



# THE UNIVERSITY CHOICE JOURNAL

Session plans for tutors

trotman | t

# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Theme 1: Why university?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Theme 2: What makes a good decision?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Theme 3: What should I study?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Theme 4: Where should I study?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Theme 5: It's time to be strategic</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Theme 6: University visits</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Theme 7: Money and finances</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Theme 8: Do I take a gap year?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Theme 9: What about the labour market?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Theme 10: What if things don't go according to plan?</b>	<b>20</b>

# INTRODUCTION

The following ten session plans are designed to use alongside *The University Choice Journal*. Each session is built around one of the themes in the journal and lasts approximately 30 minutes. They are a resource that could be used during tutor time and encourage critical reflection; a key skill for the process and for university life in general.

# THEME 1

## *Why university?*

### *Why do I want to go to university?*

#### ***Learning objectives/outcomes***

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. give three reasons why they are thinking about going to university
2. evaluate whether these reasons are positive or negative
3. describe what and who is influencing their decisions.

#### ***Resources/materials***

None

#### ***Preparation***

To carry out a short (5-minute) interview with someone in the year above about why they want to go to university.

#### ***Activities with approximate timings***

*Introduce topic (2 minutes):* emphasise the importance of understanding why they want to go to university (e.g. important for their motivation when they are there to help them to succeed, to be clear about possible options).

*Group work (10 minutes):* in groups of four, ask students to share the content of the interviews and make a list of the reasons people gave for going to university. They should rank each reason out of 5 (1 = poor reason, to 5 = excellent reason).

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share the findings with the whole group; tutor to record.

*Video clips (5 minutes):* find relevant video clips to watch, for example:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CSagIPQ0BY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CSagIPQ0BY)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4lfSKhmF7I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4lfSKhmF7I)

As an alternative, ask students to find video clips on this topic that they find helpful and share them.

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to make a list of their own reasons for going to university and to state whether these reasons are positive or negative.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 2

# What makes a good decision?

*How can I be sure that I am making a good decision?*

### ***Learning objectives/outcomes***

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. understand more about what makes a good decision
2. evaluate a decision they have made
3. think about the next steps in their decision-making process.

### ***Resources/materials***

None

### ***Preparation***

None

### ***Activities with approximate timings***

*Introduce topic (2 minutes).*

*In pairs (5 minutes):* ask students to discuss with their partners a decision they have made recently. How happy were they with it on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = very unhappy and 10 = very happy). Students to share the rankings with the whole group.

*Group work (5 minutes):* one important decision students have already made is their choice of subjects; in small groups, ask them to make a list of how they made this decision and then to list the points under headings. Ask them to draw out at least three good ways and three bad ways of making decisions.

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share their findings with the whole group; tutor to record.

*In pairs or threes (5 minutes):* ask students to discuss, in relation to university choice, what makes a good/bad decision?

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to make some notes on what they want to do next to make a good decision.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 3

# *What should I study?*

## *How can I decide what to study?*

### ***Learning objectives/outcomes***

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. list their academic strengths
2. identify some of their main interests
3. relate these to their university course choice.

### ***Resources/materials***

None

### ***Preparation***

None

### ***Activities with approximate timings***

*Introduce topic (2 minutes):* underline the importance of choosing a course that will be interesting and satisfying in order to succeed.

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to complete a SWOT analysis in relation to their academic work (Strengths – things they are good at and enjoy; Weaknesses – things they find very difficult and might not enjoy; Opportunities – things they would like to learn more about; Threats – things that might trip them up or stop them from learning).

*In pairs (with someone they know quite well) (5 minutes):* ask students to complete a SWOT analysis on their partner.



*In the same pairs (10 minutes):* ask students to discuss and compare the two SWOT analyses.

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to consider how the SWOT analysis might help with choosing a course at university and write notes on their thoughts.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 4

# Where should I study?

*Where would I like to spend the next few years of my life?*

### ***Learning objectives/outcomes***

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. understand more about where universities are located
2. discuss the pros and cons of studying close to home or far away
3. consider where they want to study.

### ***Resources/materials***

IT facilities, large map of the UK, post-it notes.

### ***Preparation***

Ask students to research online for two universities that look attractive to them – one within 30 miles from home (this could be further away depending on your location) and one further afield. Ask them to bring the names of the universities to the session.

### ***Activities with approximate timings***

*Introduce topic (2 minutes).*

*In pairs (5 minutes):* ask students to share the names of the two universities they selected and to discuss what attracted them to these institutions. Students to write the names of the universities on post-it notes and place them on the map. During the activity, the tutor to make a list of the universities selected on the board.

*In pairs (10 minutes):* students to look at the websites from two universities on the list (not the ones they chose themselves) and make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of their locations.

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share their opinions with the whole group.

*Review (5 minutes):* students to write down individually what this tells them about where they might like to study.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 5

# *It's time to be strategic*

## *It's all about grades and points*

### ***Learning objectives/outcomes***

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. understand more about being strategic in relation to university choice
2. understand some of the possible major pitfalls
3. think about how to avoid them.

### ***Resources/materials***

None

### ***Preparation***

Ask students to research online three courses they might want to apply for and to make a note of the grades/points the universities are likely to ask for.

### ***Activities with approximate timings***

*Introduce topic (2 minutes).*

*Group work (5 minutes):* ask students to imagine they have decided to run a marathon. In their small group, ask them to make a list of the things they would need to do to make this happen. (This will include everything from booking a place to training, diet, support, etc.)

*Definition (2 minutes):* tutor to share the definition of being strategic. Know what you want to do (e.g. running a marathon) and understanding what you need to do to give yourself the best possible chance of success.

*In pairs (10 minutes):* in relation to university choice, one key element is the five choices on the UCAS form. Ask students to share the three courses they chose as part of their research for the session and to rank them, from 1 to 5, in relation to how strategic they are (1 = poor to 5 = excellent), giving reasons for the rankings. Ask them to consider if these choices are going to enable them to succeed or could they set them up to fail? Students to discuss choices and considerations with their partners.

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share the findings with the whole group.

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to make notes on what they feel they need to do next. Do they feel they need to adjust their choices?

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 6

# University visits

## Starting to make a plan for university visits

### **Learning objectives/outcomes**

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. make a plan for which universities they want to visit
2. start to look for dates for visits
3. be clear about some of the things they want to see during their visits.

### **Resources/materials**

IT

### **Preparation**

Ask students to come to the session with a list of at least three universities they would like to visit.

### **Activities with approximate timings**

*Introduce topic (2 minutes).*

*Tutor-led activity (2 minutes):* discuss with students how to decide if a particular university is right for them. Gather ideas from the students (e.g. a university's website, a Push guide, talking to a teacher who went there, talking to former students). Many university students say that the single most important thing was going on a university visit.

*Online activity (10 minutes):* ask students to research online when they will be able to visit the three universities they have identified. Help students to find the details (e.g. on the open days website) and ask students to list the relevant dates.

*Small groups (5 minutes):* ask the students to start to make a plan by making notes under the following questions:

- What do they need to know? (E.g. the location)
- How will they get there?
- What do they hope to see?

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share one key point from each group.

*Review (5 minutes):* students to list the most important points for them.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

# THEME 7

## Money and finances

### How to manage on a tight budget

#### *Learning objectives/outcomes*

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. begin to think about how to manage on a tight budget
2. think about how to save money on food
3. be aware of places where you can shop economically.

#### *Resources/materials*

IT

#### *Preparation*

Ask students to make a list of what they ate during the day yesterday.

#### *Activities with approximate timings*

*Introduce topic (2 minutes):* to discuss why living cheaply will be important while at university.

*Group work (5 minutes):* in groups of six, ask students to imagine they are sharing a student flat or house and they are all keen to eat cheaply and well. Ask them to consider how they can work together to do this? Students to make notes.

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share the findings with the large group.



*Group online activity (15 minutes):* divide students into six small groups. Students to look up the prices of key products on one of the following supermarket websites (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Aldi, Lidl, Morrisons, Asda) to find out which is the cheapest. Each group selects a different supermarket website to look for the following products – bread, milk, eggs, mince, tinned tomatoes, olive oil, plain biscuits, their favourite breakfast cereal, jam, squash. Each group adds up their costs and shares the results.

- Which supermarket was the cheapest?
- What will this mean for your shopping?

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 8

# *Do I take a gap year?*

## *Would a gap year be a good option for me?*

### ***Learning objectives/outcomes***

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. begin their research into taking a gap year
2. identify good websites on taking a gap year
3. be clearer about what they need to do next in relation to the option of taking a gap year.

### ***Resources/materials***

IT

### ***Preparation***

Ask students to find a good website on taking a gap year.

### ***Activities with approximate timings***

*Introduce topic (2 minutes):* emphasise the personal choice aspect of taking a gap year.

*Website reviews (15 minutes):* ask students, in groups of three, to explore the websites chosen beforehand and make a list of their strengths and weaknesses. Students to rank each website from 1 to 3:

1 = good, 2 = average and 3 = poor.

*Groups of three (5 minutes):* ask students to choose the best website from the three and to make a list of three key points to remember.

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to think about what they need to do next to help them decide whether or not they want to consider taking a gap year.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 9

# *What about the labour market?*

## *Why do I need to think about the labour market now?*

### *Learning objectives/outcomes*

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. understand more about what graduates do
2. think about the effect the labour market might have on the university choice process.

### *Resources/materials*

None

### *Preparation*

Ask students to look at reliable websites (e.g. [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)) to gather information on graduate destinations.

### *Activities with approximate timings*

*Introduce topic (2 minutes):* explain the importance of understanding the labour market.

*Group work (15 minutes):* ask students, in groups of four, to share their findings from their online research and to make a list of 10 common job areas or industries that graduates enter. On the list, ask students to decide if they think each area has 1 – too many graduates applying; 2 – just about the right number of graduates applying; or 3 – too few graduates applying.

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share the findings with the whole group; tutor to record.

*In pairs (5 minutes):* ask students to discuss with their partners how this might affect their decisions regarding what to study.

*Individually (5 minutes):* ask students to make notes on what they want to consider next.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*

## THEME 10

# What if things don't go according to plan?

## What are my options?

### *Learning objectives/outcomes*

By the end of the session students will be able to:

1. consider a range of options after receiving their results
2. think about a backup plan
3. cope better with the clearing process.

### *Resources/materials*

'Ready for Results' (RfR) postcards – blank postcards with the title RfR.

### *Preparation*

None

### *Activities with approximate timings*

*Introduce topic (2 minutes):* encourage students to look ahead to receiving their results.

*In pairs (5 minutes):* ask students to imagine it is results day; they get their envelope, open it and it's not what they hoped for. What does it say? What now? Ask them to discuss this scenario with their partners.

*Feedback (5 minutes):* students to share main points with the whole group.

*Whole group (5 minutes):* make a list of the possible options available to students; tutor to write them on board.

*Tutor input (5 minutes):* give top tips for clearing, i.e. be quick, get help and be decisive. Outline the support available. Ask students to make a list of where they might study instead and to find out which universities offer a relevant Foundation year.

*RfR cards (5 minutes):* hand out the cards and encourage students to use them to record the key steps they would take if necessary.

*Summarise and conclude (2 minutes).*