

PRESS RELEASE

University Clearing - Students facing more complex decisions on higher education

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With thousands of students about to face University Clearing next week, the Sodexo University Lifestyle Survey (ULS) reveals that the decision to attend university has become an increasingly complex choice.

As a result of the change in fee structures, expected student debt levels have increased substantially since the last Sodexo ULS in 2012. Almost one in five students in the UK (17 per cent) expects to take on debts in excess of £40,000, compared to 2 per cent previously, while 58 per cent expect at least £20,000 of debt. The higher investment means today's students enter into a more complex decision-making process when considering university and are increasingly focused on the end-game of career progression and earning potential when choosing their course.

Sodexo's study of over 140 universities and 2,000 students throughout the UK found that 76% of students said they wanted to go to university to improve future employment opportunities, up from 74% in 2012. 62% chose to go to university to increase their earning power, up significantly from the 36% who cited this reason when the ULS began in 2004.

With this in mind, the Survey found that students are doing more detailed research about their choice of university than ever before. 26% of students took parental advice (up from 12% in 2012) and 23% were swayed by teacher advice (14% in 2012). The internet is also gaining importance as a research tool for prospective students; 55% of students were influenced by internet research when choosing a university, up from 27% in 2012, while 21% gleaned information on universities via social network sites (11% in 2008).

Peter Taylor, Strategic Development Director at Sodexo, commented: *"Having completed the University Lifestyle Survey over the last 10 years, we've seen that students are increasingly serious and thoughtful in their decision-making about university. Universities can't afford to be complacent about attracting the best students. It's important they understand students' requirements and help offer the best possible experience."*

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