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.

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