IS IT WORTH GOING TO UNIVERSITY?

YES IT IS!

ALL THE ADVANTAGES OF GOING TO UNIVERSITY
WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GOING TO UNIVERSITY?

Changes to funding for higher education, and media stories about employment after university, mean that some people question the benefits of going.

A considered decision is important, but the evidence shows that most people are still much better off going to university if they can. This guide will provide some facts and give you a clear idea of the value of higher education.

So if the question is ‘is it worth going to university?’

Yes it is!
WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER UNIVERSITY?

Changes in the workplace mean that there has been an increase in the demand for employees with a degree. There are now thousands of new graduate jobs that didn’t exist ten years ago, and even some that did have evolved – meaning that more in-depth and specialist skills are needed in the workplace – and these can be learnt whilst at university. Some examples are:

Employers also need to compete in the world economy, where educational levels are often higher than in the UK. So recruiting graduates will help them be more competitive.

“I don’t need a degree to get a good job”

This is partly true. There are some higher level apprenticeships or high level training qualifications available. However in order to stay competitive in the job market you may need a higher level qualification like a degree.

“I could work my way up from the bottom to the top”

This can be true, some companies do have internal training and promotion schemes, but this is less common now. In many organisations your progress will be limited by the level of qualification you have. This means that you could be good at your job, but someone with a degree could progress faster than you.

“I could get a job now and go to university later”

This is true, and you can be just as successful. However, there’s a lot to be said for going sooner rather than later, you can take advantage of the social life and step into a higher level job that bit quicker. It’s more difficult to go to university later – you may have financial or family commitments, and finding time to study is harder. Many mature students wish they had gone to university earlier. Many students take a gap year before moving on to university. If you do this you should still apply for university in Yr13 (or college equivalent) as you can take advantage of all the help and support from your teachers – but then once you are offered a place at a university you can defer (push it back) a year. This way, you know that your university place is waiting for you.

“A degree gives you the opportunity to pursue many careers which would otherwise not be available to you

A growing number of jobs require a degree

Without a degree you are excluding yourself from over a quarter of the job market now – and this will increase

“The vast majority of young people in future are going to need a route to higher skills if the UK is going to compete globally”

Neil Carberry, CBI Director of Education and Skills
**Does the degree subject make a difference?**

*Sometimes, but not as often as you might think.*

There are obviously some jobs you can’t do without a specific degree – such as doctor, vet, teacher. And for some jobs, you would need a particular set of skills, for example to work in finance you need mathematical skills; for journalism you need creative and writing skills – but in both cases these can be obtained from a wide range of degrees.

For most graduate jobs, the subject that you study at university really doesn’t matter. What employers are interested in is the motivation and ability to learn new things, apply skills, communicate, and take responsibility for your own work. More than half of employers do not specify which degree you should have. However, just for interest, the top subject areas for employment prospects are:

1. Medicine and dentistry
2. Education
3. Veterinary science
4. Health related subjects
5. Law
6. Biological sciences
7. Mathematics
8. Languages
9. Engineering
10. History and philosophy
11. Architecture, building and planning
12. Business and administration

**Better Employment Prospects**

Going to university will increase your employability - that means your chances of getting and keeping a job:

- many professional jobs require a higher level qualification
- those with higher level qualifications tend to be promoted faster once at work
- you are much less likely to be unemployed during your working life
- the job market is changing and the majority of new jobs during the next decade will require a higher level qualification such as a degree
- opportunities for high quality training without a higher level qualification are more limited

Graduates, along with the rest of the population, have had fewer job opportunities recently. However, their employment rate is now stable, and compared with others, graduate job prospects are much better.

**Types of employment**

Some reports show graduates in lower level jobs but this is usually taken from data obtained six months after graduation. This information is not a true picture - many students have not decided which direction they wish to take at that point, some need to get work experience (which won’t count) and some will travel or volunteer for a year before seriously looking for a graduate level position. Within a couple of years, the vast majority are where they should be.

Graduates are much less likely to be unemployed than those with lower qualifications, due to the skills, knowledge and experience gained at university.
GRADUATE EARNINGS

Whilst varying from one job sector to the next, research consistently shows that graduates earn significantly more than those without a degree. Some examples of average wages by occupation are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Studied</th>
<th>Graduate employment or self-employment</th>
<th>Non-graduate employment or self-employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aeronautical and Manufacturing Engineering</td>
<td>£24,133</td>
<td>£16,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and Management Studies</td>
<td>£22,103</td>
<td>£15,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting and Finance</td>
<td>£21,383</td>
<td>£16,179</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>£21,211</td>
<td>£14,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacology and Pharmacy</td>
<td>£20,569</td>
<td>£15,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town and Country Planning</td>
<td>£20,606</td>
<td>£15,164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graduates may start on modest salaries, but typically earn much higher salaries as their working life progresses.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that over the past decade graduates earned an average of £12,000 a year more than non-graduates.

Research carried out for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) shows that the average net earnings benefit for a graduate over a working lifetime is £200,000...and that’s taking account of all the costs of being a student.

“University is awesome! It’s the best way to really find yourself, make loads of friends and improve your career prospects.”

Jay Allen
Journalism
University of Sheffield
GAIN SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE FOR LIFE AND WORK

Whatever you study, you’ll gain skills at university that will be invaluable to you personally and professionally for years to come, such as:

- time management
- budgeting
- research skills
- self motivation
- showing initiative and creativity
- presentation skills
- communication skills
- IT literacy
- team working
- planning and organisation skills

GAIN SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE FOR LIFE AND WORK

Almost all universities offer work experience. Many also offer placements – either a compulsory ‘year in industry’ or an optional year out. You could find yourself in the fast lane working with Jaguar, or maybe you’re the next Bill Gates and could secure a placement at Microsoft. Graduates with an entire year of full-time work experience are very appealing to employers!

The sky’s the limit!

HIGHER EDUCATION IS WORTH THE COST

University is affordable

You don’t pay upfront to go to university

- You can get loans to cover the cost of course fees and living costs
- You don’t pay anything back until you earn over £21,000
- You may never pay the full amount back – your loans will be written off after 30 years
- In no way does it affect your credit score or ability to get loans or credit in the future

Think of your student loan as a graduate tax, rather than a debt. Just like tax, the amount you pay is calculated on the amount you earn, not on what you borrowed. It’s important to consider the long term financial benefits as well.

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT

Illustrating a £25,000 salary

For more information on student finance please visit our website www.yesyoucango.org
What about working part-time?
You don’t have to choose between getting a job and going to university – many students work part-time whilst studying. The flexibility of higher education courses usually allows time for part-time work, and many universities even have their own ‘job shops’.

Working is also a great way to meet new people, earn some extra cash and gain experience to put on your C.V.

“Getting a part-time job really helped me out financially at university, which in turn enabled me to become more independent in the long term. Going to university is definitely worth the debt, as I gained a social life, experience and career prospects I wouldn’t have had otherwise.”

Caitlin Johnstone
Food Marketing Management
Sheffield Hallam University

“I would say ensure you budget straight away, student payments often don’t go as far as you think. University is a great experience - one of the best times of your life, so enjoy it as much as you can.”

Aaron Pearce
English Language
Sheffield Hallam University

SOCIAL LIFE AND FRIENDSHIPS

At university there is lots of time and loads of opportunities to experience new things and make new friends. You’ll meet new people on your course and in halls of residence (flats owned and rented by universities) if this is where you choose to live.

“University, despite rising fees has proven to be an invaluable and greatly positive experience. I have had the opportunity to meet people that I would have never previously come across and pursue interests I didn’t know appealed to me. I am confident that a strong degree will give me the stepping stone I need to secure a steadfast future.”

Sophie Sharman
English Literature
University of Sheffield
University can be great fun

All universities have a wide variety of clubs and societies which are a brilliant way to meet new people and give something a go for the first time. Or you can continue pursuing your interests in sports or other hobbies whether this is football, hockey or reading.

Joining a club or society is fun and rewarding.

Here are some of our favourites:
Harry Potter Society @ Cardiff
The Northern Society @ Bristol
The Pirate Society @ Sussex
SocieTEA @ Leeds
Table Football Society @ Sheffield
Come Dine With Me Society @ Edinburgh
Caving Society @ Southampton
Bongos?! World Music Society @ UCL
Circus Hallam @ Sheffield Hallam

Check out the list of clubs and societies on the website of any university to see the kinds of things on offer. Plus, if you have your own great idea for a club you can always set one up!

“I’ve enjoyed my experience in the University of Sheffield. I’ve learnt how to be independent and do things on my own! There are plenty of opportunities if you want to get involved in any way. Totally worth it!”
Michelle Lai
Psychology
University of Sheffield

Independence

You don’t have to move out whilst going to university, if the campus is close by you could stay at home. But if you do decide to move out it is a great opportunity to gain some independence, make new friends and take on extra responsibilities.

But there’s much more to gain from going to university

- It broadens the mind
- Provides you with unique opportunities
- You get to meet a wide range of people from different backgrounds, countries and courses
- You can even learn a new language from scratch
- There are opportunities for overseas study if you want them
- Opportunities for industry placements and work experience

CONCLUSION

You will rarely meet a graduate who regrets going to university – but there are plenty of people who didn’t go, and regret it later. As well as gaining extra skills and knowledge whilst at university, by obtaining a degree you show employers that you are dedicated, ambitious and high achieving – which will put you ahead of the game when it comes to applying for jobs.

It’s one of the best decisions you will ever make
IS IT WORTH GOING TO UNIVERSITY?

yes it is!

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