

Part 3: Exam practice

Complete the summary below with words from the text underneath. Use **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** for each answer.

Summary:

Up until recently, students expected to earn good money after graduation. However, there has been a dramatic (1) _____ in attitude, and a minority now think that they will work in a field that they are (2) _____ for. It is still worth doing higher studies in the UK because the gap in earning between university graduates and the people who do not have university degrees is greater than anywhere else (3) _____. Because of the current economic situation, there may be fewer employment opportunities available, so for (4) _____, qualifications are very important.

The recession has brought about an abrupt change of mood on university campuses up and down the country. A five-year boom in the graduate job market has been stopped in its tracks and salary expectations, which hit record levels last year, are heading southwards. No wonder only one in five of 16,000 final year students questioned for a recent survey by High Flyers Research said that they expected to get a job for which they are qualified by the time they graduate this summer.

Despite the gloom, the financial case for going to university remains compelling. International surveys continue to show the salary premium enjoyed by UK graduates over those who choose not to go to university as among the highest in the world. In the post-recession world, a university degree is likely to be even more of an advantage to job-seekers than before.

But choosing the right degree course and the right university will also be more important than ever. This does not necessarily mean that students should go only for job-related degrees, but it will put a premium on marketable skills. And it may mean that more universities can be expected to follow the lead of Liverpool John Moores University, which puts all of its undergraduates through a World of Work (WoW) course designed to give them the problem-solving and communications skills they will need at work.

The Times Good University Guide 2010, published by HarperCollins, offers a wealth of essential information to help candidates to navigate the maze of university choice, as well as advice on student life. It is the most authoritative guide to universities in the UK and is an essential and comprehensive tool for students and parents.

The online version of the Guide allows students and parents to create their own individual university rankings and to compare the strengths and weaknesses of different institutions by sorting universities according to one of eight criteria – from student satisfaction to research quality and degree results. The table sees Oxford maintain its leadership, despite coming below Cambridge in most of the subject tables. Cambridge has the better record on student satisfaction, research, entry standards, completion and graduate destinations, but Oxford's lead in staffing levels, degree classifications and particularly in spending on libraries and other student facilities makes the difference.

The biggest climbers at the top of the table include Liverpool (up from 43 to 28), Leeds (up from 31 to 27), Sheffield (up from 22 to 18), Edinburgh (up from 18 to 14) and Exeter (up from 13 to nine). St Andrews remains the top university in Scotland, while Cardiff is well clear in Wales.

The key information is contained in the 62 subject tables, which now cover every area of higher education. The number of institutions in this year's tables has increased by only one because a fourth university – the West of Scotland – has instructed the Higher Education Statistics Agency not to release its data. It joins Swansea Metropolitan, London Metropolitan and Liverpool Hope universities in blocking the release of data to avoid appearing in league tables.

Part 3: Exam practice

The following passage has seven paragraphs, labelled A–G. Which paragraphs mention the following information? You do not need to mention all the paragraphs.

- 1 the relationship between local environment and behaviour _____
- 2 the benefits of asking around _____
- 3 becoming an organiser _____
- 4 partnerships against crime _____
- 5 problems which are not really problems _____
- 6 aspects of neighbourhood research _____

Will you love your neighbours?

A

When you are interested in buying a house, it's easy to check the location and specifications of the house, but how can you assess an area's community spirit – not just if the neighbours are friendly, but whether people will get involved in helping to deliver public services, setting up social enterprises and tackling local issues? Here are some tips for finding out what an area's community spirit is like.

B

If an estate agent shows you around, ask for the vendor's phone number. 'Meeting the seller is an opportunity to find out what an area is like,' says Chris Gittins, manager of Streets Alive (streetsalive.org.uk), which works with residents, councils and voluntary groups to build communities by hosting events and activities in streets. It is also worth trying to meet the neighbours to find out more about an area. If you don't find anyone at home, or don't get a clear response, talk to people in the pub or the corner shop.

C

Living Streets (livingstreets.org.uk), which promotes safe, active and enjoyable streets, says steer clear of heavy traffic. Its research shows that people living on busy streets shield themselves from noise, don't go outside and restrict their children's independence – all of which reduces interaction with neighbours. And although an open space may seem like an asset, it can also become a source of conflict, says Dominic Church, senior adviser at the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. 'If they are not kept clear and nobody is clearly responsible for the maintenance, they can become breeding grounds for graffiti, antisocial behaviour and kids mucking about,' he says.

D

Local police can tell you whether there is a Neighbourhood (or Home) Watch scheme in your area (mynhw.co.uk). Living in an area with a scheme doesn't just reduce your insurance premiums and ensure that the police tackle local issues such as theft: research shows that even when neighbours have nothing in common they share a desire to create a safe area and create a community spirit. If there isn't a scheme, find out why.

E

Councils have lists of local voluntary organisations that can help to reveal the interests and activities of local communities. Some councils also run award schemes, which may include prizes for active and inspirational groups. Search the web, use social media and post queries on forums to find out residents' views. This may give you more varied and up-to-date information than the council. Look at newschoolsnetwork.org to see if there are any plans to set up a new free school in the area. This is a sign of socially engaged parents and community motivation.

F

Floods, high crime levels and other issues can give a neighbourhood a bad image, but they can boost community spirit. In my case, the floods of 2007 brought people together to tackle climate change, which led to a low-carbon group that this year won two national competitions worth more than £800,000. The CrimeMapper website (maps.police.uk) provides information on crime and antisocial behaviour by area and police force. You can search by five types of crime and get details of your local neighbourhood policing team, its contacts, and the next 'Have Your Say' meeting.

G

If you are confident about the house, you could go ahead with the purchase and hold a street party to boost community spirit. 'People who have just moved into a house are critical to setting up street parties,' Gittins says. 'After two or three years it becomes harder – they meet neighbours, get set in their routines, and feel less motivated.'