

## **Is university the right choice for me?**

One of the big decisions to make when finishing high school is what to do after you've passed your final examinations. If you do the highest level of high school, you may feel that people expect you to go to university right after, just because you can. But does that mean you should?

Going to university for the sake of going is a very poor motivation. If you don't know what you want to study or why, you might select a course that you may not like or that comes with bleak job prospects. Consider some of the things outlined below to figure out whether university is something that might suit you, or if perhaps another path may fit you better.

### **Good jobs**

University is often seen as a path, and sometimes a requirement, to a 'good' job. But what is a 'good' job? A job that pays well? One with high status? A job with a company car, or one with good job security? Or perhaps a job that you like and you are good at? Maybe a job that you can do part-time because you know you want to be there to care for your future children, or because you'd rather spend as much time as possible on your hobbies.

There are plenty of good jobs that do not require a degree, such as plumbing and carpentry. Sure, these might not be 'glamorous' or 'intellectual' jobs but at the moment there is a lot of demand for skilled labourers so you can make a pretty decent living: the current average salary for plumbers in the UK is almost £32,000 a year! This is more than a Post-doctoral researcher in their first few years.

### **The right fit**

There are so many ways in which a job can be 'good' for one person and bad for another, so it's best to not compare yourself too much to others. Instead, think about who you are, what you enjoy doing, and what you want for your future. Knowing yourself will help you figure out what a 'good job' looks like to you. Don't expect to know all of this when you are 18 years old though: this is something you will learn as you gain more life experience. Despite not knowing exactly what you'd like your life to look like when you're in your 40's, it's never good to rush into something. So, consider what you do know about yourself and the sort of role you'd like to play in society and take it from there.

## **Job prospects**

These days there are many students who finish their undergraduate degree with no job lined up. They may end up living at home again or working unskilled or lower skilled jobs to get by. In these cases, was their degree worth it? If university sets you back £9,000 a year in tuition alone and you end up working as a barista with little other prospects, university perhaps wasn't worth it. This is one of the reasons why you should not just study something because you think you'll enjoy studying it, but you need to consider what your job prospects could be with the degree you intend to start.

## **Reflect**

If you don't know what you want to do at university or whether to go at all, why not wait for a year before signing up? In that year you could work, even if it's in a menial job. That year will give you some work experience, you'll make some money and you buy yourself some more time to think about your different options (both at university and outside of university).

When you are no longer in school you may find that you really do miss Physics and Computer Science, for instance. You will also be removed from high school and the people and dynamics it involved, and instead you will become more independent. The insights gained from taking a step back from 'school' can help you hone in on a future career and thus help you to make a better decision when it comes to your further education!