Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Block: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Career Life Education 10

Is a Bachelor’s Degree Still Worth It?

Read the article on the website listed below. Answer the following questions, directly on this page, then re-upload to your myblueprint account.

https://www.bcjobs.ca/blog/is-a-bachelors-degree-still-worth-it-entire-article/

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1. What are some of the employment risks of high paying oil and gas sector jobs?
   1. These jobs are vulnerable to downturns in the economy and the price of oil. Also, certain rersources are being phased out resulting in the complete closure of plants.
2. According to cognitive psychologist Shlomo Breznitz, what is a good trait to have for a career these days?
   1. It is important to be well-rounded as more and more jobs require you to put on multiple “hats” in a single job and collaborate with people from different backgrounds. You also need to findi solutions to multidisciplinary problems.
3. How does the author argue that it is still a good idea to get a bachelor’s degree?
   1. Many industries need people to solve complex problems and have good communication skills. We also need people who are quick learners , creative and critical thinkers who can adapt to technology in a rapidly evolving world. Which is what any bachelor’s degree will teach you.
4. What are employers increasingly reluctant to do for new employees since 1993?
   1. Train their employees, they expect people to already have the skills at the time of employment.
5. What program did UBC adopt to combat the bleak job prospects for recent graduates? Do you think it is a useful program? Why or why not?
   1. “the University of British Columbia, runs the [Arts Tri-Mentoring Program](http://students.arts.ubc.ca/involvement/arts-tri-mentoring-program/) where it matches students in the Faculty of Arts with alumni members who share the same the major.”
   2. I think it is useful because mentoring and networking is super important for getting the job you want but answers will vary.
6. According to an October 2014 report, how were university grads doing compared to their non-trained counterparts?
   1. Overall, lower unemployment than non-trained or the average.

“ It found that five years after graduation, the unemployment rate for these students was 4.7 per cent, well below the 2013 B.C. youth unemployment rate of 12.9 per cent, and below B.C.’s overall unemployment rate of 6.6 per cent.”

1. Do you believe it is a good idea to get a degree in an arts field such as Psychology, Economics, History, English. Etc? Why or why not?
   1. – answers will vary
2. Do you know a person aged 21-30 with their bachelor’s degree? What are they doing for work?
   1. answers will vary.

# Is a Bachelor’s Degree Still Worth It? (Entire Article)

By [Milton Kiang, Sr. Resume Writer](https://www.bcjobs.ca/blog/author/milton-kiang/)

June 11th, 2015

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Note: This article was originally written as a three part series. Reproduced below is the entire article.

We’ve all heard stories about over-qualified university grads working at Starbucks and Home Depot for minimum wage. Today’s youth unemployment hovers at 13.4 per cent (nearly double the overall national level), along with student debts rising 44 percent from 1999 to 2012.

With university tuitions having [almost tripled](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/canadian-university-costs-to-rise-13-per-cent-over-4-years-report-1.2761406) during the last 20 years, and projected to rise another 13 per cent over four years, we’re beginning to wonder whether a bachelor’s degree is worth pursuing for our sons and daughters, nieces and nephews.

I used to think that universities did a poor job in equipping university graduates for today’s competitive job market. As a resume writer, I would sometimes look at a young person’s resume, observe the number of degrees and programs that the person has taken, and wonder how it is that the person still can’t find decent work in her field, or a job with a promising career path.

We hear news stories about a “skills shortage” in Canada, and how the government needs to do a better job in promoting the skilled trades as an alternative to a university education. With resource extraction comprising a significant portion of our nation’s economy, particularly here in B.C., this seems to make sense. In early 2014, B.C. premier Christy Clark made a heavy push to try to encourage more people to enter skilled trades for jobs in the province’s natural resource sector and potential liquefied natural gas industry.

Then last month, I read [*Maximum Brainpower*](http://maximumbrainpower-cognifit.blogspot.ca/p/book.html) by cognitive psychologist Shlomo Breznitz, where he asserts that increasingly, more companies now require employees who can think across multiple disciplines and from different perspectives. He points to Toyota, where workers from marketing, sales, product development, engineering are put into a same room to work on the same problem. In praising “generalists”, Breznitz says that “ as the world gets more complex, fewer and fewer answers can be found within the walls of a single discipline. […] We have learned so much about every field that most new questions fall within the border of two or three disciplines.”

As much as the country needs mining technicians, oil field welders, and rig operators to work in the burgeoning oil and gas sector, what happens when commodity prices go down (as they are now)?  What happens when demand dries up in a particular resource sector, forcing entire industries to close down? Yes, we need technical and mechanical workers; but we can’t forget that this economy isn’t driven solely by those who work in the trades. In addition, the social, economic and business problems we face today are so complex and so seemingly intractable, that they require community leaders, business people, entrepreneurs, and policy makers who can take a multidisciplinary approach in finding solutions. And this is where studies in the humanities and liberal arts come into play.

Diana Sorensen, the dean of arts and humanities at Harvard University, recently penned a  [letter](http://artsandhumanities.fas.harvard.edu/humanities-project) for Harvard’s Humanities Project to promote studies in the liberal arts. The public letter states: “Study within humanistic disciplines hones precisely the skills needed to navigate a world marked by rapid change, increasing interdependence, transformative technologies and multimedia communications.”

What a degree in the humanities tells a prospective employer is that a liberal arts applicant has spent four or five years engaged in critical thinking, researched and wrote on a wide range of subjects, and applied analytical thinking skills to a range of issues, ranging from economics to politics, culture to philosophy. It shows that the student was disciplined enough to commit to four or five years of studies, completed assignments, collaborated in groups to finish projects, and studied for and passed exams.

A legitimate charge by today’s under-employed university grads is that employers want a minimum of one or two years of experience in chosen field – even for an entry level job – and that universities aren’t producing “job-ready” grads. This leads to the question of who’s responsible for providing job-skills training for young people entering the job market: the university or the employer?

A [Maclean’s article](http://www.macleans.ca/work/jobs/the-myths-about-canadas-skills-gap/) in September cites studies from the Conference Board of Canada, showing that employers in this country spent about $705 per employee in 2013. That’s up $17 from 2010, but down from a peak of $1,207 in 1993.  Explanations for Canadian corporations’ parsimonious attitude towards training range from a relative lack of competition in many industries (which reduces incentives to boost efficiency) to a risk-averse culture where the return on investment from training isn’t easily quantifiable. Craig Alexander, chief economist for TD Bank, put it this way in a [Toronto Star article](http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/08/30/is_there_any_point_to_an_arts_degree.html): this new emphasis on skills, rather than education, is basically a manoeuvre to “get the education system to do the training that in the past the employer would do.”

So the problem really isn’t the humanities degree itself, it’s the reluctance of employers to provide job-specific training to new university graduates. It also doesn’t help that our economy is still recovering from the Great Recession, and that Canadian companies are retaining wads of cash and are reluctant to make investments into their own businesses – including spending to train employees.

What I’ve always believed is that universities should do a better job of informing students about the realties of the job market and about their job prospects after they graduate. They can do a better job of tracking the employment activities of their graduates: how many are working in a management trainee program or in a decent-paying job with a defined career path? How are many are working in non-career, low-paying service sector jobs (e.g. at Home Depot, Chapters, Starbucks, etc.) How many are entering professional schools (e.g. law, medicine, business), vocational training programs, or graduate schools? In this way, students entering university will be more realistic about their post-university career prospects. When graduates accumulate student loans of $50,000 or more, it’s imperative that they get this data going in.

Universities are already responding to the criticism that they are not preparing their students for the job market. My alma mater, the University of British Columbia, runs the [Arts Tri-Mentoring Program](http://students.arts.ubc.ca/involvement/arts-tri-mentoring-program/) where it matches students in the Faculty of Arts with alumni members who share the same the major. The program, now in its tenth year, requires mentors to meet with mentees at least four times during the school year, during which time everything from career goals to the job market to graduate schools is discussed. “The purpose of the program,” says Bonita Perko, the UBC alumni relations officer managing the program, “is to provide students an opportunity to transition from university to the working world.”

Mentors can take their mentees to their workplace to job shadow, facilitate informational interviews for their students, and invite students to industry-related events. The Arts mentoring program teaches students how to interview for jobs, present themselves at networking events, and write resumes and LinkedIn profiles. “Feedback from students in the past tends to be that they can’t believe how much they were able to learn from their alumni mentor,” says Perko.

University graduates can take comfort that, over time, those with degrees do make higher incomes than those with just a high school or college diploma. Paul Davidson, president of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, stated in [The Globe and Mail](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/will-an-undergrad-degree-really-help-you-get-a-better-job/article601007/?page=all) that “the basic premise that the value of a B.A. is not what it used to be is wrong.” In his research, based on census information, Davidson found that people with a basic undergraduate degree make $1.4 million more over their lifetime than those with no post-secondary education, and $1 million more than college grads.

[Based on 2008 data](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/will-an-undergrad-degree-really-help-you-get-a-better-job/article601007/?page=all), Statistics Canada found that the income of university graduates from Canadian universities was 70 percent higher than those with just a high school or vocational training diploma, and 63 percent higher in country members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

[An October 2014 report](http://www.vancouversun.com/business/University+graduates+defy+urban+myth+find+jobs/10319723/story.html) released by the Research Universities’ Council of B.C. found that university students who graduated five years ago have a lower unemployment rate than the provincial average. The report looked at students who completed an undergraduate degree from the following B.C. universities: UBC, SFU, University of Victoria, UNBC, Royal Roads, and Thompson Rivers. It found that five years after graduation, the unemployment rate for these students was 4.7 per cent, well below the 2013 B.C. youth unemployment rate of 12.9 per cent, and below B.C.’s overall unemployment rate of 6.6 per cent.

Ultimately, we all know that earning a humanities degree doesn’t usher a person right into a well-paying job at the outset, in the same way that a degree in medicine, law or engineering might. Nor does a B.A. in anthropology mean that the student gets to work as an anthropologist. Much depends on how applicants present themselves to employers, where they look for work, and the kinds of positions they apply to. And let’s not forget – it’s also important who the applicant knows within an employer’s organization.

Tim McCready, who studied visual art and communication at the University of Windsor and has worked for Vice magazine and The Strombo Show on CBC, told the [Toronto Star](http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2013/08/30/is_there_any_point_to_an_arts_degree.html) that the devaluing of an arts degree has nothing to do with the degree itself, and everything to do with the economy. “I don’t think it’s about the degree, it’s about wages going down, tuition going up,” he says. McCready, who’s been working in the arts for almost 10 years, says being aware of these hard realities just made him apply himself more diligently. “I’ve always known that [the arts] is where my strengths lie,” he says. “That’s why I busted my ass.”