STOWE SCHOOL

THE GAP YEAR

Many Stoics take a year off academic study between leaving Stowe and entering higher education. The experience can be rewarding and educational, allowing individuals to develop an independence and maturity that stand them in good stead at university/college and beyond. Not all higher education institutions welcome a gap year, nor is it a suitable break for everyone, but we believe that every Stoic should consider the idea and reach a positive decision.

There is a wealth of opportunities to explore and ideally this needs to be done early in the first of the Sixth Form years, since some are extremely popular and snapped up by those who take the trouble to apply well in advance. Others have a selection process that takes time to complete. It is reassuring to have the next stage in life planned before immersion in the hectic final preparations for A Levels.

To facilitate organising a gap year, Stowe has a wide range of resources at hand which are available in the School Library, VLE (http://stowenet.stowe.co.uk/gap-year) and Careers office. For further information, please contact Michael Righton.

Stowe organises a 'Keeping Safe on your Gap Year' training day with a company called Objective Travel Safety. This takes place in the last week of the Summer term and it is advised that anyone taking a gap year should attend. This course has a fee, but is highly recommended. Winners of the 'Gap Scholarship' will be offered this course free as part of their award.

All organisations offering gap year placements have websites. Access to the websites of specific organisations is most easily available through www.gap-year.com.

OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

The demand for young people to volunteer to teach English throughout the world, especially in developing countries, is high and this is where many gap year students spend part of their time. However, there is a wealth of opportunities in widely differing fields and a great many organisations can help to secure placements.

A number of Stoics have enjoyed the **Army Gap Year Commission** which is specifically designed to fill the gap between leaving school and going to university. The Gap Year Commission enables students to have a taste of life in the Army for anything between four and eighteen months. Candidates must still pass the RCB and, if selected, will be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant after a three week course at Sandhurst. At the end of this commission, there is no further commitment to the Army. Interested Stoics need to meet the Army Liaison Officer when he visits in the Michaelmas term to thoroughly investigate this option.

The **Year in Industry** offers challenging and paid industrial experience and training before university/college.

There are many short courses at different institutions, such as **foreign language schools** or **art** or **drama/film schools**, which can be combined with travel or some other activity.

Organisations such as **Raleigh International** seek to develop the potential of young people through a programme of conservation, community and adventure projects in remote areas. Similar organisations are **Gap Activity Projects**, **Africa/Asia Venture**, **Students Partnership Worldwide, Blue Venture** and **Trekforce Expeditions**, to mention but a few.

A gap year is often used to obtain a secretarial, cookery or sport related qualification such as sailing instructor, skiing/snowboarding instructor, or even a pilot's licence.

FINANCE

Gap year projects are usually funded by Stoics and their families. Typically, between £5,000 and £7,000 is needed, if travel and placement fees are taken into account. It is important that a Stoic takes ownership of the project by raising at least half this money him/herself, perhaps by working before the placement commences.

Each year the Parents' Gap Scholarships offer Gap Year Awards worth between £1,000 - £2,000, depending on the nature of the voluntary work taken. The allocation of these awards is competitive and applicants are given a searching interview.

Applications are usually due shortly after the Christmas break, with interviews taking place in early February. I am happy to offer advice and help with preparation for these applications over the course of the Michaelmas term. I will help interested students to prepare their applications for Gap Scholarships.

Michael Righton
Head of Gap Year

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