

CHOOSING UNIVERSITIES

CHOOSING COURSES

CHANGES

- 1980 9% of the population went to higher education
- 2010 around 45% of the population went to some form of higher education (51% for girls)
- 1980 people went to universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education
- 2011 the vast majority of higher education is at university

Implications

- Competition for popular universities/courses is very high. Many courses now ask for all A grades at A level (increasingly A*) and a raft of As at GCSE. Some also have entrance tests.
- Over 200,000 applicants did not get in last year
- There are far more graduates chasing jobs than there are specific graduate jobs
- Employers are looking for more in terms of 'Experience' and 'Soft skills'
- The decisions you take on what to study and where are more important than in your parents generation.

HOWEVER

- Employers are recruiting more graduates
- The number of university applicants will go down (perhaps substantially)
 - 1) This may reduce competition for graduate level jobs
 - 2) This may reduce competition for university places
- The future is much better than the present

TYPES OF UNIVERSITY

- There are 3 main groups but there is some overlap and you must be discerning, it is not simply a 'Good University is the Best'
- **Russell Group**:
- Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College, Kings College, Leeds, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Queens (Belfast), Oxford, Sheffield, Southampton, UCL & Warwick.

- **1994 Group**: Normally campus universities and often created in the 1960s.
- Bath, Durham, East Anglia, Essex, Exeter, Goldsmiths, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, Queen Mary, Reading, Royal Holloway, St Andrews, SOAS, Surrey, Sussex, York.
- **Non Affiliated**: Mixture of traditional and new, some are very good e.g. Aston
- **New Universities**: The old polytechnics and colleges of higher education
- **Specialist**: Agricultural Colleges, Art Colleges etc

- Within these groups you can further subdivide into universities which are primarily vocational; scientific, arts-humanities or generalist.
- A university can have a poor overall ranking but be very good for a particular course and thus you need to be a discerning shopper.
- The Russell Group is a trade body and not a quality standard n.b. York, Bath and Durham are NOT in the Russell Group.

Study Abroad

- USA is now feasible
- Many EU universities teach in English and nearly all are cheaper than the UK.
- Irish universities are much cheaper
- Non UK choices do not detract from your UCAS applications

TYPES OF DEGREES

- Training
- Vocational
- Sciences
- Non vocational academic

- Mock Vocational

Structures

- Single honours
- Joint honours
- Mixed
- Sandwich
- Straight
- Masters or BA/Bsc

- Some universities have specialized in vocational degrees and mainly offer sandwich courses
- Aston
- Bath
- Bradford
- Brunel
- City (not all)
- Loughborough
- Salford
- Surrey

However many other also offer sandwich courses

Course Choice

- Interest in a subject
- Career Objectives
- Is it needed for a specific job?
- Does it give industrial experience?
- Does it give a range of 'Soft Skills'?
- Is it 'Employable'

N.B. A relevant degree is not always obvious:

- Overall, 59.9% of business graduates are in graduate level employment (latest figures), compared to an overall graduate level employment rate of 62.4%.
- However a numerate business degree from a 'good' university is very employable

GOLDEN RULE

- Start from the course in and not the university out.

Choosing Universities

- **University ranking**
 - Specific facilities
 - Cost of living
 - **Drop out rate**
 - **Application Ratio**
 - Research/Vocational
 - Campus/City
 - The way the course is taught/examined
- **Course ranking**
 - **Work experience**
 - Ambiance
 - **Grades Required**

SPREAD YOUR RISK

- You normally have 5 choices
- There is less leeway than in the past (although we do not know the impact of the new fees)
- Your insurance choice is now much more important
- Think wider than the UK

Common Mistakes

- Do not have required GCSEs
- Taking inappropriate A levels
- Not likely to obtain the grades required
- Too pessimistic
- Personal statement not appropriate
- Plagiarism on the statement

Graduate Employment

- Around 50% of advertised graduate jobs are open to any discipline BUT major companies often prefer graduates with a high level of numeracy, IT skills and a second language.
- You compete against other graduates and against other EU graduates and to an extent overseas students also.
- 62% of LSE students are non UK, Imperial 32%, UCL 28% and Warwick 23%.
- There is a shortage of some STEM graduates and employers complain about the lack of work experience, no second language, poor numeracy, lack of customer focus and lack of commercial awareness.

- Employers look at what university you went to, whether you have a 2:1, your work history, leadership and positions of responsibility experience and overall 'Soft skills'.
- Students on sandwich degrees tend to get jobs easier e.g. Surrey. Many non science employers favour science degrees. UK much lower than other EU countries in terms of industrial experience.

Soft Skills

- Verbal & written communication
- Enthusiasm
- Problem solving ability
- Numeracy
- Business Awareness
- Team Work
- **Work Ethic**

Conclusion

- Degrees should not just be looked at in employment terms, as the vast majority of participants will gain a great deal of other benefits such as: a wider perspective on life, new outlooks, meeting people from different backgrounds and cultures and the chance to take up new hobbies and interests.
- For most people it is a life changing experience and the single biggest influence on the rest of their lives.

- 91% of students agreed with the statement 'I've enjoyed being at university and would recommend it to others'
- JUST 10% felt that 'Being at university has prepared me well for the working world'

Job Market

- There is an A level job market and in many sectors there is an A level and Degree entry route
- In many cases it is likely that a degree **WILL NOT** enhance your earnings (taking onto account costs and lost salary)

To Do Now

- Look at the courses available
- Look at the grades required/experience needed
- Look at the ways the course is offered
- Look at potential universities
- Use UCAS.com