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NEXT STEP

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT POST-GRAD IN THE UK

The UK is a unique place for higher studies, particularly because the post-graduate courses here are mostly one-year programmes. This means you can get the same level of global qualification in half the time compared to most other places in the world. However, getting into a good university here is challenging. Hopefully, the suggestions below might help some of you to get on the right track for applying to UK for a post-graduate degree.



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

The right university and subject

This brings me to the first step of searching for the right university and subject. This should be the longest and most important part of your application process. The first and foremost thing regarding a higher education abroad is to decide what you want out of it. Everyone has their own motivation and it is imperative to be clear about it with yourself. This motivation will drive your choice of university and the subject you are going to study there. For example, subjects with focusing on research and universities famous for their research activities should be on top of the list of those who want to become an academician. Whereas, people looking to build a corporate career later on must choose subjects and universities that are more closely related to the industry in order to get a more hands-on knowledge and experience.

There are many rankings out there to look at. I personally like the Eduniversal ranking, which divides universities into Palmes leagues that indicate the level of an academic institution's international reputation. However, note that ranking is not the only deciding factor. Look into the curriculum of the subject that you want study and see if it satisfies your internal need to learn on that topic.

Next, look at the list of faculties and their qualifications. Spare a thought on the city the university is situated in and if you think you can spend one year of your life there or not. Based on all these criteria,

finally decide on at least three university-subject combinations to apply to, just to be on the safe side.

The application process

Once you have finalised where you are going to apply, it's time to start the application process. This is a tiresome and arduous process so allocate yourself enough time for this: one month in my opinion.

First check if you need to give any standardised tests or not. IELTS is a must for the UK and some business schools also prefer a GRE/GMAT score. So if you need to sit for any of these exams, do it as soon as possible since you will not be eligible to apply without these scores.

Next comes writing your Statement of Purpose (SOP). This is usually the biggest determinant of your application's fate. Spend ample time and thought in writing it and review it at least a few times in between. Consult with friends and seniors regarding how to express certain ideas. Show them your writing and get feedback from time to time. Remember, it's always difficult to critique your own writing so there is no shame in getting external help.

Also keep in touch with your teachers/colleagues who are writing recommendations for you. A well-written recommendation will go a long way in helping you get into your desired school. So it is important that the SOP and recommendations tell a harmonious story about you, not a confusing or contradictory one.

Scholarships and funding

After completing the application process,

check for scholarships and funding opportunities. For the UK, Chevening and Commonwealth are two of the biggest sources of graduate study funding.

However, these are highly competitive and the application process for these start very early. Other than these, all universities have a number of bursaries and grants awarded on different criteria. Sometimes you are automatically considered for the department bursaries based on your application, but in some universities you have to apply separately. This mostly requires you to write another essay explaining why you believe you are eligible for this scholarship and requires you to provide proof of your own and your family's earnings.

Living there

Next, you need to look for options of your accommodation. Many think that they will manage something once they arrive here and that is the biggest mistake you can make. If you are planning to live in the university-provided accommodation, apply as soon as you get an offer to study there because these options run out first. If you are looking for outside accommodation, be careful in choosing the neighbourhood and check the travel routes to your university from your to-be residence. You wouldn't want to spend hours on the road every day just to get to class. Needless to say, the farther away from the city centre you live, the cheaper the costs, but the more complicated it becomes to travel.

Getting your visa

Assuming you are successful in getting an

offer letter from your desired university, it is time to apply for a UK visa. First, you will need a CAS (confirmation of acceptance) document from your university. Next, you need to have the entire tuition fee sum (minus any scholarships that you have received) and sufficient money to live in UK for the duration of your study shown in a bank account for at least a 30-day period before applying for the visa. On the day of the visa application, there is a Skype interview with UK Visas and Immigration where you are asked about your motivations for higher study. This interview is very critical and a lot of rejections are happening these days as a result of it. It is important to be honest here and confident about your plans and objectives. If you seem nervous and unsure about your plans, it might impact the outcome negatively.

If you are looking to study in the UK for the 2018-19 session, now is the time to start planning. Most universities have a rolling admissions process, which means the earlier you apply, the better your chances are. All the best in your endeavour for knowledge and wisdom!

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THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY

DIDN'T YOU SHOW THE BOSS HOW TO BECOME SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY BY JOINING TWITTER, FACEBOOK, LINKIN, INSTATHIS, INSTATHAT, EVEN GOOGLE+?



HE POSTED, "TO GUY THAT SHOWED ME THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA. I CAN NOW SEND MEMOS TO EMPLOYEES QUICK & EASY. THAT MAKES YOUR JOB REDUNDANT. PLEASE CLEAN OUT DESK"



ALSO, HE JUST POSTED A PHOTO OF THE BOX YOU'RE CARRYING YOUR THINGS IN. SAYS YOU NEED TO LEAVE IT BEHIND. BOX IS OFFICE PROPERTY.



EPIC FAILS: JACK DORSEY

The founder of Twitter and biggest US mobile payment chip service, Square, faced a heavy blow when he was kicked out as CEO of the microblogging site for his poor management style.

While he is now back on board as Chairman, splitting his time between Twitter and Square, the very idea for Twitter came from a failure. At the time, Dorsey was working at Odeo, a podcasting company, which was in a rut. During a brainstorm on how to improve the startup, Dorsey had a simple but brilliant idea—and Twitter was born.

The social network now hosts more than 200 million monthly active users, proving his point that "Twitter was not started because we had a good idea. It was started out of a failure. And that can happen today."

Oh, and Dorsey didn't finish college either. Education is clearly overrated.

IS SPITTING IT OUT THE BEST WAY TO BREAK BAD NEWS?

"You're great, Sara. You make the best grilled cheese and your bottle cap collection is insane. But I'm just not that into you, and I'd rather you not contact me again."

Nobody likes to be the bearer of bad news. When you're on the giving end, sugarcoating might feel helpful in breaking the ice or make you feel more comfortable ruining someone's future. We end up trying to cushion the blow with a little small talk and circumlocution. What ensues is probably bewilderment, even denial, on the receiver's end, and you end up making a hack job out of it.

A recent study by professors at the Brigham Young University (BYU) and the University of South Alabama found that when you're delivering with bad news, the best thing to do is to just spit out.

BYU's linguistics professor Alan Manning and South Alabama's Nicole Amare analysed 145 students who received bad news in a variety of scenarios. Participants then shared how clear, considerate, direct, efficient, honest, specific, and reasonable they felt each delivery was, and ranked which type of

delivery they preferred. Turns out most people wanted their bad news straight up, with very little, if any, buttering up. When it came down to it, they valued clarity and directness above all else.

And that's completely relatable. People pick up on when they're being buttered up for bad news—it only amps up their anxiety. Why make a person go paranoid waiting for you to get the point just because you can't find the right words? Some might even call it manipulative.

But should foregoing all niceties always be your modus operandi? Yes, excluding certain scenarios. When it comes to a break-up or a lay-off, people prefer a tiny amount of a polite buffer. Manning explains, "An immediate 'I'm breaking up with you' might be too direct. But all you need is a 'we need to talk' buffer—just a couple of seconds for the other person to process that bad news is coming."

While that makes sense in many ways, when it comes to bad news regarding facts, especially those that affect your wellbeing, it might be better to just let the Band Aid rip. "If your house is on fire, you just want to know that and get out. Or if you have cancer, you'd just like to know that. You don't want the doctor to talk around it," Manning says.

But those with a predilection to start-with-a-positive feel otherwise. Dr Robert Buckman, a medical oncologist who currently teaches IBM execs, amongst others, how to share bad news, advises you shouldn't get right down to it.

His protocol starts off by listening. Ask open-ended questions about how the other person is feeling, how their day is going, etc, and then get to the news. You could use a word or phrase they finished with to show you were sincerely listening.

Dr Buckman also suggests asking for their perspective first. If you're going to

give your employee a bad review, a good way to broach the subject would be to start by asking what they think of their own performance.

Other experts say it's not the wording, but the tone that matters to the receiver. A study by Saarland University in Germany that analysed 400,000 employment tribunal cases (half of which had to do with lay-offs) found that employees were much likelier to react aggressively when their managers spoke to them aggressively.

And if you're still not sure what to do, simply imagine yourself in their shoes: would you prefer the quick-and-dirty or have them tell you softly? You'll find the direction you need.

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