



## Case Study

**Student:** Colin Parry

**Advanced Highers:** Chemistry, Maths and Physics

**Home Town:** Stirling

**University:** Strathclyde

**Degree:** MSc Applied Physics

‘It’s giving me back a year of my life’ is how Colin Parry views the opportunity to reduce his five year Masters programme to four years through direct second year entry.

Leaving Stirling High School aged 17 with five Highers (four As and a B) plus three A grade Advanced Highers, Colin applied to three Scottish Universities through UCAS. All three gave him unconditional acceptances, but only Strathclyde made the offer of direct entry to second year. Strathclyde was also easy for Colin to commute to from his home in Stirling. Although he recalls being vaguely aware that it was a possibility, it had been at an Open Day at Strathclyde that Colin discovered that direct entry to second year was a real option for him. That said, different advisors offered conflicting advice about whether this was a good option or not.

At 19 Colin is in the third year of his degree and has no doubt that it has been right for him. Parents and advisors are often concerned that the jump from sixth year to second year university will be too great. Colin is exceeding his own expectations and takes the view that anyone who has achieved good Higher and Advanced Higher grades should be able to cope, provided there is a reasonable match between their Advanced Highers and the first year university syllabus. He does however recognise that a high level of commitment, enthusiasm and confidence are also key. He has enjoyed the challenge where some of his friends who did first year found it boring and largely repetition of work they had done at school, which may make it more difficult for some when work steps up a gear in second year.

Another stated concern is that it will be difficult to make friends, as fellow students will have formed relationships and groupings in first year. Colin didn’t find this a problem either, partly because he is a sociable person who has no difficulty in talking to either fellow students or lecturers. However Colin has also observed that grouping and friendships formed in first year often change as the increased work pressure in second year separates those who are highly motivated and committed to obtaining a good degree from those who are looking for different things from their time at university.

Colin has not been aware of any special support from the university other than an additional meeting with his advisor of studies, but as he has said himself he is not slow to speak to lecturers and fellow students and to seek advice and help if he needs it. At Strathclyde, a high percentage of course notes and material is available on the university intranet and this helps plug any gaps resulting from not doing first year. Living at home Colin has also had good support and encouragement from his parents and his girlfriend who is studying at another university.

The benefits for Colin have been saving a year both in terms of time and money. He has also enjoyed the challenge. He has no particular career ambition at the moment, recognising that career opportunities will change during the time he is undertaking his degree, but he is upbeat about the potential opportunities that his degree will offer him.

Colin's advice to others is that if they have achieved good Advanced Higher grades and they are sure they are choosing the right degree, they should seriously consider applying for direct entry to second year. He understands that parents and advisors will worry that the jump between school and second year university is too big. However, if there is a good match between the first year syllabus and work covered at school and they are committed, enthusiastic and confident, parents and advisers should share that confidence.