College students should base their choice of a field of study on the availability of jobs in that field.

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim. In developing and supporting your position, be sure to address the most compelling reasons and/or examples that could be used to challenge your position.

The scope of being employed in a field is one of the biggest factors that students consider when choosing what to study at college. Universities offer a wide range of courses, of which only a few may deal with high-demand fields. The issue at hand is whether students should consider job availability as the core factor in their decision-making. However, this is not enough; simply looking at the job prospects of a degree programme does not guarantee a student's success. There are many other things to be considered when making such a career-defining decision, though the importance of keeping job prospects as just one of the items on the long list of considerations is not something to ignore.

The first thing for a student to consider when picking a degree would be their interest in the field. This is objectively better than just taking up studies in a field that one does not care for; it produces disinterested employees/workers who, though widely sought after by many companies in the job market, would not feel a sense of self-fulfilment in their job. Self-fulfilment is necessary for people to stay motivated at their jobs, and it is a widespread observation that employees who are happy with their jobs do better. Even if they err, they keenly learn how to do better, and do not fall into a state of ennui. Even among researchers, the people who are in the job primarily out of interest tend to be more enthusiastic about pushing forward, reaching milestone after milestone. At the IITs, the most prestigious engineering colleges of India, students who choose subjects without considering their own real interests have been recorded to score poorer, and often opt to switch their courses. This just reduces the time they get to spend in their field of interest, and leads such students to have to work extra-hard to reach the level that they would have, had they chosen their dream field. Hence, a student's interest is quintessential, and must be prioritised over job availability.

Second, the uncertainty of the job market for various fields is volatile. One may decide to study data science in 2020, seeing as it was growing by leaps and bounds as a field, and companies at the time recruited plenty of students in relevant fields, but when they later graduate in, say, 2024, the field's expansion rate may have flattened or dipped. The companies may have shifted to employing students with more generalised skills like artificial intelligence or machine learning, rather than plain data science. Predicting the availability of jobs at the time of a student's graduation is hard, and it goes to show that considering this as the sole factor in course selection is not a sound plan. If a subject does not pique a student's interest, and they end up taking the course simply by looking at the current prospects, it may not yield favourable results. Hence, this is another reason why job availability can not be the go-to factor for a student's course choices.

Finally, we must not understate the importance of job availability when making this decision, at one of the most vital crossroads of a student's professional life. A large majority of students study in the hopes that it will yield returns; what they pay to learn today, they hope will pay them back tomorrow. Completely obscuring the job prospects of a field could cause students to pick fields that no one employs them in. The field in question may be dormant or may be in its elementary or moribund phases, it is often hard to discern. But students could place a, say, 30% weight of their career decisions on the job availability in their field. Sure, a complex equation could be hypothesized. But 30% seems like a 'good enough' level of weight to place. It still takes into account the job prospects of a field, while also not ignoring the several other factors that are at play in a student's life.

Hence, although college students should surely consider the availability of jobs in a field when choosing what to study, this should not eclipse the several other things that they must take into account. The importance of making a well-thought-out decision at this stage of a student's education can simply not be overstated.