



The  
Economist

大学

Universities

# The Economist

## 听读系列



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公众号：狂奔的外刊

## 大学 更高的预期

学生们正在远离不良学位。政府应该帮助他们

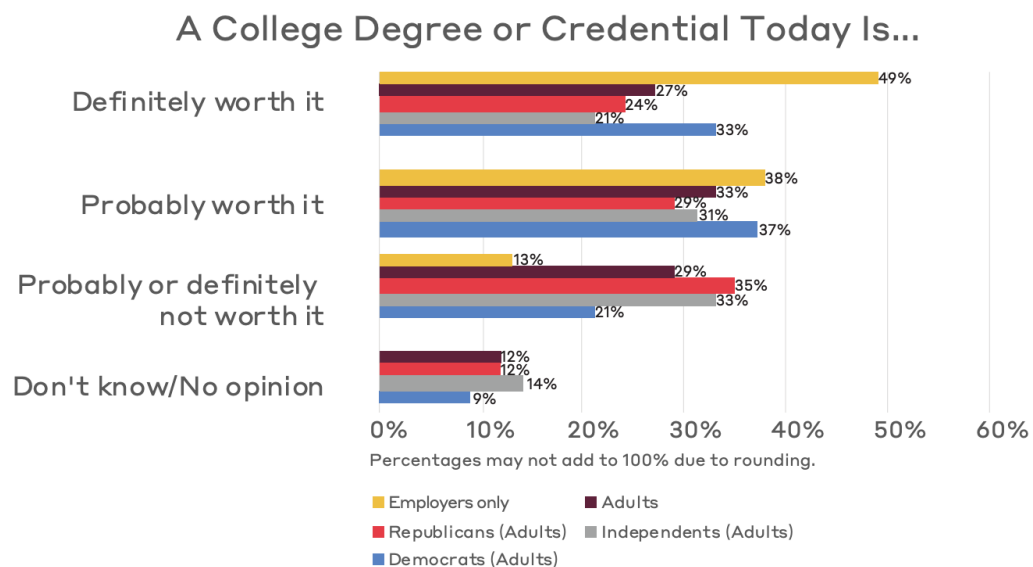
## Universities Higher expectations

Students are veering away from dodgy degrees.  
Governments should help them

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1. IT IS **FASHIONABLE** to be **gloomy** about the costs and benefits of a **degree**. In America a majority of people now tell **pollsters** that they think going to university is not worth it. For the average **undergraduate** that is far from the truth.



**fashionable** /'fæʃ(ə)nəb(ə)l/ **adjective** following a style that is popular at a particular time 流行的; 兴起的; 时髦的

**gloomy** /'gluːmi/ **adjective** without much hope of success or happiness in the future 前景黯淡的; 悲观的

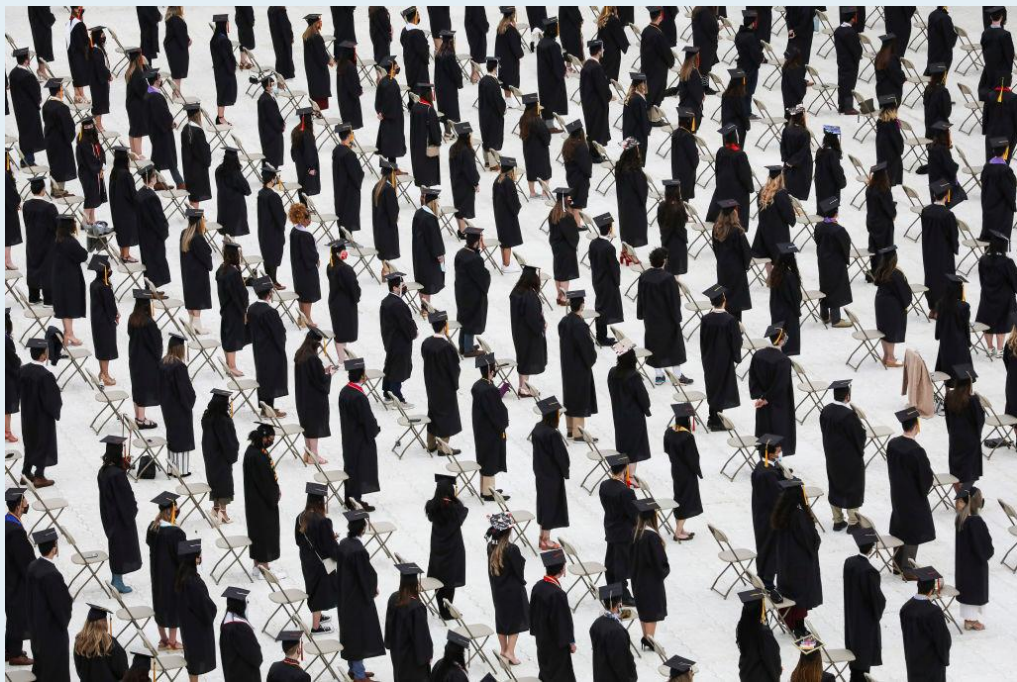
**degree** /di'ɡriː/ **noun** [C] the qualification obtained by students who successfully complete a university or college course (大学) 学位

**pollster** /'pɒlstə/ **noun** a person who makes or asks the questions in an **OPINION POLL** 民意测验主办人; 民意调查员

**undergraduate** /ʌndə'ɡrædjʊət/ **noun** a university or college student who is studying for their first degree 本科生



In rich countries people who hold a **bachelor's** degree earn over 40% more than those who do not. This **premium** has remained **lofty**, even as the number of university-**goers** has soared: some 33m people are studying **undergraduate** degrees across the rich world today.



**bachelor** /'bætʃələ/ *noun* (usually **Bachelor**) a person who has a Bachelor's degree (= a first university degree) 学士

**premium** /'pri:miəm/ *noun* an extra payment added to the basic rate 额外费用; 附加费

**lofty** /'lɒfti/ *adjective* (of buildings, mountains, etc. 建筑物、山等) very high and impressive 巍峨的; 高耸的

**goer** *noun* -**goer** (in compounds 构成复合词) a person who regularly goes to the place or event mentioned 常去 ... 的人

**undergraduate** /,ʌndə'grædʒuət/ *noun* a university or college student who is studying for their first degree 本科生

2. Yet those average figures hide **queasily** large differences. For a shocking share of students, the returns from attending university are **puny**. About 25% of men and 15% of women **graduates** in England would have been **better off financially** had they not **bothered**.



**queasy** /'kwi:zi/ **adjective** slightly nervous or worried about sth 稍感紧张的; 略有不安的; 心神不定的

**puny** /'pju:ni/ **adjective** (*disapproving*) not very impressive 不起眼的; 可怜的; 微不足道的

**graduate** /'grædʒuət/ **noun** ~ (in sth) a person who has a university degree 大学毕业生; 学士学位获得者

**be better off** to have more money 有较多钱; 比较宽裕

**financial** /faɪ'nænʃl/ **adjective** [*usually before noun*] connected with money and finance 财政的; 财务的; 金融的

**bother** /'bɒðə(r)/ **verb** [I, T] (*often used in negative sentences and questions* 常用于否定句和疑问句) to spend time and/or energy doing sth 花费时间精力 (做某事)

In total, student debt has reached \$1.6trn in America, 60% more than is owed on credit cards. Low earnings help explain why about a fifth of America's student borrowers were in default before the pandemic.



**trillion** /'trɪljən/ **noun** 1 000 000 000 000; one million million 万亿; 兆

**credit card** **noun** a small plastic card that you can use to buy goods and services and pay for them later 信用卡

**earnings** /'ɜːnɪŋz/ **noun** [pl.] the money that you earn for the work that you do 薪水; 工资; 收入

**borrower** /'bɒrəʊ/ **noun** a person or an organization that borrows money, especially from a bank 借款人; 借方

**in default of sth** (formal) because of a lack of sth 由于缺乏 ... ; 因为没有 ...

**pandemic** /pæn'demɪk/ **noun** a disease that spreads over a whole country or the whole world (全国或全球性) 流行病; 大流行病



3. Those who do worst out of higher education attend **shoddy institutions**, are badly prepared, give up, or choose subjects that lead to low wages. Many who do complete their courses are **loaded** with debt and **equipped** with a degree of **peripheral relevance** that has been taught badly. They are being **ripped off**, not prepared for a better life.



**shoddy** /'ʃɒdi/ **adjective** (of goods, work, etc. 商品、工作等) made or done badly and with not enough care 做工粗糙的; 粗制滥造的; 劣质的

**institution** /ˌɪnstɪ'tjuːʃn/ **noun** [C] a large important organization that has a particular purpose, for example, a university or bank (大学、银行等规模大的) 机构

**loaded** /'ləʊdɪd/ **adjective** ~ **with sth** (*informal*) full of a particular thing, quality or meaning 充满 ... 的

**peripheral** /pə'rɪfərəl/ **adjective** (*formal*) not as important as the main aim, part, etc. of sth 次要的; 附带的

**relevant** /'reləvənt/ **adjective** ~ **(to sth/sb)** having ideas that are valuable and useful to people in their lives and work 有价值的; 有意义的

**rip sb↔off** [**usually passive**] (*informal*) to cheat sb, by making them pay too much, by selling them sth of poor quality, etc. 敲诈; 讹诈

4. The good news is that young people are voting with their feet. A **dramatic shift** is **taking place** as students **switch** to subjects that are linked to better earnings.



**dramatic** /drə'mætɪk/ **adjective** (of a change, an event, etc. 变化、事情等) sudden, very great and often surprising 突然的; 巨大的; 令人吃惊的

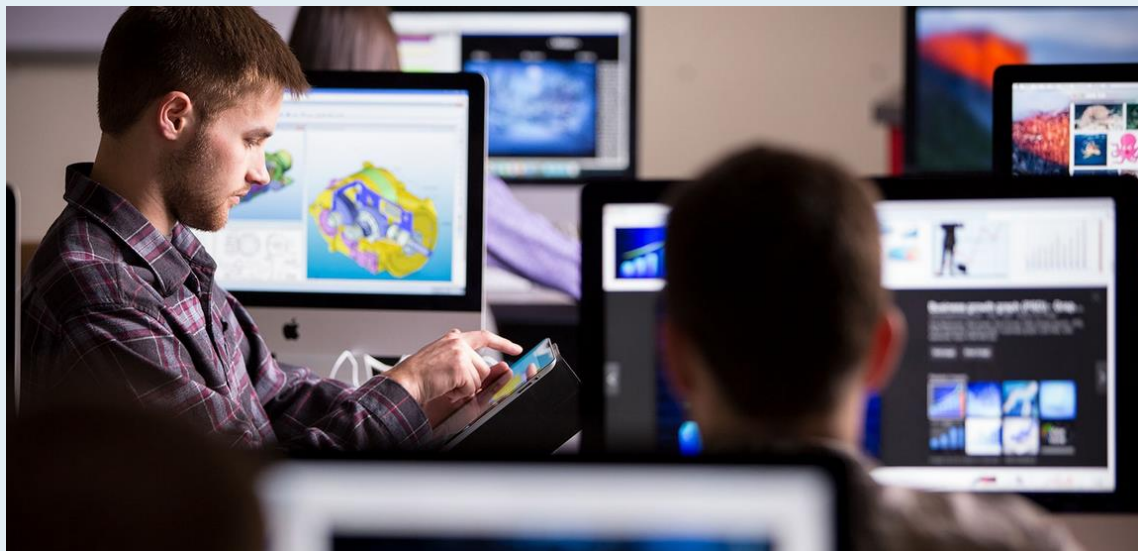
**shift** /ʃɪft/ **noun** [C] ~ (in sth) a change in position or direction 改变; 转移; 转换; 变换

**take place** to happen, especially after previously being arranged or planned (尤指根据安排或计划) 发生, 进行

**switch** /swɪtʃ/ **verb** [I, T] to change or make sth change from one thing to another (使) 改变, 转变, 突变



In America, for example, the numbers **enrolled** in **computer science** have more than doubled in a decade. Those studying English and history, subjects that are less likely to raise wages, have fallen by about a **quarter**. Some universities have begun to **cull** courses.



**enroll** /ɪnˈrəʊl/ **verb** [I, T] to arrange for yourself or for sb else to officially join a course, school, etc. (使) 加入; 注册; 登记

**computer science** **noun** [U] the study of computers and how they can be used 计算机科学; 电脑科学

**quarter** /ˈkwɔːtə(r)/ **noun** (also **fourth** *especially in NAmE*) [C] one of four equal parts of sth 四等份之一

**cull** /kʌl/ **verb** ~ sth to kill a particular number of animals of a group in order to prevent the group from getting too large 部分捕杀, 宰杀 (为防止动物种群量过多而杀掉其中一定数量)

5. Governments should seek to **accelerate** this adjustment in the **higher-education marketplace**. But all too often their **instinct** is to **throw money at** the problem.



**accelerate** /ək'seləreɪt/ **verb** [I, T] to happen or to make sth happen faster or earlier than expected (使) 加速, 加快

**higher education** **noun** [U] (*abbr. HE*) education and training at college and university, especially to degree level (尤指达到学位水平的) 高等教育

**marketplace** **noun** the marketplace [**sing.**] the activity of competing with other companies to buy and sell goods, services, etc. 市场竞争

**instinct** /'ɪnstɪŋkt/ **noun** [U, C] ~ (for sth/for doing sth) | ~ (to do sth) a natural tendency for people and animals to behave in a particular way using the knowledge and abilities that they were born with rather than thought or training 本能; 天性

**throw money at sth** (*disapproving*) to try to deal with a problem or improve a situation by spending money on it, when it would be better to deal with it in other ways 白 (往某事上) 扔钱

President Joe Biden wants America's **Supreme Court** to approve his plan to **forgive** a large **chunk** of the country's student debts, as a **one-off**. He also hopes to **tweak** the rules on **repayment**, which will make the federal loan system a bit more **generous**.



**the Supreme Court** *noun* **[sing.]** the highest court in a country or state 最高法院; 州最高法院

**forgive** */fə'gɪv/ verb [T] ~ (sb) sth (formal)* (of a bank, country, etc. 银行、国家等) to say that sb does not need to pay back money that they have borrowed 免除 (债务)

**chunk** */tʃʌŋk/ noun (informal)* a fairly large amount of sth 相当大的量

**one-off** *noun (BrE)* a thing that is made or that happens only once and not regularly 绝无仅有的事物; 仅出现一次的事物

**tweak** */twi:k/ verb ~ sth* to make slight changes to a machine, system, etc. to improve it 稍稍调整 (机器、系统等)

**repayment** */ri'peɪmənt/ noun [U]* the act of paying back money that you have borrowed from a bank, etc. 归还借款; 偿还债务

**generous** */'dʒenərəs/ adjective (approving)* giving or willing to give freely; given freely 慷慨的; 大方的; 慷慨给予的  
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Together these changes could cost hundreds of billions of dollars over the next decade. The danger is that they will make America's students less **discerning** about how much they borrow and what they use the money for. Without a **disciplining mechanism**, **pricey** universities will be even more **inclined** to raise their **fees**.



**discerning** /di'sɜːnɪŋ/ **adjective** (*approving*) able to show good judgement about the quality of sb/sth 有识别力的; 有眼力的; 有洞察力的

**discipline** /'disəplɪn/ **verb** ~ sb to train sb, especially a child, to obey particular rules and control the way they behave 训练; 训导; 管教

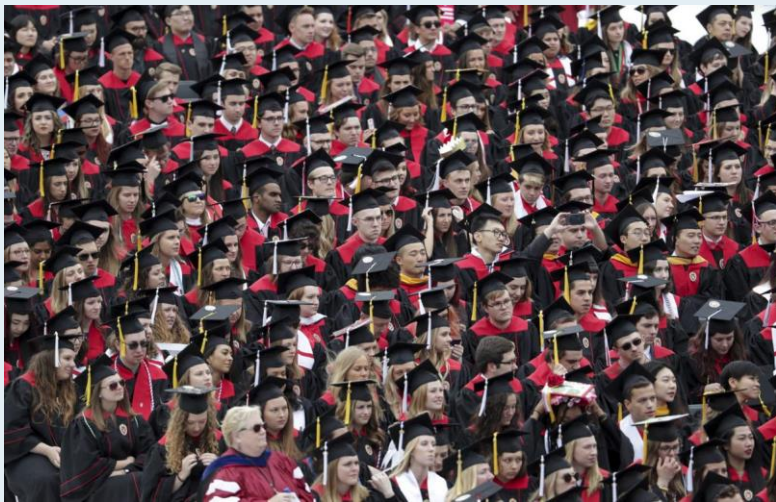
**mechanism** /'mekənɪzəm/ **noun** a method or a system for achieving sth 方法; 机制

**pricey** /'praɪsɪ/ **adjective**  
**prici-er, prici-est** (*informal*) expensive 昂贵的

**inclined** /ɪn'klaɪnd/ **adjective** [**not before noun**] ~ (to do sth) wanting to do sth 想 (做某事)

**fee** /fiː/ **noun** an amount of money that you pay to join an organization, or to do sth (加入组织或做某事付的) 费

6. A better **alternative** would be for governments to invest in giving students the information they need to make **sensible** choices. Britain has **pulled together** detailed data about how much graduates from thousands of courses at hundreds of institutions go on to earn, but it does a poor job of supplying this to all **applicants**.



**alternative** /ɔ:l'tɜ:nətɪv/ **noun** a thing that you can choose to do or have out of two or more possibilities 可供选择的事物

**sensible** /'sensəbl/ **adjective** (of people and their behaviour 人及行为) able to make good judgements based on reason and experience rather than emotion; practical 明智的; 理智的; 合理的; 切合实际的

**pull together** to act, work, etc. together with other people in an organized way and without fighting 齐心协力; 通力合作

**applicant** /'æplɪkənt/ **noun** ~ (for sth) a person who makes a formal request for sth (= applies for it), especially for a job, a place at a college or university, etc. 申请人 (尤指求职、进高等学校等)

America has been working on something similar, but laws that limit federal data-crunching are getting in the way. Some youngsters, often the better-off ones, are already making good use of data. Supplying it to everyone else should be a priority.



**crunch** /krʌntʃ/ **verb** to crush hard food loudly between the teeth, or to make a sound as if something is being crushed or broken 嘎吱地咬嚼; 嘎吱作响

**get in the way of** to prevent sb from doing sth; to prevent sth from happening 挡 ... 的路; 妨碍

**youngster** /ˈjʌŋstə(r)/ **noun** (*informal*) a young person or a child 年轻人; 少年; 儿童

**priority** /praɪˈɒrəti/ **noun** [C] something that you think is more important than other things and should be dealt with first 优先事项; 最重要的事; 首要事情



**Modest** spending on career **counselling** in **secondary schools** could help reduce the billions spent on **writing off** student loans **down the line**.



**modest** /'mɒdɪst/ **adjective** not very large, expensive, important, etc. 些许的; 不太大 (或贵、重要等) 的

**counselling** /'kaʊnsəlɪŋ/ **noun** [U] professional advice about a problem 咨询; 辅导

**secondary school** a school for young people between the ages of 11 and 16 or 18 中等学校; 中学

**write off** ~ (of sth) (**business** 商) an act of cancelling a debt and accepting that it will never be paid (债项的) 注销, 销记

**along/down the line** (**informal**) at some point during an activity or a process 在某一环节; 在某一时刻

7. Governments should also be **fussier** about which courses their cash helps pay for. Programmes at all levels that wish to benefit from state funds should have to clear a basic quality **hurdle**—for example, that a majority of the students who enroll in them **eventually** end up earning more than high-school graduates. Mr Biden would like a limited rule of this kind to come to America. But a decade has passed since such talk began.

**fussy** /'fʌsi/ *adjective* too concerned or worried about details or standards, especially unimportant ones 无谓忧虑（或担心）的；大惊小怪的；挑剔的

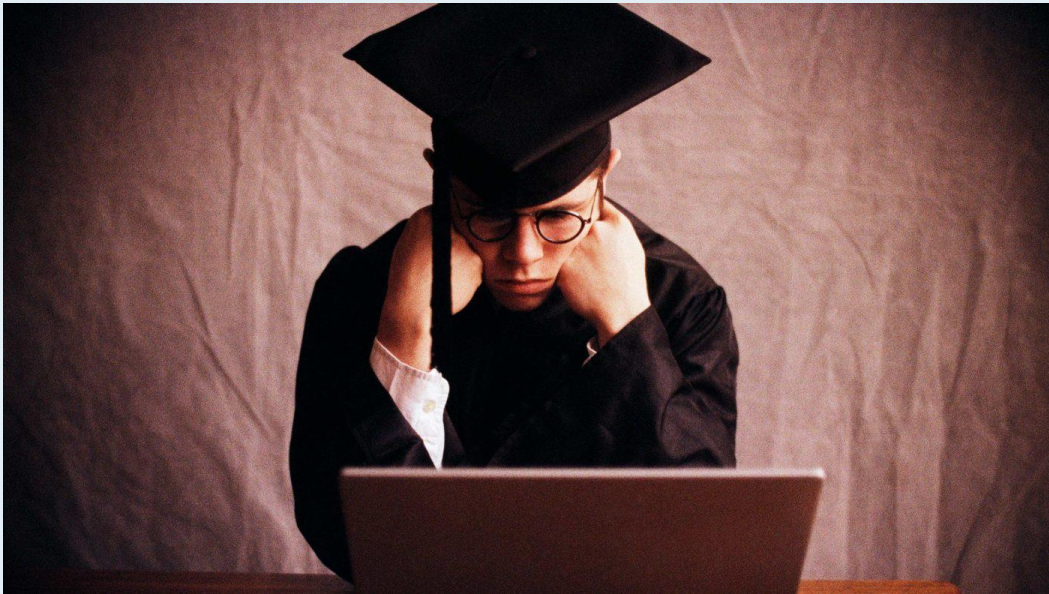
**hurdle** /'hɜːdl/ *noun* a problem or difficulty that must be solved or dealt with before you can achieve sth 难关；障碍

**eventually** /ɪ'ventʃuəli/ *adverb* at the end of a period of time or a series of events 最后；终于





8. Some universities and colleges resist these kinds of **safeguards**. They argue that trying to **weed out** poor-value courses and to focus government **lending** will **compromise** the pursuit of knowledge and **penalise** poor families and **minorities** by limiting what they can study.



**safeguard** /'seɪfɡɑːd/ **noun** ~ (against sth) something that is designed to protect people from harm, risk or danger 安全设施; 保护措施

**weed sth/sb↔out** to remove or get rid of people or things from a group because they are not wanted or are less good than the rest 清除, 剔除, 淘汰 (不需要的或较差的人或物)

**lending** /'lendiŋ/ **noun** [U] (*finance* 财) the act of lending money 放款; 贷放

**compromise** /'kɒmpɹəmaɪz/ **verb** [I] to give up some of your demands after a disagreement with sb, in order to reach an agreement (为达成协议而) 妥协, 折衷, 让步

**penalise** /'piːnəlaɪz/ **verb** ~ sb to put sb at a disadvantage by treating them unfairly 置于不利地位; 不公正地对待

**minority** /maɪ'nɒrəti/ **noun** [C] a small group within a community or country that is different because of race, religion, language, etc. 少数派; 少数民族; 少数群体



However, the real problem is that the **status quo** is leading too many people to pursue shoddy but expensive degrees. The goal should be an education system that steadily adapts to the shifting **preferences** of society and the demands of the **labour market**— and one that has a low **tolerance** for degree courses that fail young people.



**status quo** /ˌsteɪtəs ˈkwəʊ/ **noun** [sing.] (from *Latin*) the situation as it is now, or as it was before a recent change 现状；原来的状况

**preference** /ˈprefrəns/ **noun** [U, sing.] ~ (for **sb/sth**) a greater interest in or desire for sb/sth than sb/sth else 偏爱；爱好；喜爱

**labour market** **noun** the number of people who are available for work in relation to the number of jobs available 劳动力市场

**tolerance** /ˈtɒlərəns/ **noun** [U] ~ (of/for **sb/sth**) the willingness to accept or **TOLERATE** sb/sth, especially opinions or behaviour that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you 忍受；容忍；宽容；宽恕