

Vast differences exposed in graduate outcomes

Universities need to address the 'stark disparities' that see students get significantly different earnings and employment outcomes at different institutions despite doing the same subjects, the Education Secretary has said today (26 June).

[New data](#) released today show the wide variation in average earnings and employability by course and institution 1, 3 and 5 years after graduation, and reinforces to prospective students completing their A Levels this week that where they choose to study really matters.

Damian Hinds has praised the universities that are leading the way for student outcomes, including future earnings and employability, but expressed his concerns at those delivering similar courses and not yielding the same results.

Last month Mr Hinds expressed concerns over courses not offering value for money for students and taxpayers, and today's data shows that some universities aren't giving students the same positive outcomes that other students on similar courses benefit from. Previous research by the IFS has shown that variation in outcomes cannot be solely attributed to differences in students' prior attainment and social background.

Expected salaries are only one of the drivers when it comes to choosing a university and course. Today, Mr Hinds has highlighted the importance of courses that contribute to the UK's rich and diverse culture and society.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Studying at university has the potential to expand horizons, enrich understanding and transform lives, and we have more data available than ever before to help students make the right decision to achieve that. We know that potential earnings is a driver for many when it comes to choosing a university, and today's data will help thousands choose the right course for them.

Of course, future earnings aren't the only marker of a successful degree, we need to also look at employability, social impact and the important cultural value which enriches our society.

What I am concerned about though is how a course at one university can generate drastically different outcomes and experiences compared to another one offering the same subject, whether that's potential earnings, employability and even teaching quality.

It cannot be right that students studying the same subjects at different institutions, and paying the same fees, are not getting

the same positive outcomes which are evidently achievable. All students should feel they are getting value for money and the stark disparities between some degrees show there are universities that need to improve and maximise the potential of their courses.

Last year [analysis](#) by the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed that women who study at the lowest returning course earn on average 64% (approximately £17,000) less than the average degree after graduation. For men, this figure is 67% (approximately £21,000) less.

This month a [student survey](#) from the Higher Education Policy Institute showed that more than a third (36%) of students said they would have made a different post-18 choice if they were given the opportunity again. These options included choosing a different institution (12%) or course (8%), both (6%), or choosing an alternative route such as an apprenticeship (4%).

The Government has transformed student choice by increasing the data available and the data today will help students opening their A Level results on 15 August find the right course and institution for them.

Two new apps launched earlier this year, backed by Government funding, which use graduate outcomes data to help prospective students make better choices about where and what to study. ThinkUni, created by [AccessEd](#), works as a personalised digital assistant to access information, while [TheWayUp!](#) created by The Profs, is a game where players can simulate career paths.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Deciding where and what to study at university will be one of the biggest choices young people will make, so we want students and their parents to have the best possible information about higher education.

This data is an invaluable tool to help prospective students when deciding on the next stage of their lives, though clearly graduate outcomes are not the only measure of importance when deciding which subjects to study.

While there is more to do to ensure that we recognise the social value and wider importance of subjects upon which graduate earnings are not always an accurate measure, I hope the next generation of students will take advantage of all the new data this government has made available to help them start their career on the right path.

The department's flagship rating system, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), which awards universities with a Gold, Silver or Bronze rating encourages high-quality teaching and provides another tool to help students make informed decisions on their post-18 options.

Last month the independent panel for the post-18 education and funding review published its recommendations to the Government, with a focus on delivering value for money for students and taxpayers. The Government will now consider the panel's recommendations before concluding the review at the Spending Review.

The universities regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), has placed a condition of registration on providers to deliver successful outcomes for all of their students. The OfS has the power to take action where a provider is not meeting this criterion, including imposing sanctions, and in the most serious cases deregistration.