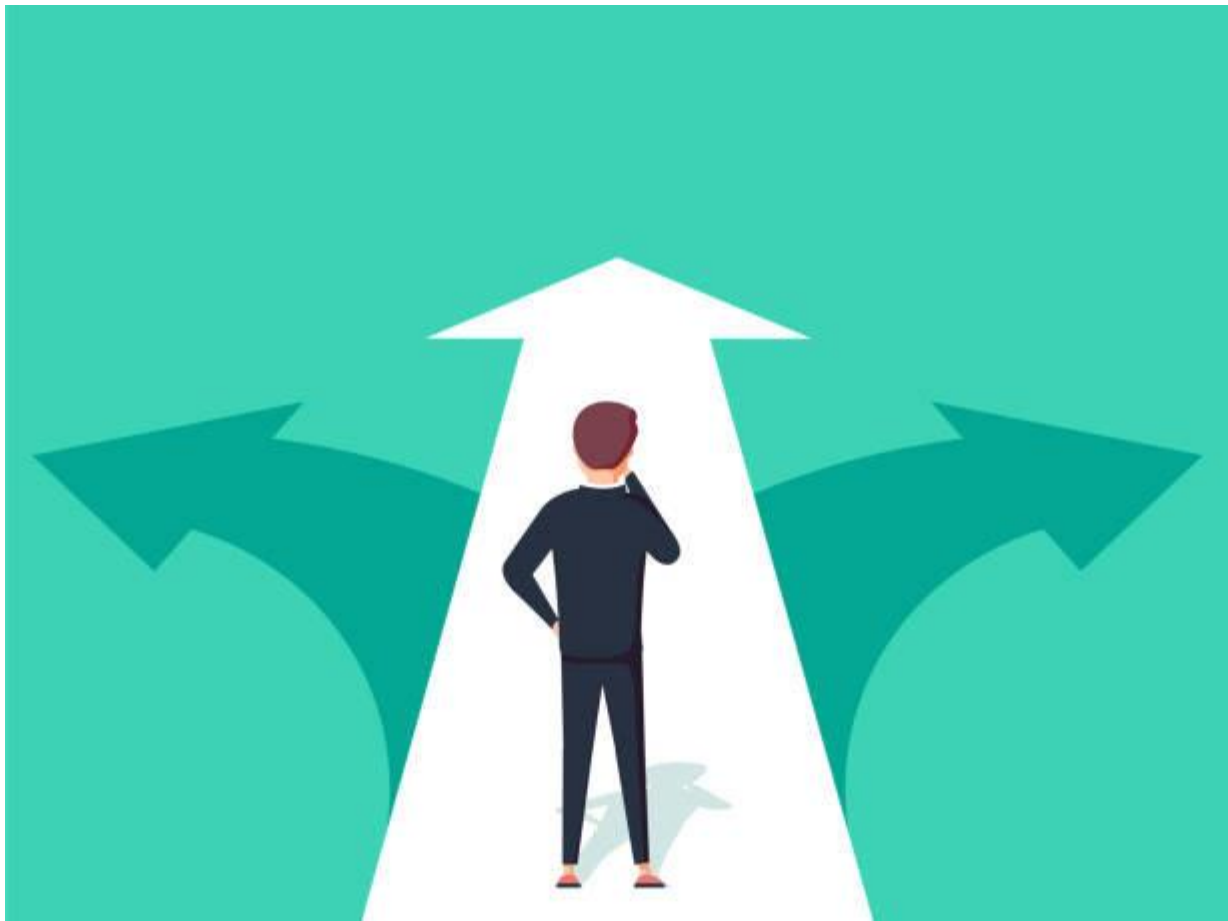


The Grand Dream - a manual how to get into a British university

When you hear the phrase people throw around so easily: "What do you want to do in the future?" what comes to your mind? The obvious answer would be "studies", right? Well "What kind of studies?". From here on it's getting difficult. You need to ask yourself what you wish to do in life. It is not an easy question, quite the opposite. Many of us seem to have trouble deciding what's next. Can you blame us? There are so many options to choose from. Add to that the pressure of having good grades and getting a satisfying score on your final exams. It can be very overwhelming. So is there a way to somehow manage all this? Yes there is. It is called motivation. With the right amount of motivation you can achieve anything - "Dream big, go far".

But how do you get motivated in the first place? It can be a person that we admire that motivates us or the idea, the goal we have set for ourselves. Setting the metaphorical bar high is a great way to go about it. In my case "the bar" is getting into a university in Britain. So this article will answer all your questions on how to go about it, as well as it will provide some tips regarding motivation. If it caught your interest I would like to invite you to give this article a read.



First of all, something needs to be set straight. Getting into a university abroad is not an easy task, no matter which country. It takes a lot of work and enormous amount of dedication. The factors deciding on

whether you get accepted or rejected may seem pretty overwhelming at first glance. We can split those factors into four categories: The School Factor, The Initiative Factor, The Financial Factor and The Mental Factor. Each of these factors is crucial when it comes to getting into the university of your choice.

Before we get into that you need to know how the English system of reviewing the candidates work. The system is supervised by the British organisation called Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, UCAS in short. Their main task is to manage the recruitment for British universities. It goes something like this: you sign up on their website, give your personal details, your contact information, country and the year you want to start studying. After you have signed up on UCAS, you can apply for an undergraduate course. The window to do so closes on January 15th and it can take until June to get your application reviewed. You could argue that there is no need to hurry but generally it is advised to do it early because in case your application gets rejected you can try applying through other institutions such as directly to your university of choice or via an agent. By applying early you avoid "last minute worries" and you have more time to plan everything out.

The first factor - The School Factor is pretty self-explanatory. UCAS reviews your application based on your Matura Exam results and sometimes your grades. On average 96 UCAS Tariff points are required. Tariff points are calculated like this:

<p>Matura / Matura Technikum / świadectwo dojrzałości (Certificate of Maturity)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 136 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 5 or 70% or better • 128 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 4 or 65% or better • 120 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 4 or 60% or better • 112 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 4 or 55% or better • 104 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 4 or 55% or better • 96 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 4 or 50% or better • 80 UCAS Tariff points = Pass Matura (Świadectwo Dojrzałości) with Satisfactory grades (3+ or 40%) or better AND at least two extended level subjects with an average of grade 4 or 50% or better.
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Getting a satisfactory Matura exam result is possible if you put enough work into studying for it. That's all when it comes to The School Factor.

The next thing worth looking into is The Initiative Factor. I have decided to call it like this since it requires entirely your own contribution. It consists mainly of three aspects. The first being the proof of your abilities and skills with the foreign language in the form of an English certificate. You need to prove to your university that you are a competent user of language and that you will not have trouble understanding and communicating with natives. The most popular way of going about it is an IELTS certificate. The certificate grades your skills based on a test that you will have to write at the institution closest to your place of residence. The test consists of four parts: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Based on your scores in each category you will be graded on the scale from 1 to 9, where 1 stands for a "non-user" and 9 stands for an "expert user". The most discouraging part of it is a high fee at around 800 PLN for taking the test. But worry not! The certificate isn't actually that hard. It requires a bit more than the core high school curriculum but it should not be out of reach for dedicated students. For reference, an average university requires your score to be around 6.0 to 6.5 which means "competent user" and is generally considered to be at the range of difficulty of B2 level so it's the same level that we are taught in high school.

English Level	CEFR	IELTS
Proficiency	C2	9.0 8.5
Advanced	C1	8.0 7.5 7.0
Upper Intermediate	B2	6.5 6.0 5.5
Intermediate		
Lower Intermediate	B1	5.0 4.5 4.0
Elementary	A2	3.5 3.0
Beginner	A1	2.5 2.0
Starter	A0	1.0

The second aspect is your personal statement which reflects your qualifications, expertise, interests, and achievements. You need to write about yourself to persuade the admission committee that you are eligible to study at their institution and that you can be a valuable addition to their community. This statement is the most important document you are going to fill out. You should include there information like your future career plans and goals, previous achievements, previous study details, writing skills etc. The most important part being: the reason you want to study there. It is very important to convince the committee that you will be of use to them.

The last aspect is something commonly referred to as "recommendation letter". Basically it is a letter that your teacher writes for you basing on your personal statement. He/she gives there his/her opinion on you. What kind of student are you? How talented are you? What was it like teaching you? Recommendation letter matters a lot. If you manage to convince your tutor to write

one for you, your chances of getting accepted increase greatly. Make sure to be nice to your teachers and do not cause any unnecessary conflicts.



With that out of the way it's time to address the elephant in the room - The Financial Factor. The simplest but at the same time the hardest condition to fulfill. Studying abroad is not cheap, it never was and probably never will. At the time of writing this, the cost for a year at a British university places at 9,250£ which is roughly 45,000PLN. Paying a sum of money like that upfront is impossible for most of us but fortunately there are alternatives. The first one being an apprenticeship. In essence, an apprenticeship is a job. You'll spend 80% of the working week at your place of employment and 20% at your place of study. You'll earn a salary and your course fees will be covered by your employer and the government. It's a good way of coming to terms with high fees. Unfortunately not every university offers this option.

The other way is something called the "student loan". In short, it is a loan that you start to pay up after you have graduated. The amount of the repayments will depend on your job and your salary. Paying up this debt usually takes around 100 months since it rounds up to 1% of the loan per month.

There is no perfect solution to this problem unfortunately. As they say: "pick your poison". But when looking at the bigger picture it is a small price to pay for the thrill and the unique experience that studying abroad provides, right?



Now that all the tangible aspects are covered it's time to look into the most important factor of them all - The Mental Factor. You should have a general idea what it takes to become a student at a foreign university by now. The road to get there is littered with many technical difficulties and hardships. This bumpy road however could be a huge step in life if you decide to take up the challenge. In everybody's life comes a time in which we want to do something exceptional. We want to show people around us that we are capable of achieving great things if we only try hard enough. That's what this entire factor is about. It's not a stretch to say that motivation is the key to overcoming all that has been mentioned so far. Never think that this is out of your reach. Seek support in people surrounding you like your friends, family or teachers. With the right mindset you can do anything. I want you to keep that in mind. Hopefully I managed to convince at least some of you that it's worth holding on to your goals and never giving up.

