

WHERE NEXT? WHAT INFLUENCES THE CHOICES SCHOOL LEAVERS MAKE?

Choice is endless, but how do students make these choices, and how does this differ by pathway? To what extent do the choices students make in school affect their next steps? And how should we support students in making informed and aspirational decisions?

THE AGE AT WHICH STUDENTS START THINKING ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION VARIES

One in three applicants report first thinking about higher education at primary school.

Disadvantaged students are **more likely to consider higher education later**, which can limit their choices, especially for more selective subjects and higher tariff providers.

This suggests that **careers information, advice and guidance** (CIAG) should be embedded within **primary education**.

STUDENTS CHOOSE THEIR DEGREE SUBJECT BEFORE THEY THINK ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE THEY WANT TO ATTEND

83% of students told us they decided on their degree subject **before** choosing their university or college.

This highlights the role of **subject-specific outreach**.

DECISIONS ARE MOST INFLUENCED BY ENJOYMENT, BUT EMPLOYABILITY IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT POST-COVID

99% of students report making choices at school based on their **enjoyment** of a subject, and this is also the **primary driver** of degree choice.

Over 50% report that **high graduate employment rates** have become more important to them since the start of the pandemic.

Understanding what is important to individuals will help improve support for their decision-making.

SOME HIGHER EDUCATION SUBJECTS REQUIRE MORE FORETHOUGHT THAN OTHERS

One in five students report they could not study a higher education subject that interested them because they **did not have the relevant subjects for entry** – with medicine the most commonly cited.

Students should be made aware of how **choices made in school can affect later options**.

POST-16 CHOICES STRONGLY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' FUTURES

49% of English 18 year olds with post-16 vocational qualifications enter higher education, but are **significantly less likely to attend higher tariff providers** than those with general qualifications (entry rate of 3% vs. 27%).

As the roll-out of T Levels accelerates, it is vital that students **know where all pathways lead** when making choices in school.

THERE IS A NEED FOR EARLIER, BROADER, AND PERSONALISED CAREERS INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE (CIAG)

Two in five students believe **more information and advice** would have led to them making better choices.

Almost one in three students report **not receiving any information about apprenticeships** from their school.