

News story: Universities Minister pledges to transform student choice

The Universities Minister has pledged to open students' eyes to the range of different outcomes being delivered by universities to help them make the best choice about where and what to study. It follows [research](#) that reveals how studying the same subject at a different institution can significantly affect future earnings and career prospects.

Sam Gyimah is leading an 'information transformation' through the development of new digital tools and mobile apps so every prospective student, whether they are from a disadvantaged background or the first in their family to attend university, has the same access at their fingertips to the different outcomes provided by different institutions.

[Analysis](#) by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that women who study one of the 100 courses providing the lowest economic returns have earnings up to 64% (approximately £17,000) less than the average degree after graduation. For men, this can be up to 67% (approximately £21,000). The Universities Minister wants to make it easy for students to find out which degree courses at which institutions could offer them better prospects in the future.

The new technology will level the playing field for the most disadvantaged students, who often receive no help or encouragement on university choice, so they can understand the life-changing impact a degree from the right university can have on their future.

The government is publishing a record amount of data on universities and their differing outcomes, and the Universities Minister is committed to making sure everyone has the information they need to make the right decision for them – the new mobile apps and digital tools will put this information directly into the palms of their hand.

Universities Minister Sam Gyimah said:

Going to university is one of the single biggest investments a person will make in their lifetime and it is absolutely vital that everyone has the information they need to make the right decision. We're publishing over half a million cells of data showing graduate outcomes for every university – more than has ever been published before.

What you study and where you study really matters, and these new digital tools will highlight which universities and courses will help people to reach the top of their field, and shine a light on ones lagging behind – levelling the playing field for every prospective student.

This is the start of an information transformation for students,

which will revolutionise how students choose the right university for them. I want this to pave the way for a greater use of technology in higher education, with more tools being made available to boost students' choices and prospects.

Sam Gyimah launched a £125,000 competition earlier this year for companies to develop apps and digital tools so student outcome data can be put at the fingertips of students.

At a showcase event held on 1 November at Imperial College London, the Universities Minister unveiled the final five prototype apps and websites from this competition, and announced that two of those finalists will receive an additional £150,000 each to develop their design into a final product.

The Minister met the five finalists, made up of tech companies and coders from across the UK, to test their prototype apps along with prospective students.

The five tech companies are:

- AccessEd Ltd. – ThinkUni app: a “personalised careers assistant” on mobile, laptop or tablet
- Course Match Ltd. – Coursematch app: an app with a swipeable interface
- MyEd Ltd. – UniPlaces: an innovative, web-based compatibility checker tool
- The Profs – That’s Life: a web-based tool that gamifies university and career choices
- UNI4U Ltd. – a web-based tool which will match students to their ideal university

This funding is part of the Universities Minister’s drive to provide transparency for students and boost quality – offering accessible measurements of data that matters to students, and exposing courses that are lagging behind.

[Research](#) published by the government in June 2018 showed that what students study and the institution really matters to their future life chances. In many other areas of life, from utility bills to hospital care, technology has put better information at our fingertips. These new tools will help enable a similar revolution in transparency in Higher Education.

This is part of a wider revolution in transparency in Higher Education data – the government is already publishing a wide range of data including likely earnings, employability, and teaching quality at universities, also known as TEF. Sam Gyimah now wants to make it even easier for young people to use information like this to help them choose where to study.