

Are you choosing the right subjects in Class 11?

STUDY ABROAD

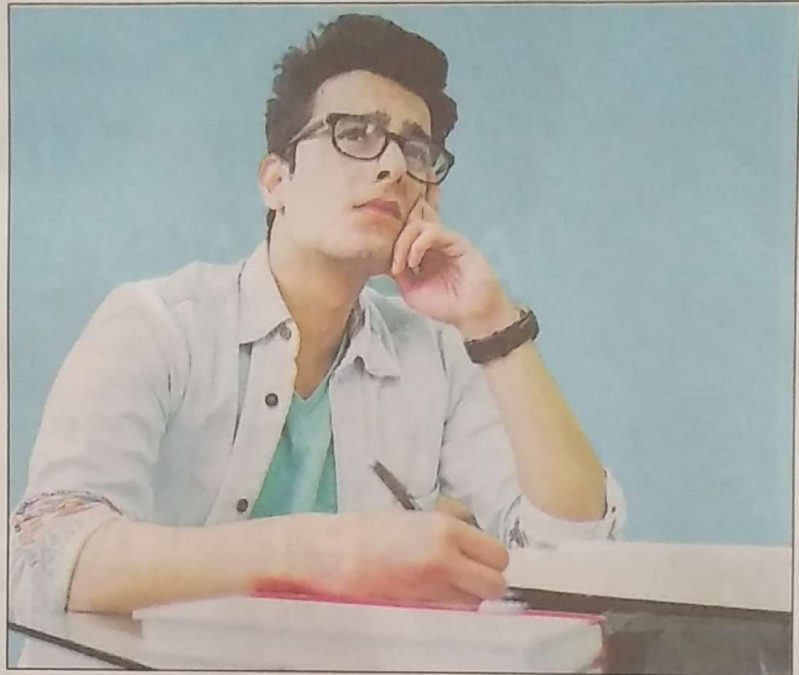


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This is an intense time of year for you if you are a Class 10 student, since you will be facing rigorous exams in the coming months. After that you will be asked to select subjects in Class 11. Subject selection becomes a tricky question if you hope to study abroad within the next few years. Unfortunately, a wrong choice at this critical phase can dash your dreams, which you will only come to realise once it is too late.

Depending on where you want to study, your approach to subject selection will vary slightly. In the UK, colleges set minimum entry requirements for specific courses. For example, a BSc in management science from University College London requires students to achieve top scores in the highest level of math. Note that economics, business studies, accounts are not entry requirements for such courses – often students believe that as long as they have completed the commerce stream they are prepared to study business. However, commerce without math will make you ineligible to apply. Many people find it counterintuitive that to study economics or psychology at the best universities abroad you are not required to have taken either subject through Class 12. Keep this in mind and remember that your current subjects need not be a direct map onto your future goals.

In the US, because the application process is holistic and students are allowed to change their major course of study and



■ The subjects you choose in Class 11 can affect what you study later at university level.

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colleges are looking for overall academic preparation. This is why US colleges recommend you take courses in all subjects including English, social studies, mathematics, science, and foreign language throughout grades 9-12. The more selective the college, the more rigour they will expect, no matter what your intended major – example successful applicants to the best universities for history have usually taken three to four years of science and math.

Higher education in the US is grounded in the philosophy of liberal education, which equips students to manage diversity, complexity and change while also exposing them to in-depth achievement of a specific subject. As such, US colleges are not seeking students who are overly specialised or narrowly focused at an early age and the idea of professional studies at the undergraduate level is rare (example medicine and law can only be studied as post-graduate courses in the US). This approach

to education partially explains why entry requirements to US colleges are not overly specific.

The above scenarios of the UK and US are the most extreme – one very rigid, the other very flexible. Many other country requirements, such as Canada, Singapore and Australia, fall somewhere in the middle and vary by college and course. But as a rule, no matter your intended country of study, dropping either science or math after 10th grade will limit your options. And it is almost universally true that students interested in engineering should plan to study math and physics. If all else fails and you have specific questions about whether you are eligible to apply with your particular subjects, you can email or call the university directly. Also remember that 'scoring' should not be the criteria for subject choice.

The author is a study abroad advisor and co-founder of The Red Pen.