

IELTS Reading Practice 1

Going to university is crucial to a successful career. Why or why not?

People lacking university degrees are more likely to be restricted to basic jobs in service, manufacturing or construction industries, jobs that attract few job-related benefits, little career advancement and job satisfaction. Besides, they are vulnerable to layoffs once the economy becomes less favourable.

In contrast, university graduates generally fare better. Studies show that university graduates have significantly higher income throughout their lifetime than those with only high school qualifications. Of course, not all university graduates have the same sort of high job status and earning. There is a significant earning gap among them from different fields. For example a degree in history or arts would have less earning potential than those in law or engineering. Nevertheless, if you enter one of these fields with a degree, you are more likely to find a good job somewhere than those who do not have a degree.

Moreover, the experience during college life makes the difference in personal growth. Aside from the knowledge gained in the particular discipline you pursue, inside and outside classroom, university education trains you to think analytically and critically, understand and appreciate complex subjects, and express ideas effectively. A tight academic timetable with a heavy study load, leading a life as an independent adult, campus and social life are some of the elements that instill gradually crucial skills such as self-discipline, organization, time management, communication, the ability to learn, and drive to pursue goals. In other words, college life helps prepare you to become a more professional individual, ready for taking up responsibility of higher order in your career.

Most people have a common dream: go to university, get a good job, buy a house and raise a family. It may not always be that straightforward, but it all starts with your educational degree which helps you realize your career as well as life goals. Thus degree-holders are in a better position for a challenging and rewarding career and a more fruitful life.

On the other hand, many believe that university education has always been over-rated. Many graduates, particularly those *non-STEM majors*, have to undertake *mediocre* employment while regretting having made a major commitment of time and money to their degree. Besides, we can easily name many successful people who have never gone to university. Career success depends on many other factors – factors that university education often does not teach. The classroom knowledge does not always translate into practical skills for the real world. Employees need to bring marketable skills to the table

so as to provide value for their employers. Those skills are learnable through education. Apart from academic education in university, education can be gained through formal, informal, self-directed learning, on the job training, studies at high school, training centres, continuing education institutes, and workplaces. No matter what form it takes, you come along with a positive work attitude and continual desire to learn and adapt. It would usually take years of such diligence and persistence to achieve success. Surely, this attribute decides your career development more than a degree certificate.

The arguments for and against both views can go on forever. Nonetheless, one thing is clear: higher education is the right choice for some but it may not be suitable for everyone. You should choose your own preferred career path, via university or otherwise, which can ultimately make you happy. In keeping with the fast-developing world, one should work hard, continue to learn and develop oneself to face an increasingly competitive job market. Then success will follow.

Questions:

1. Is a university education crucial to one's success? Give an answer based on the passage above.
2. Do you think it is fair for employers to give a higher salary to graduates from certain professions such as law and medicine?
3. What are the factors which are important to one's success but a university education often does not provide? Name TWO of these factors.
4. What suggestions does the writer give concerning higher education? How should one prepare oneself to face an increasingly competitive job market?