

STUDY CHOICES

advertising feature

Five questions to ask about your course

PEOPLE can put more thought into buying their first car than researching their tertiary study options. But just like cars, there can be enormous differences between courses, so it pays to do your research.

What subject areas interest me?

Many school leavers would have an idea of what they want to do by now, but there's still time if you're feeling clueless. "Any career selection should start with exploration," says Kate Murray, a school careers counsellor and founder of careers program Huddle Collective. She recommends you start by thinking about your strengths, passions and favourite subjects, and talking to friends, family and career counsellors. Don't be lured by the course with the highest ATAR, Murray warns, as marks aren't the best indication of your suitability.

What environment suits me best?

Understanding the environment in which you work best can be the difference between enjoying your degree and potentially dropping out.

"People often think they will attend a certain place and they get there and realise 'this doesn't feel like me at all'," Murray explains.

While some people thrive in the anonymity of university, others can feel lost among the crowds. They may suit a private college, which usually has smaller class sizes and a more hands-on approach.

Similarly, because private colleges often focus on a few specific careers, they can be a better fit for those who want to start working in their chosen field as soon as possible.

Do I like the campus?

Most universities and private colleges offer information days as an opportunity to learn more about courses, talk to staff and current students, and tour campus facilities.

Murray suggests students attend with a list of questions

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DR MANNY ASTON,
MACLEAY COLLEGE

to ensure they don't miss anything. If you have a clear idea of what you want to do, don't forget to check they have the facilities available.

How industry-focused is the course?

Not only does a strong industry focus ensure you're being taught the latest research, but teachers with a history in the field can be invaluable sources of advice and information.

"Industry links mean you'll build networks and contacts which will differentiate you from other jobseekers," Murray says.

Ensuring your studies are industry-relevant is also a sign to employers that you take your future seriously, says Mark Foy, principal of Belle Property Surry Hills. "Taking time out to study shows us that they see real estate as a long-term career, not just a short-term job," Foy says. "We love graduates because they've gone to that time and effort."

Can I arrange work experience?

With a recent survey by Graduate Careers Australia revealing that only 68 per cent of bachelor degree graduates are in full-time work within four months, work experience and internships can be an important way to jump the queue and secure a job after study.

"Universities are often 'set and forget' but we try and prep each student individually for their career," says Dr Manny Aston of Macleay College, which includes internships as a compulsory part of each course. "It teaches them the practical things that we can't teach in class and gives them a foot in the door of an industry that can be hard to get in to."



Make sure you ask the right questions and dig deep when considering your tertiary education options.

Kiana gets a career she can bank on

NO ONE could accuse Kiana O'Brien of wasting time. The 20-year-old hadn't even finished her internship with NAB when they offered her a full-time job.

O'Brien works as part of NAB's social media team, helping high-profile clients including Tiffany and Co and Louis Vuitton build their social media presence.

The Cronulla local applied to Macleay College after finishing high school and after initially studying marketing, enrolled in

their Diploma of Business Management in Public Relations.

"I did have some ideas about going to university but Macleay's diploma course was only one year and I loved the fact that it included industry experience," she says.

Now she is working full time while many of her friends are struggling through their second year of university.

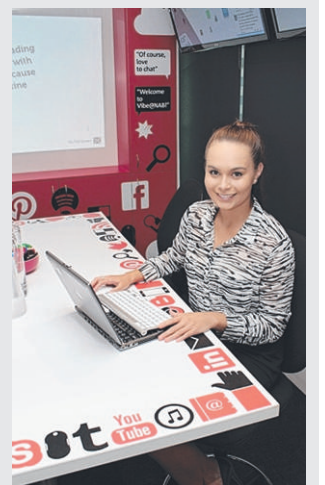
Macleay College students must complete an industry internship as part of their

diploma, and O'Brien interned at NAB for three months before being offered the role.

"An internship is so important; it gives you a foot in the door, connections and insight," she says.

Although she organised the placement herself, O'Brien says the college has been instrumental in her success.

"They help you with your CV and I liked that Macleay had industry professionals who had been out there in the business," she says.



NAB's Kiana O'Brien.

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