

# Why go to university?

Four graduates talk about their experiences.

**A** Sonia

While I was doing my physics degree people would often say I was acquiring skills I'd be able to use in my future career, even if I didn't become a physicist. It sounded like nonsense to me: if I did another job in the end, what could be relevant about knowing what's inside an atom or how to operate a laser? It turns out they were referring to the wealth of other skills you pick up along the way. Communication and problem-solving are just two of these. In contrast to the way you may have been taught before, university teaches you to be innovative and to think for yourself. Going to university is about more than just studying though! I got to make friends from all over the world and they have proved to be useful work contacts.

**B** Jane

I went to university because it was the career path expected by school, parents and classmates (to an extent) and also because I didn't really have a clue about what other options were open to me. It's difficult to know how things would have turned out if I hadn't gone. I do know that the job I do 'requires' a degree to do it, though there must be alternative ways of developing these skills. The degree, like it or not, is the screening method used by large numbers of employers and as such opens certain doors. It's certainly harder to get into all sorts of careers without a degree. The debates about university education typically revolve around routes into employment, yet for many the degree is barely relevant to the work we end up doing later on. It gives access to a certain type of career but the actual degree can often be of little practical value.

**C** Lydia

There is a lot of pressure on teenagers to know exactly what they want to do with their lives. As a high-achieving student at school, the alternatives to university didn't really appeal to me. So I took up a place at a good university but ended up studying something I wasn't sure I was interested in. Some people know what they want to do from a young age, and for those people, going to university straight out of school may be a great idea. However, many of us are very unsure of our future ambitions aged 18, and should therefore be given as many choices as possible, rather than being pushed into a degree course. Many of my friends went to university straight from school.

**D** Bethany

I don't really remember making the decision to go to university. Everyone always assumed I would, even though I was never the most gifted academically. Someone asked me during my second year why I had gone, and I remember not being able to answer the question. Maybe it was the way I was raised? Maybe it was the school I went to? But university was the next step. I had a great time there, I must say. It's so much more than the place you go to get a degree. You learn so many life skills that I would urge anyone to give the idea some thought. Since graduation I've had a string of jobs. University is an excellent decision for some, and may provide the right qualifications to start a career. But for others, going straight into a job is just as appropriate.

## WRITING (1 hour 20 minutes)

### Part 1

You **must** answer this question. Write your answer in **140–190** words in an appropriate style on the separate answer sheet.

- 1 In your English class you have been talking about life in the past. Now, your English teacher has asked you to write an essay.

Write an essay using **all** the notes and give reasons for your point of view.

'Life is better today than it was 100 years ago.' Do you agree?

#### Notes

Write about:

1. health
2. entertainment
3. ...(your own idea)

Write your **essay**. You must use grammatically correct sentences with accurate spelling and punctuation in a style appropriate for the situation.

Part 2

Write an answer to **one** of the questions 2–4 in this part. Write your answer in **140–190** words in an appropriate style on the separate answer sheet. Put the question number in the box at the top of the answer sheet.

- 2 You recently saw this notice on an English-language website called TV Gold:

**Reviews wanted!**

**A TV documentary I learnt a lot from.**

Have you seen an interesting TV documentary recently that you learnt a lot from? Write us a review of the documentary. You should explain what the documentary was about, tell us what you learnt from it and say whether other people would find it interesting too.

The best reviews will be posted on the website next month.

Write your **review**.

- 3 You see this announcement on an English-language travel website.

**ARTICLES WANTED**

**A day in the city!**

We are looking for articles about how a visitor could have a great time in a city in your country in just one day.

Write us an article telling us what a visitor can do, what they can see and how they can travel around.

The best articles will be posted on our website.

Write your **article**.

- 4 Your English teacher has asked you to write a report on a part-time or holiday job that you have done. The report will appear in the college English-language magazine.

In your report, you should

- describe the job
- explain what you learnt from it
- say whether you would recommend other students to do it.

Write your **report**.