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# Get more into university



In Britain there is currently a misconception that the number of young people who achieve university degrees stands at the OECD average. The OECD surveys the number of people aged 20-22 in each country with a degree and because young people in Britain tend to go to university and graduate a little earlier than in much of the rest world, we look

average. Looking at attainment by age 25 or 30, Britain is far below average amongst the rich world nations in the proportion of its young people who get to go to university. This year there was an 11% increase in applications but only a 1% increase in university places.

There is nothing intrinsically deficient in young people in Britain which means that we could not quickly, within one academic year, take an additional three young people in every hundred into our universities. There are almost 200 universities. Most extra students could live at home while studying. I have written up the figures and evidence of how this occurred in 1996/7 in the British Medical Journal, including estimates of the health benefits of more university places.

Universities are a good place to be to weather recessions, but what is most

important about taking young people out of the labour market is that it frees up the jobs many of these most qualified of young adults would otherwise have taken. Another young person gets a better job as a result, another gets the job they would have got, another gets to be off benefits, and all those moves up cost you nothing but the cost of extra university places. And, as students spend more than they have in income, extra students benefit recovery.

Apprenticeships, internships, conservation volunteers are all good ideas, and are all needed, but nothing else would be quite as effective as raising university entry to international norms.

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