

Case Study

Student: Catherine Robins

Advanced Highers: Economics, Management and Maths

Home Town: Dollar

University: Aberdeen — Business School

Degree: Economic Science and Management (Joint Honours)



Aged 21, Catherine Robins is in the fourth year of her Honours degree Course at Aberdeen University having gained direct entry to the second year of her Course three years ago. However, her initial UCAS application did not include Aberdeen University and she had never heard of the possibility of direct entry to second year!

With her birthday in January, Catherine found herself among the youngest in her class and on leaving Dollar Academy at 17, decided to have a gap year during which she spent time in New Zealand, Australia and India. During that year she also spent time in Aberdeen with friends who were already studying there. The “granite city’s” appeal was sealed when Catherine’s research revealed that the University offered a Joint Honours Course in Economics and Management, the syllabus of which was ideal. Catherine made a late application direct to Aberdeen University and as part of this process was interviewed by the Head of Admissions who advised that her five A grade Higher passes and three Advanced Highers (AA&C) could give her direct entry to second year if she wished.

Catherine realised that direct entry to second year would mean harder work in her initial year in higher education and she would be able to socialise less than if she went into first year. However, after satisfying herself that the first year syllabus had been substantially covered by her studies at school, discussion with her parents and reassurance from the University that, should things prove too difficult, she could revert to first year, Catherine opted to accept the offer of direct second year entry.

This decision proved the right one for Catherine who was confident that she could cope. Having had a gap year she joined friends who had entered first year straight from school and she made new friends among first year students whom she met while participating in freshers week activities or whilst living in halls during her initial year. University staff were very supportive in helping her bridge the few gaps resulting from her missing first year. She also had a wide circle of friends whose first year notes she could access.

Looking at the benefits, Catherine said: ‘Direct entry to second year means I will complete my Honours degree in a year less than others — I will have a year’s less debt and will be entering the workplace at a younger age.’ For Catherine there has been no real negatives except that she did not have a year to settle into university life and her bank sets her loan limit as being in her third year when she is in fourth year. Catherine is looking forward to graduating and joining the family business.

Asked what advice she would give others considering direct second year entry, Catherine suggested:

- ◆ Look in detail at the first year syllabus to see what you would miss that hasn’t been covered by your school studies.
- ◆ Be sure the course is the one you want to do — if you’re not sure, you might be better to do first year as the options to change in second year are fewer.
- ◆ It’s not for everyone, but do it if you are confident you can cope.