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UNIVERSITY STILL TOP CHOICE FOR HIGH-FLYING SCOTS DESPITE PANDEMIC

- **Half of prospective students in Scotland believe going to university will improve their job prospects**
- **A third believe attending university will lead to a better salary**
- **Just 5% delayed starting university as a result of the pandemic**

University is still the pathway to securing the best job prospects say half (50%) of Scottish prospective students aged between 18 and 34, according to research from Bank of Scotland.

A third (30%) also believe that attending university will net them a better salary in the long run, compared to those who decide against taking the higher education route.

Pandemic no put-off for Scottish students

According to the survey of young Scottish adults*, just 5% delayed starting university as a result of the pandemic, and less than a tenth (9%) believe that going to university is no longer financially viable.

Two fifths of the young respondents (41%) believe that, despite the costs, having a degree is still worthwhile, compared to one in five (22%) who think university is not good value for money.

In terms of funding, over a third (35%) of prospective students intend to pay for their studies with their savings, a number which has almost doubled since March 2020 (up from just 19%). Others (46%) will pay for their course through part time work, with less than half of students (47%) utilising a student loan.

Pete McCarthy, Director at Bank of Scotland, said: “Despite the uncertainty the last year created for young people, it’s reassuring to see this hasn’t deterred the next generation of students from following their educational and career plans. The overall picture is positive, with just 5% delaying their course as a result of the pandemic.

“Young people are also taking their finances seriously, with a 16% rise in those saving money to fund their degree aspirations, compared to pre-pandemic. It’s a good idea to start looking at higher education costs as early as possible, as it will help with getting a good idea of what may need to be saved to fund the course, accommodation, books and the all-important nights out.”



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Future Financiers

Many young Scots are already thinking further into the future, as nearly half of prospective students (44%) have a particular career in mind to study towards, and over half (52%) want to study a subject they love out of passion.

The survey also found that the younger generation consider banking (58%), technology (56%) and medicine (49%) the careers most likely to be lucrative, in terms of salary, in the future. Further, just under half of respondents thought coding would be worthwhile financially (45%), compared to a fifth (20%) for jobs in social media and a sixth (15%) opted for reality TV stardom as the route to riches.

However, over a quarter (26%) think on the job training or an apprenticeship is a better option than attending university, with one in 10 preferring vocational education.

“Going to university has always been part of my plan”

Cameron Green is 16 and lives in East Kilbride, Glasgow. He is going to the University of Strathclyde, to do Architectural Studies.

“Going to university has always been part of my plan because I’ve wanted to be an architect for years; I love the idea of creating beautiful buildings that people will use and enjoy, designing them so they work for future generations, in the most sustainable way. The best way for me to achieve this is to get a degree in architecture, the first step of three, to becoming a fully registered architect.

“I think having a degree demonstrates dedication and discipline, so that when you’re applying for jobs in the future, you do stand out. Plus there’s all the other benefits uni gives you, like meeting new people from different walks of life, and getting to learn a subject you love. I definitely think some university courses will lead to more lucrative careers in terms of salaries though – doctors, dentists, engineering, IT – all feel like they’d provide financial security in the future. However, it’s a lot of hard work to qualify in those fields, just like Architecture! Saying that, there are absolutely lots of ways to achieving your goals and university isn’t the only way to do it, I definitely think modern apprenticeships are great and are becoming more popular.

“The pandemic has been rocky for students. I was really concerned about the prospect of doing all of my learning virtually as it wouldn’t have felt like a true ‘uni’ experience. I thought long and hard about whether to defer. However, Strathclyde were great, and held a meeting to explain how everything would work that made me feel a lot better, so I’ll be pushing ahead and won’t be deferring.”



“There are loads of ways to build a successful career in an area you love”

Kiera Gowans is 18 and lives in Kirriemuir. She is going to Abertay University, Dundee to study Criminology

“I’m really keen on joining the police force and, for a long time, I didn’t want to go to university. My plan was to apply to join the police straight after school but the pandemic really changed my perspective. It made me realise that you never know what’s around the corner in life and you should make sure you’re doing the things that you love. I decided I didn’t want to jump head first into a job after school and that I had an opportunity to study a topic I’ve always been interested in – crime, the reasons for it, and the justice system – so when I saw the criminology course at Abertay, I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to apply.

“I can’t deny I’m excited about the social life side of things too and, in all honesty, I’m mostly looking forward to the party aspect of university! I’m not staying in halls this year as I wasn’t sure how everything would work if there were more lockdowns in future but I’m still going to be able to meet new people and make friends. Freshers Week is going ahead and I really can’t wait!

“I definitely don’t think that going to university is right for everyone. There are loads of ways to build a successful career in an area you love and there are so many fantastic jobs that don’t require university degrees. I don’t think it’s as important as it used to be as lots of job opportunities no longer require a degree. For me, university wasn’t something I wanted to do for a long time but, as it happens, I did end up changing my mind. I think I’ll find out more about myself at uni while also making new friends – and socialising!”

End

Notes to editor

Photos of Cameron and Kiera available by request

*All figures relate to Scots aged 18-34

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 3801 adults, of which 2,109 were 18-34. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17/5/21-08/06/21. The survey was carried out online.

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