

Why I chose a Joint Honours Degree: Combining my passions...

...by Sophia / from the UK / studying History and Economics (MA)

One of the most challenging dilemmas many prospective university students face is deciding which subject to study. When I began my university application journey I faced this dilemma. I had studied varied subjects during 6th form had two distinct subjects that fascinated me greatly, History and Economics. On one hand, history interested me because it offers rich narratives, diverse cultures, and profound lessons from the past, helping us understand the complexities of human civilisation and the forces that have shaped our world. However, economics also captivated me with its analysis of how societies function and the impact of financial systems on our daily lives. Faced with the challenge of choosing between these two compelling fields, I found the perfect solution: pursuing a joint honours degree in History and Economics.

This decision has allowed me to explore both passions in depth, providing a comprehensive and enriching academic experience. In this blog post I will share some of the benefits of pursuing a joint honours degree and highlight why I think the decision to study two very different subjects offers unique opportunities for growth and learning.

1) Interdisciplinary Learning: Embracing the Intersection

One of the most significant benefits of pursuing a joint honours degree is the opportunity for interdisciplinary

learning. By studying two distinct subjects simultaneously, I've had the chance to explore the intersection of history and economics, gaining insights into how these disciplines inform and complement each other. This interdisciplinary approach has enriched my understanding of complex issues, allowing me to analyse historical events through an economic lens and vice versa.

2) Flexibility: Tailoring My Degree

Another advantage of studying a joint honours degree is the flexibility it offers. Rather than being confined to a single field of study, I've had the freedom to tailor my degree to my interests and career aspirations. Whether exploring the impact of the economy on the environment and the formation of cities or exploring culture and the arts in 1960s Scotland, I've been able to explore diverse topics that captivate my curiosity and shape my academic journey. Additionally it gave me choice with my dissertation as I could do a history, economics, or economic history dissertation, further highlighting the flexibility of some joint honours degrees.

3) Diverse Skill Development: Fostering Versatility and Adaptability

My journey studying two distinct subjects simultaneously has given me a wide range of skills that are valuable in today's job market. From honing analytical thinking and research abilities in history to refining communication and problem-solving skills in economics, I have developed a more versatile skill set. Additionally, by balancing the demands of two distinct subjects, I've honed my time management, organisation, and prioritisation skills, preparing me for life after my studies.

4) Networking Opportunities: Building Connection Across Disciplines

Engaging with faculty members, peers, and professionals from

two different disciplines has provided me with invaluable networking opportunities. By building connections within two different schools at the University I have gained access to diverse perspectives, resources, and mentorship opportunities, enriching my academic experience and expanding my professional horizons. Whether collaborating on projects or participating in extracurricular activities, these networking opportunities have expanded my network and enhanced my overall university experience.

In conclusion, pursuing a joint honours degree in History and Economics has been a rewarding journey that has allowed me to combine my passions and develop a versatile skill set. From interdisciplinary learning to flexible tailoring of my education, this experience has prepared me for success in both academic and professional pursuits. Through networking opportunities and diverse skill development, I've enhanced my overall university experience and look forward to applying what I've learned in the future. If you would like to ask any questions about studying a joint honour degree please send me a message on Unibuddy and I would be more than happy to answer!

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Want to find out more?

Chat with Sophia

Approaching the dissertation

Dissertation. A big word, and often a scary one. Alfie, a Student Ambassador, looks at ways to make it slightly less intimidating.

Perhaps the culmination of your time at university and exceptional (circumstances notwithstanding), also the longest piece of academic writing you will have created to date. Sounds like a lot – and let's not mince words, it is a big task and not one to be taken lightly. However, with the right preparation, forethought, and enthusiasm, it is as enjoyable a project as any other. It should represent the sum of your passions and interests that you have cultivated over your time studying, or perhaps afford you a chance to further explore areas you have not yet had the chance to investigate. Simply put, it is a fantastic opportunity to hit your stride as an aspiring academic, or to cap off your university experience.

When it comes to the dissertation, it is never too early to start planning. I'm not suggesting that you should be coming out of your first year lectures and taking an abundance of notes on potential topics and sources to use, rather if something grabs you early on, maybe it could be something worth considering for the future. If a particular topic, method, or concept catches your eye, take notes! Remember it for later, and by the time that third year rolls around and the question is being asked, you'll have some ideas for what you've got planned.

It is worth bearing in mind that third year is an optimal time to start your planning, especially over the summer break. At this point in your studies you will have likely covered a great deal of content and – hopefully – will have found something you enjoy writing about. If this is the case, take notes from any courses you have around the subject area and try to explore them. Consolidate reading lists, discuss material with suitable academics, and read around the subject if you have time. Naturally, this isn't something that you need to have done by the first day of fourth year, but it's something worth preparing if you have the time to spare. In addition, try to identify an appropriate member of academic staff to act as your dissertation supervisor – someone who is

ideally familiar with the topic, so that you can discuss ideas accordingly.

Writing the dissertation is a separate beast and surprisingly manageable if you like to break things down into sections. A dissertation will often have a literature review that examines contemporary academic thought on a topic and is not too dissimilar from discussions of readings done for seminars. This is often a large portion of your dissertation, so be sure you're comfortable doing the reading to follow through. Other key chapters are your introduction where you'll outline your subject, structure, and points for consideration, and your discussion, where you can make a deep dive into the content, highlighting your own ideas and opinions, as supported by or in opposition to existing thought. Be sure to give ample time for the writing of all this, as it can seem quite demanding, but rest assured that you'll be able to intersperse this with meetings with your supervisor who can discuss your progress.

When it comes down to it, the dissertation is quite a big process, but one to (hopefully) be enjoyed. The freedom to pursue your own academic interests and supplement your own research with the aid of university professionals is a great opportunity to develop your own researching capability, perseverance, and self-motivation, all desirable and transferable skills for postgraduate study and beyond. While it is a big challenge, it is one that you're not undertaking alone, as all other undergraduates will be in the same boat as you. So don't worry, do your best, and remember to engage with the stuff you're passionate about – it's all plain sailing from there.

Essay writing

Everything you ever wanted to know about essays but were afraid to ask by Student Ambassador Constance.

Essay writing, love it or hate it, it is the metric by which we students are measured. Figuring out your 'style' is something of a journey and will inevitably include some painful marks to grow as a writer. However, there are some tips I can offer, distilled from my four years of successes and failures, to help demystify the approach to essay writing.

Picking a topic – Don't go for the obvious and easy. This can be hard, especially if you are pressed for time. But the reality is a lot of people are going to go for the obvious and easy, especially if you are in a big course. It will only make it harder for you to stand out amidst the fifty other people who picked the same question.

Picking a topic Part 2 – Pick a topic you like. If you like a subject more, chances are you are going to try harder and, dare I say, enjoy the process of researching more. Better yet, if you have the opportunity to pick a question, go for it. It is a perfect opportunity to focus on what *you* enjoy.

Research – Get your ducks in a row. Do not cut corners, I repeat, do not cut corners. This is when you want to be organized and systematic. Make sure you are clear when you take notes and have noted who said what. I still get cold sweats thinking about running to the library at 3 am because I could not figure out which book I had taken a quote from.

Research – Be one with the source. If you are using primary sources, it is best to have a direct quotation so that you ensure you have not lost any of the original source's meaning, especially if it is literary in nature.

Writing – (When you can) Take bite size pieces. Inevitably,

there will be a time where you write an essay in a day. Afterwards, you will feel groggy, gross and your brain's IQ will have depreciated to the value of a guinea pig until you have had a full 8 hours of rest. Some people can function perfectly under these circumstances – if you are one of them, Godspeed my friend – but most are not. My best essays were slow burners where I took time to make a really pretty and detailed outline and only wrote a maximum of 500-1000 words per day.

Editing – Take some time and then go for it. Essays are like boyfriends or girlfriends; sometimes you just need a little space. Give yourself a day or two to avoid your essay and then go to a printer, print that baby out, grab a pen and read it aloud. Yep, read it like it is the Queen's Speech and cringe at the sound of your own voice. It the most useful tip a lecturer from first year gave me, and by far the most surefire way to catch grammar mistakes.

Submit – Get the receipts. Chances are you will be submitting your essay online via Turnitin. For all that is good and holy, no matter how tired you may be, check your email to make sure you got a receipt confirming your submission. Nothing is worse than losing marks for an essay you thought you submitted on time.

What is perhaps the most important thing is not to be dismayed if you do not get the mark you want. Read the feedback and take it to heart when you go to write the next one.