

**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