

Taking a Gap Year

Many of you will choose to take a gap year. At the moment, you may not be planning to do so, but many Carthusians decide during their second year that they wish to take a Gap year.

You need to think **why you want to take a Gap Year**.

Is it:

- to improve your CV?
- to take a year out from the educational treadmill?
- because you did not manage to get into the University of your choice (especially Oxbridge)?
- because you do not know what course to do at university or whether to go to university?
- because you want to do something for other people?

Whatever the reason you have, it needs to be genuine. Universities and Employers are not interested in students who simply want a 'year off'. You must be seen to be doing something constructive and worthwhile.

Once you have decided why, you need to think about **what you might want to do and for how long**.

What you might want to do falls into a number of categories:

- **Expeditions** – usually involving work in developing countries and/or trekking
- **Charity work** - usually involving work in developing countries
- **Teaching Abroad** – usually English or in a Prep school in the UK or abroad
- **Travelling** – should be combined with any of the other options (may be seen as a long holiday if done exclusively)
- **UK based** – charitable work
- **Working** – you may choose to work for some or all of your Gap Year either to gain experience or to raise funds or both. This may be in UK or abroad
- **Gain a qualification** – you may want to qualify as a ski or sailing instructor or gain business/secretarial qualifications
- **Studying** – there are many courses which may interest you that do not lead to a qualification (and therefore have no exams). You may do these to e.g. improve your language skills, learn more about Italian Art History, or Spanish culture.

You need to plan out the timings of your year. Some organisations expect a longer commitment than others. You might need to commit a whole year (e.g. helping out at a Prep School tends to be a full school year), or just a few weeks.

Many pupils work up to Christmas to earn money and then go abroad for a few months combining an expedition with travelling and even working abroad.

What do the universities think?

You should first select the Universities and courses of your choice and then check their position regarding Gap Years. The most competitive courses/universities do not usually allow students to *defer* (this means applying in September 2008 for entry in 2010). Instead you are best applying in September 09 (as an OC) – they will look positively in these cases where there is a constructive and well planned Gap Year. The only subject where Gap Years are not normally recommended is **Maths**.

There are some alternative approaches:

- Students who study **modern languages** will spend a year of their 4-year course studying and/or working abroad and therefore a Gap Year may not be necessary.
- Many universities offer **Sandwich Courses** where you can spend a year working in industry.
- Many universities also offer the chance to spend a year of your **study abroad** with the Erasmus or Leonardo schemes.

What do you need to consider?

The earlier you start your plans the better. To write about your Gap Year plans in your personal statement is strongly advised.

If you are intending working abroad you must think about the **visa requirements** – if using an organisation then they usually do this for you.

Finance – the cost can be extremely high. 3 months in South America trekking and working in rural community may cost £3500 to £4000 plus flights and spending money.

Travel Insurance – an essential requirement to cover you for theft, loss of baggage and medical emergencies

You may need **vaccinations** to travel to some countries.

Find out as much as you can from the organisations. E.g.:

- What exactly will I be doing?
- What support they offer you?
- What safety measures do they have in place?
- How long is the programme?
- What happens if I am not happy with my placement?

How can we help?

In the Charterhouse Careers Library we have brochures from most of the main Gap Year Providers. Take time to look through these and get some ideas. There are also books available in the Careers Library. All the providers have web sites where you can get more up to date information and some links are including in the external links of the HE & Careers Charterhouse website. Do not restrict yourself to the bigger Gap Year providers – there are many smaller organisations that may offer better programmes.

Key web sites: www.gapyear.com
www.gap-year.com
www.yearoutgroup.org
www.gapwork.com
www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk

Organisations: www.i-to-i.com
www.questoverseas.com
www.raleighinternational.org
www.bses-expeditions.org.uk
www.realgap.co.uk

Safety: www.planetwise.net
www.objectivegapyear.com
<http://www.ultimategapyear.co.uk/>

Organised Gap Year Fairs see (www.myfuturewise.org.uk)

Expanding Horizons Fairs organised at Independent Schools. You are welcome to visit any of these as advertised on the website.

[Hampton School, Middlesex, 24/09/09, 5.00-7pm](#)

[Epsom College, Surrey, 29/09/09, 4.30-6pm](#)