

## **Your Career Path and University.**

Over the next few months as you consider your options after the Sixth Form you also need to consider your options after university. It is essential that whatever you choose you are doing it for yourself and for the right reasons. By all means get advice from friends, beaks, parents, admissions tutors – but it will be **you** going to live in that City and study that subject, for anything up to 4/5 years.

### **You must take personal ownership of this process.**

You might want to think carefully about the following questions.

*Why are you going to university?*

You must have good reasons for going into HE – it may not be the right path for **all** of you. If you are not sure, at least explore the alternatives. There are many good employers that take on employees at 18 and enable them to work and study for degree level and professional qualifications.

*Does it matter what University you go to?*

Essentially the answer to this is **YES** and **NO**. You need to find Universities and courses that suit you and enable you to develop the skills necessary for work. Most graduate employers are more interested in what you have done with your time at university rather than where you went. You do need to find universities that give you the opportunity to develop these skills – employers tend to choose universities that are good at this (rather than just their historical reputation).

*Does it matter what course I do?*

There are of course certain ‘vocational courses’ where the degree is essential – medicine, veterinary science, dentistry and engineering. For most other professions (including Law) the degree does not matter. What is important is that you can identify from your degree course which skills you are developing which may be attractive to an employer.

*What is meant by employability skills?*

There are around 269,000 new graduates created every year – it is a very competitive environment and you must be able to set yourself apart from them. Many employers set a UCAS points tariff (ie A Level grades) for a basic entry criteria to assess your intellect as well as expecting at least a 2:1 in your degree. After that they are looking for self reliance skills, interpersonal skills, communication and team-working skills, self motivation, flexibility and commercial awareness. All these skills will not be obtained through your degree course.

*How do I acquire them?*

Involvements in activities such as sport, culture, academic, music especially if you help, run or administer the activity. Work experience, preferably relevant to your chosen career (find sandwich courses where you spend a year in work), gap year, summer internships (where you work through the summer in a business), volunteer work (**see sheet *Building a Good CV***).

It is vital that you take the initiative – this will only happen if your chosen career path is **your** property and what **you** want to do. You must think ahead, get to know what you want, be curious (examine everything closely and do not take any information for granted), and always be open to new ideas and learning.

**What do employers want? (Table taken from ‘What do graduates do? 2008’ HECSU and AGCAS) See [www.prospects.ac.uk/links/wdgd](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/wdgd)**

Type of Skill	Employers requirements – ‘Buzz’ words	Examples of how the skills can be developed through interests, work experience and education
Self-reliance Skills	Self-awareness – purposeful, focused, self-belief, realistic Proactivity – resourceful, drive, self-reliant Willingness to learn – inquisitive, motivated, enthusiastic Self-promotion – positive, persistent, ambitious Networking – initiator, relationship-builder, resourceful Planning action – decision-maker, planner, able to prioritise	Duke of Edinburgh Award Young Enterprise Award Music Band (play regularly at local venues) Participate in competitive sport Public speaking/debating society Amateur dramatics
People skills	Team working – supportive, organised, co-ordinator, deliverer Interpersonal skills – listener, adviser, co-operative, assertive Oral communication – communicator, presenter, influencer Leadership – motivator, energetic, visionary Customer orientation – friendly, caring, diplomatic Foreign language – specific language skills	Working in a shop/supermarket/restaurant Fundraising for charities Voluntary work Member of orchestra Play sport for a team Guide/Scout/CCF leader
General Employment Skills	Problem-solving – practical, logical, results orientated Flexibility – versatile, willing, multi-skilled Business acumen – entrepreneurial, competitive, risk taker IT/computer literacy – office skills, keyboard skills, software packages Numeracy – accurate, quick-thinker, methodical Commitment – dedicated, trustworthy, conscientious	Young Enterprise Award Project work through studies Mensa membership Book club Member of local club/society Music grades
Specialist skills	Specific occupational skills – specialist relevant knowledge, e.g. languages, IT Technical skills – e.g. journalism, engineering, accounting, sales	European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Language skills Web design skills Writing for school/college newspaper First Aid at Work Qualification NVQ qualification