think about that for a moment. That's a very large commitment.

University is a very large commitment of time and money. For these reasons it's often the case that people who start a degree do not actually finish.

Once a student has completed a degree, there are postgraduate qualifications available. These might include a graduate certificate or a graduate diploma. They could also include a Master's degree, or even a Ph.D., which is a Doctorate of Philosophy, which can be applied to different areas. This can involve many, many years of study, and again, can be quite expensive.

2.2 Pathways to Study

When considering your future course, you need to think about the courses you may also need to complete that will help them get to that final course. For example, if you want to study to be an engineer, you may need to boost your skills before you start your degree in engineering.

A pathway course is a common requirement for students who are not ready to start their desired course.

You might start your pathway with an English language course. You might need to do an IELTS test or TOEFL test or another English language test to prove your English ability. The start of the pathway is the English language competency test.

The second part of the pathway may include a diploma, which can take up to one year. Sometimes diplomas allow you to have advanced standing. In other words, you do not need to repeat first year because the first year of college is counted in the diploma. These types of courses are offered by pathway colleges.

Eventually, sometimes after one and a half years, the student will get to their final degree. The advantage of taking the pathway courses is that it prepares a student for success. In fact, students who go straight into their degree, particularly international students, will fail because they don't have the skills required, and they don't have the knowledge of an education system, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia.

2.3 Qualifications for Specific Jobs

It's important to consider what type of work you can do with each type of qualification. If you get a certificate or a diploma, you may be limited to the type of work you can do. You may be able to do certain functions at work, but not full functions.

**Courses lead to jobs...
So know what jobs your course leads to**

Take nursing as an example. If you study nursing and you have a diploma of nursing, then you might have limited job opportunities. This could mean you are limited to helping people with hygiene or organizing their meals or speaking to their families, but you may not be involved in more of the technical nursing issues.

If you go to university, then you can qualify as a registered nurse. This would allow you to be much more involved in the technical skills required to deliver nursing care. This may

involve administering medicine, in some cases, talking with doctors, and keeping track of patient records that are complex and lead to decision making.

If you study a postgraduate course, you can also open fantastic career opportunities. By taking those extra two or three years to study a Master's degree or even a Ph.D., you can give yourself an opportunity to go much further in your career and gain a level of pay which is much higher than people who have a lower qualification.

It's important that you look at your own area of study and work out the different pay scales for the different job qualifications.

2.4 Understand Time Commitments

How long will you need to study to complete your course? If you are studying for a university degree, it can take three or maybe four years, depending on the type of qualification. For example, a Bachelor of Arts may take three years, whereas a Bachelor of Engineering may take four years. That is a considerable amount of time, particularly when you take into consideration the fact that that is full-time study. Full-time study usually requires you to study four subjects or four units at the same time. Each unit can take 12 hours of study per week. Therefore, a full-time load is a real requirement for over 40 hours of study commitment per week.

Some students choose to study part-time. If you study part-time, you may only take one or two units per semester. However, this means that your degree may take six, seven or eight years to complete. Doing a degree part-time takes tremendous commitment over a long period.

2.5 Can You Complete the Course?

This is the big question. Can you finish what you started?

When people start their courses, they often have a great amount of enthusiasm and interest in the subjects they are taking. This is great, as it allows you to be passionate about a subject and read the extra information and go to lectures and tutorials and be involved in the learning process. However, for many people, the course, while interesting, can become very difficult.

While universities and other education providers are offering these courses, they are doing so, in many cases, to get the maximum number of students. You need to ask yourself, are you the right student for that course? Do you need more skills? Are you able to study? For

example, the English language requirements might be very hard, or the skills in mathematics, or the skills in science might be very demanding.

Another question you need to contemplate is around finance. Many courses are very expensive, and students are often prepared to pay for the first year of their course; however, when it gets to second year, they run out of money.

**Running out of money half way through a course is common
and can lead to panic.**

Before you commence your studies, you need to think into the future, and think, can you make enough money to cover your expenses while you're at university?

Common expenses include:

- tuition fees
- computer
- study resources
- accommodation
- transport
- food
- entertainment
- phone and internet
- health insurance

Finance is an important part of the study equation, and often, finance is an area that students don't consider seriously enough when they first decide to study.

2.6 Action Steps

The action step for this chapter is to complete the final two columns of this table.

In the fourth column, you should write 'yes' if you think you can achieve this level of qualification, or 'no', if you think that you won't be able to complete this course. In the fifth column, you need to give a value score for a career. For example, write 100 if this level of qualification is necessary. Give a low score if it won't help.

Course Type	Qualification	Typical Study Time Required	Can I complete this? (Yes / No)	Value for Career (0 – 100)
Short Online Course	Certificate of Completion	1 week – 3 months Part-time study		
Community College Certificate	Recognised Certificate	3 months – 1 year full time study		
Diploma	Formal Diploma	6 months – 1 year full time study		
Undergraduate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	3 – 4 years full time study		
Postgraduate Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate	6 months full time study		
Postgraduate Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma	6 months full time study		
Postgraduate Master's	Master's Degree	2 years Part time study		
Postgraduate PhD	Doctor of Philosophy	3 years Part time study		

Step 3 – Choose the Best Study Location

“Location, location, location”. *Christopher Buckley*

3.1 Location Choices

Choosing where to study is exciting because these days there is a huge range of choice available. The main options can be seen in the following table.

Study Mode / Location	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommendation
100% online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study from anywhere • Study anytime • Easy to start • Huge range of choice • Course fees may be lower than face-to-face courses • Can be completed while working a full-time job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation to keep studying might be hard • Course requirements may be confusing about course • Quality of teaching may not be good • May not be an accredited course that is widely recognised • Can be lonely 	Consider your strengths and weaknesses as a learner. Do you have the motivation to study by yourself for long periods? If so, this may be a good option.
Part online, part face-to-face (blended learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to teachers during face-to face • Study from home to build extra skills • Use online quizzes and video lessons to increase learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reduce motivation to attend face-to-face classes • Students may feel they don't get enough time with the teacher • Some online resources not well-developed 	If the course is well-designed, the blended mode of learning can be the best experience for learners. Being able to meet people Can be the best of both modes
Home town or city - own country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to understand teachers • Transport is easy to use • Accommodation may be cheaper • May have local friends studying the same course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of colleges may be limited • May not feel different from high school experience • Less chance to gain independent learning and living skills 	If your home town or city offers high quality education choices, this may be the best option as there are many advantages of studying in a place that is familiar.
Distant town or city - own country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger range of education choices • Easy to understand teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be more expensive than studying at home town 	For students from a country that offers great education choices this is an excellent option. In the USA, many

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain independent living skills in a safe environment • Great option for students from smaller towns or cities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be unfamiliar at first 	students choose to study in a distant location because it offers a new living experience and a wide range of study opportunities.
Different country - same language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger range of education choices • Easy to understand teachers • Gain cultural and independence living skills • Expand network of future international work contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes extra time and effort to organise • Can be expensive • Can lead to culture shock 	While students may feel disorientated and suffer culture shock at first, this offers excellent opportunities for deep learning and cultural insights, as well as a new perspective on course content.
Study in a different country - different language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge range of education choices • Allows for study of internationally recognised qualifications • Can lead to major career opportunities • Leads to strong language skills • Gain cultural and independence living skills • Expand network of future international work contacts • May lead to working opportunities in new country • Can lead to migration opportunities in new country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes extra time and effort to organise • Can be expensive • Can lead to culture shock • Requires big adjustment to new language • Requires big adjustment to learning style, including independent learning • Students may not be used to using technology in learning 	International education, especially in English language destination countries, is very popular as there are multiple advantages. It is essential that students who attempt this type of study understand the challenges that come with culture shock, expensive living conditions and instruction in a new language.

3.2 The Power of Study Location

Location has power in the world of education. If you say you have graduated with a college degree in the United Kingdom, that will hold power for future employers and may lead you on a track to more career success.

**Location has power -
the reputation of the country you choose for your studies very important.**

It's also important to understand which qualifications are internationally recognised. If you earn a degree from an Australian university, then education providers all over the world will recognise this qualification, so that you can build on this qualification.

If you study in a country that does not have a strong reputation for education, then you may be limiting your future career options, especially when it comes to working for major international companies.

The location you choose to study can have influence the rest of your life. Think about how this works.

When you study a course, you will learn information about the local city or country. For example, if you study accounting in the United States, you will learn about the tax law and regulations in the United States that will be different from your own country.

Similarly, if you study engineering in Australia, you will learn about the types of building structures that are built in that country. Therefore, you think about your career goal and understand if you are studying the right course for the type of job you want in the future.

3.3 The Rise of Online Study

Technology is everywhere these days, including education. It is common for course to include video lessons, downloadable worksheets and readings, online quizzes, online discussion boards and group work using social media channels for students in different locations.

“As technology breaks down the physical barriers of college campuses, the extraordinary intellectual capital of the educator community is becoming available to anyone committed to learning - regardless of age, income or location.”

Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen

Some non-accredited courses are offered 100% online, such as Udemy.com or Lynda.com. These can help students gain quick skills in a specific area, but they are not usually recognised by employers of other education providers.

Other courses are 100% online and have basic certificates, such as Coursera.com and Futurelearn.com. These short-term courses that might be free or at low cost.

There is also a trend for accredited courses to move to 100% online learning mode. These include colleges in the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries that offer online certificates and online diplomas.

A quick Google search will be able to show a huge number of these that are available. It's important to realize that there are so many countries out there that are now offering education services to students, so, in many ways, it's up to you, as the customer, to do your own research to find out about the quality of courses offered by these different institutions.

3.4 Studying in Your Home Country

The clear majority of students will study in their own country. There are many benefits to this regarding convenience and cost.

However, are there benefits that you are missing when you stay in your safe zone for study? Are there opportunities you will miss in your career because you have limited knowledge and language skills?

The best way to answer this question is to look ahead 10, 20 and 40 years. Your study choice has long term impacts on your life, so if you feel that study in your home country will fit with the type of job you want in the future, then great, enrol in course in your home country.

3.5 International Study

There are two types of international study as follows:

1. International exchange programs for part of a course

An exchange program allows you to complete part of your course in a new country. This can give you an excellent taste of the culture and see the country through local eyes, rather

than the eyes of a tourist. If you are an exchange student, you might spend six months, or even a year at the new college overseas, before returning to your college to graduate.

The most important thing to consider for an exchange student is the credit that can be gained towards a qualification in the new country. You should meet the international office of the college before you depart to make sure you know which units you need to study while at the new campus.

2. International study for the whole course

It is very common for students to study in a new country for their entire course after high school. This may require a pathway option, which helps the students gain the skills necessary to be successful in the new country.

International students have many advantages, as can be seen in the location choices table. However, the course can be challenging, and the demands of independent learning and the maturity needed to be away from family and friends can make this difficult to achieve for some students.

3.6 Action Steps

Complete the following chart to help you answer the question of study location.

	Question	My Answer
1	Am I suited to online study?	
2	Do I need to be motivated by a teacher?	
3	Am I interested in the reputation of the course?	
4	Are my language skills good enough to study in a different language?	
5	Do I need to be with people from my own country and culture when I study?	
6	Can I do a short-term international exchange program as part of my course?	
7	Do I have the financial ability to study in a new country, especially if it takes a long time to get a part-time job?	
8	Am I mature enough to be an international student or should I wait for longer before I start?	
9	Can I learn independently as an international student?	
10	Is there the possibility of working in a professional job after I graduate from the course in a new country?	

Step 4 - Choose the Best Education Provider

“It’s choice – not chance – that determines your destiny”. *Jean Nidetch*

4.1 Research Your Choices

Education these days is big business. That means many colleges are offering all sorts of courses, and often they are looking to have enough students to enable them to make a profit. Therefore, you need to choose your college as you would any other service that you are buying.

You need to see yourself as the customer who's shopping around to be able to make the best decision when it comes to your education.

It's important to research thoroughly. Visit the website of the provider. Check their social media, including their Facebook and Twitter accounts. Do they have videos? When you search on Google, you can look up, "Is this school worth it? Is ABC College a good school? Does it have a good reputation?" You'll quickly see that there are testimonials from students and there are comments from students, past students, and you should be able to get a feeling for what it's like to study at this college. It's essential that you do this. This is the best way that you can find out about the service that you're going to study.

4.2 Find Out Which Course the College Is Famous For

All education providers have specializations. They are often known for special subjects. This is particularly important if you are taking a high-end degree, a university degree.

Stanford, in the United States, is known for information technology. It's located close to Silicon Valley. This is the home of Google and Facebook and Intel and Uber and many large IT providers. Therefore, if you study IT at Stanford, you'll know that this university has a strong reputation, that it's connected to industry.

4.3 College Open Days

An Open Day is when a college or university campus allows you to walk around the lecture halls, computer labs and experience what it might be like to be a student. Remember, education is a service, and you are the customer, as well as a student.

An Open Day is a great time to speak to lecturers and get a feel for the place. It's recommended that you attend as many open days as possible.

Open Days are a great chance for you to speak to course advisers and lecturers.

It's also a good idea to look out for online Open Days. These might be webinars that are held by the college or university. At a webinar, you can hear the people talking about their courses, and you can hear other students asking questions, as well as getting involved, yourself, to ask questions.

You might also speak to an education consultant to hear about the reputation of the college. Of course, there are many education consultants, sometimes called education agents, and they are a great source of information about different colleges.

4.4 Read the List of Units That Make Up the Course

Some colleges and universities have many choices when it comes to their courses. For example, in an engineering course, you may be able to study a large range of elective units. If you were studying mechanical engineering, there would be many different opportunities for you to take elective units. When you have a university that specializes in an area, such as engineering, you'll find that their number of extra units available is far higher than a college that just does this course but doesn't do it so well.

So by going through the course information, you should be able to understand:

- how many courses there are
- how many units there are
- how many options and elective units there are
- names of the units
- description of the unit

This information should start to give you a feeling when you compare these different units at different courses and different colleges, how do they compare, which one is good for you, what feels the best for you.

4.5 Compare Colleges

Choose three colleges. Download their course information PDF so you can get a feel for the information the college is trying to promote. Look at the individual units or subjects that make up the entire course. Are these the types of topics you can spend hours working on?

Once you have done this for three different education providers, it's a matter of comparing the courses. You can compare the prices, as well.

A few questions to ask include:

- How much does each course cost?
- What are the payment options?
- Where is each college located?
- Are there affordable accommodation options nearby?
- Is it possible to take some of the units online, or is the whole course face to face?
Does it include any extra services like student support services, academic support services?
- Are there job opportunities near campus?

By doing the following action step, you will get a feeling for which college and which course feels the best, which one starts to suit your needs, and then this is how you make your choice.

4.6 Action Steps

Using your research, complete the following table to help you compare the top three colleges you have found.

	College # 1	College # 2	College # 3
Name of College			
College Reputation			
Location (City, State, Country)			
Time Required to Complete Course			
Tuition Fees Per Year			
Accommodation Options			
Nearby Casual Campus Job Opportunities			
After Course Job Opportunities			

Step 5 - Prepare for Study Success

“Self-belief and hard work will always earn you success”. *Virat Kohli*

5.1 Apply to the College Early

Once you have chosen a course, you need to apply as early as you can because this is a long process. During the application, you may need to write letters and provide evidence of your education from your high school or from other courses that you've done.

if you're traveling to a new country to study, and you might need to provide translated information, officially translated transcripts and other official documents. Doing this successfully will take a long time and a great deal of effort.

This whole process of getting ready to study can take 12 to 18 months, and so once you've decided, you need to start your application as quick as you can so that you have a long lead time.

5.2 Prepare Yourself with Subject Knowledge

Higher education courses in college and at university move very quickly. For example, if you study accounting in high school, the information that you get from one year at high school may be covered in just two or three weeks at university. It's expected that the student does a huge amount of work by themselves. So before you start your course, it's important that you prepare yourself as well as you can so that you can get the most out of your education.

It's important that you look at books, understand terminology, maybe even do a short course online, so you are ready with the types of language, the types of concepts, that you're going to be covering at university. This is a great way to get a head start and make a strong start to your university course.

5.3 Build Your Academic Skills

If you are entering university, you will need to have good research skills and good writing skills. So, you need to ask yourself, are you a good writer? And if not, how can you improve? How can you improve your researching skills, your critical thinking skills, your referencing skills, and your vocabulary? All of these are very important to have when you

study university or college. If English is not your first language, this will be an extra challenge, and it's something that many international students are not prepared for.

International students often are not prepared for the high level of academic English required to complete courses.

Often students feel that it's going to be okay, that their English language will be good enough, but then they get to the university and they really struggle.

Make sure you do everything you can to lift your academic skills before you leave your home country or before you enter the course.

5.4 Make Extra Preparations for International Study

As well as having to do an English test and provide evidence of your English language proficiency, you will need to gather information, if you are going to travel to study, for visas. You also need to arrange accommodation, banking, your student health insurance, your transport, and, of course, your flight ticket to get to that new country.

Getting organized like this is essential, and it's important to do this early, rather than leaving it to the last month or so. You simply won't have time. You have to organize yourself well in advance.

So this is another reason to apply early to the college or the course that you're interested in, so that you have enough time to do all of those processes such as visas and accommodation.

5.5 Make the Commitment to Complete the Course

It's incredible how many people drop out. A person who drops out is a person who starts the course and plans to complete the course, but does not graduate because they do not finish the coursework.

Why do they drop out? Well, there are several reasons. The course might be too difficult. The course is not what they expected it to be. The course might be too expensive. They might get a part-time job. They might have a health or relationship issue.

Sometimes the reasons why people drop out are not real reasons, but excuses. They are excuses because the student wasn't ready in the first place. They weren't organized, and they hadn't committed to complete the course.

So, if you are serious about study, you need to understand that you'll have to work very hard, and you need to commit to all of the lectures and tutorials and lessons that are organized by the university. You need to be organized before you start. You need to attend the orientation sessions. The orientation sessions often happen one week before the start of a new term. These are a great way to get familiar with the campus, to find out where the buildings are, to meet important people, and to get to feel comfortable knowing where things are and understanding where to go to get services.

Once you start, it will all happen very quickly. There will be huge numbers of people walking around, all in different directions, all studying different courses. There are lots of activities, lots of fun, food, music and entertainment.

You need to be open to these new experiences. To get the most out of your university time, you need to be open to new information, to new ideas, to people from different backgrounds who might speak different languages or have different ideas and values to you.

It's important to be as friendly as possible with other students. You can never judge a person by the way they look, by the way they dress. You just don't know who they are. It's very important just to be friendly, always have a smile, and always try and contact and speak to your teachers.

If you can speak with teachers, you get the inside word. The teachers are usually happy to answer questions and give you the support you need. Often students, in many cases, international students don't ask enough questions.

It's important that you ask questions and that you see learning as an open process, where it's a discussion between yourself, the other students and the teachers.

5.6 Action Steps

Complete the following table to help you plan and start your study journey.

	Actions	What is required	Target Completion Date
1	Analyse your study goal		
2	Choose what to study		
3	Choose qualification		
4	Choose study location		
5	Choose the start date		
6	Build academic and language skills		
7	Arrange Accommodation		
8	Arrange Financial Aid, Banking & Insurance		
9	Arrange transport to study location		
10	Become familiar with campus facilities		

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