





# BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

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## THE BRITISH UNIVERSITIES AFTER THREE YEARS OF WAR

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# BRITISH UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AFTER THREE YEARS OF WAR

## I. Student Enrollment

In 1938-39 there were 50,000 full-time University students in Great Britain, of whom about 3,500 were from overseas. Of the 50,000 full-time students, 22,000 were enrolled in the Faculties of Arts, Law, Divinity, Social Sciences, Architecture, Music, Fine Arts, etc., the rest in the Faculties of Science, Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, or in other technical and scientific divisions.\* In addition there were several thousand students in Theological, Agricultural, and Technical Colleges providing courses of University standard. Of the full-time students, 11,000 were women, and this number had not decreased in the first three years of the war; the number of men had declined from about 39,000 to about 25,000.

## II. Conscription (The Draft)

### i. General Registration Procedure

The whole process is conducted by the Ministry of Labour and National Service. The Ministry is responsible for supplying men and women both to the armed forces and to war industry, and for retaining in their pre-war occupations those who should remain in them. The normal calling-up (draft) procedure for boys is that on the appointed day after reaching the prescribed registration age, which is now seventeen years and eight months, a youth registers at the local office of the Ministry of Labour. On reaching his eighteenth birthday, or at most within a few weeks after it, he will be called to the forces.

As regards the potential student, by the age of 18 or 19 in peace-time, and with a little forcing by 17½ or 18 now, the great majority of those who have been preparing for a University have either been accepted by, or actually entered on their courses at it, or they have been told they cannot be accepted. If the boy has begun his University course, or has been accepted and is about to begin, he states this on his registration form. He also states whether he is an Arts, Science, Engineering, Medical, etc., student. The Ministry then confirms his statement by inquiring from the University. In short, the normal procedures for selection by and admission to the Universities are still in operation. It is the University which decides, chiefly of course on the basis of his school and examination record, whether a boy shall be admitted.\*\*

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\* In Great Britain a technical, or science, medical, dental or veterinary student in the great majority of cases enrolls directly into the appropriate technical faculty, without a previous university or college course in arts. Some of the work done in the arts courses of colleges and universities in the U.S.A. is, in England, done in the last two years at secondary or 'public' — i.e., private — schools. The standard of university entrance is, on the whole, somewhat higher in England, and the usual three-year peace-time course for most degrees brought the student, other things being equal, to about the same standard as the four-year course in the U.S.A.

\*\* Headmasters of secondary and public schools receive memoranda from the (National) Board of Education, advising them as to the criteria of suitability; fairly uniform standards are thus secured.

## ii. Medical, Dental and Veterinary Students

When the Ministry of Labour and National Service receives confirmation of a student's acceptance by a recognized medical or dental school, or in the case of a veterinary student, that he has passed the first professional examination, his papers are placed in a special file and, subject to a satisfactory report every six months, he is retained until he has completed his course. Unless exempted, he must undertake part-time National Service.

## iii. Science and Technical Students

A prospective student of agriculture — including forestry — biology, chemistry, engineering, geology, mathematics and statistics, metallurgy, naval architecture, or physics must be certified by an expert University Board as being of a standard likely to obtain a good degree by the age of twenty-one. Subject to satisfactory reports, he is then retained at the University. It may be for only one year, if he is judged to be of more value than in industry or in the armed forces; but in most cases he will stay for two years and in many for three or, in engineering and in some other cases, up to four or five years. Continuation after the first year may be made conditional upon including training in radio, the chief scarcity subject at present. Unless exempted, he must undertake part-time National Service and must also put in several hours training a week in the University Training Corps, Air Squadron, or the "Y" scheme for pre-naval training, with various all-day exercises and three weeks under canvas during the year.

All regulations in war-time are of course subject to revision whenever necessary, and, as will be described, the Ministry of Labour has, in the Technical Committees of the University Joint Recruiting Boards, suitable machinery to effect any desired changes in the subjects of study.

## iv. Students at Teachers' Training Colleges

Students at two-year training colleges receive full deferment to complete their courses.

## v. Arts and Other Non-Technical Students

Until April 20th, 1941, the actual calling-up (draft) age in Great Britain was 20. In this period, and in fact until the end of the academic year 1940-41, these students were allowed up to six months deferment, if recommended by the academic authorities, "in order to take an important examination." If, therefore, a student entered the University by the age of 18 or 18½, he had an expectation of 2 or 2½ years attendance — too little for the pre-war requirements for a degree.

To meet this situation, Oxford took the lead in establishing a special War-Degree, which required a minimum of five terms\*

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\* The British University year is usually divided into three terms, with vacations of about one month each at Christmas and at Easter, and from 13 to 17 weeks in the summer.

University residence, as compared with the pre-war minimum of nine. The student must then immediately proceed to four "terms" of four months each of satisfactory National Service — usually, of course, in the armed forces — and, on their completion, will be granted a War-Degree. Most of the other Universities have adopted arrangements whereby degree requirements are reduced to about two years' academic attendance instead of the pre-war three. Some Universities have not altered the length of their pre-war terms, but Manchester has reduced vacations and instituted four terms a year, and Leeds has increased the length of its terms, at the expense of vacations, so that seven war-terms will cover as many months as nine pre-war. Various courses in both Arts and Science have been shortened and simplified, with emphasis on practical work.

It is possible that now, with the lowered calling-up age, the War-Degrees may be suspended. All Universities will, of course, give the student credit for work done, should he return after the war.

The calling-up age was lowered successively to 19½, 19, 18½, and, in October of this year, to 18. Up to December, 1942, specially suitable young men in the arts and similar divisions were allowed to attend the University for one year; this year might be wholly before the calling-up age — if they entered the University at 17 — or might fall before and after their 18th birthday, or they might still enter at 18, and remain one year. It has now, however, been decided to grant no more deferments to arts students, except that those who entered the Universities in September and October, 1942, and the smaller number who entered in January, 1943, will be allowed to complete the present academic year. Men classified in physical grades 3 and 4 will be governed by the same regulations as apply to women.

Hitherto the arts man, whose destination was usually a combatant unit, had to undertake about twice as much military training as the science or technical student, since the latter's destination was war industry or a technical branch of the fighting services, and his general military training was designed to be sufficient only to enable him to resist possible invasion.

## vi. Women Students

Women in Great Britain now register at 18 under the Registration for Employment Order, and are liable to be drafted at 19. Science, technical, medical, dental, pharmacological and veterinary students are deferrable on the same basis as men. Women arts students entering the Universities in October, 1943, may, if they are under 18 on October 1, take a three year course; if under 19, a two-year course, provided that in each case the course will qualify them for a degree or diploma within the stated period. These arrangements are subject to the condition that universities only admit to these three or two year courses women who intend to undertake, after leaving, work of national importance, e.g., teaching, or approved social service. Those intending to become teachers are allowed an additional year of professional training. Women students taking courses that are normally entered upon at a later age—dietetics, midwifery,

public health, occupational therapy, and various types of social work may enter upon them up to 23.

### **III. The National Service Machinery for Selecting and Controlling Students**

- i. Each University has its own **University Joint Recruiting Board**, an agency of the Ministry of Labour and National Service, which provides its offices. Each board consists of one representative each of the Army, Navy and Air Force — usually retired officers — and a chairman nominated by the University's governing body.
- ii. **The Scientific or technical student** goes before the appropriate technical sub-committee of the University Joint Recruiting Board. There is a sub-committee for each of the principal scientific divisions, consisting wholly of members of the faculty. The sub-committee determines his admittance, and periodically surveys his progress, to decide whether his reservation (deferment) should be continued. The board as a whole will not usually deal with the science or technical student until the end of his course: then, having before it the expert committee's assessment of his scientific and technical ability, it will interview him, and send to the Central Allocation Committee of the Ministry of Labour a recommendation as to how he can best be used, whether in industry or the armed forces.

The University Joint Recruiting Boards also serve as the machinery whereby the Ministry obtains, as far as possible, the desired proportion of students in each field of study. If, as at present, more technicians are needed in radio-physics, and fewer in chemistry or biology, the board will try to move students from one field to the other. It will, through its technical committees, raise the standards for acceptance in the less needed subjects, lower it in the scarcity ones, and explain the relative need to the student.

- iii. **The prospective medical, dental or veterinary student** does not have to go before a University Joint Recruiting Board, but merely has to secure admittance to a recognized school, in the same way as in peace-time. The numbers admitted in these categories are in general at the pre-war figure.

### **IV. University Staffs**

Before the war began, in mid-1938, there was instituted a Central Register of members of University faculties, and of professionally qualified people in general. Professional staffs in each University filled up cards, which were annotated by local University committees and then forwarded to the Central Registry. The information included technical qualifications, administrative experience, and knowledge of foreign languages. The Central Registry was used by civil servants, with the assistance of technical advisers from the Universities, to provide staffs for the new or expanded Ministries which were formed at the outbreak of war. The work done through the Central Registry was later supplemented by the Committee on Skilled

Men in the Services, headed by Sir William Beveridge, to some extent by a Placement Service in each branch of the armed forces, and by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Technical Personnel whose chairman is Lord Hankey.

The various faculties and departments in each University ear-marked certain teachers, and members of the administrative and library staff, as indispensable, and others were advised as to the most suitable governmental, industrial, armed forces, or other war-work. As a general rule, scientific and technical staffs were reserved, after individual examination, above the age of twenty-five, others above thirty-five. Application for reservation is made by the Universities through the University Grants Committee, the standing committee which allocates the annual Parliamentary grant to the Universities.\* The Committee transmits recommendations to the Ministry of Labour. No requests from Universities have as yet been refused. Both categories have undertaken a great many non-academic duties, the first chiefly as industrial or military advisers, the second in service on many civilian committees. Unless specially exempt, men on University staffs, like their students and other male civilians, must serve in the Home Guard if under 51. Unless serving in the Home Guard, or otherwise specially exempt, men from 16 to 60 and with certain exceptions women from 20 to 45 must do up to 48 hours a month Fireguard or other compulsory Civil Defense. The proportion of war-time to pre-war students is much higher than that of the faculty, so that the remaining staffs carry a considerable burden. In line with the recognition of education as a vital national service, men school-teachers and members of the administrative staffs of Local Education Authorities are also in general reserved at the age of 35.

## V. Special War-Time Courses

### i. State Bursaries

The greatest shortage of trained personnel has been in radio and radio-physics and in electrical engineering. To a less extent in other branches of engineering, in some branches of chemistry, of medicine and of statistics. The Government has instituted two systems of State Bursaries under which the entire maintenance and tuition expenses of students, both men and women, are paid. Students are selected on the basis of their school leaving, or equivalent, examinations in chemistry, physics and mathematics, and sent to universities and colleges at the age of 17 plus. The two-year Bursaries may lead to a degree, but that is only incidental to the main objective, which is to secure highly trained technical personnel. Science bursaries may also be given for advanced work and research. The six-months Bursaries aim, naturally, at a much more limited training. The Bursaries Schemes are said to work very well, and as many more, and in as many subjects, will be provided as the war-effort necessitates.

\* The total income of Universities in Great Britain for 1940-41 was £6,437,509. Endowments provided 15.4% donations and subscriptions 2.5, local authorities 9.3, Parliamentary grants 37.9, tuition, examinations, etc. (including Board of Education grants for teachers in training) 24, other, 10.9. In 1934-35 the comparable figures were: total income £6,072,651. Endowments, 13.9%, donations and subscriptions 2.7, local authorities 9.9, Parliamentary grants 33.9, tuition, examinations, etc., 32.5, other 7.1.

## ii. Special Six-months Courses for R.A.F. Volunteers

The Air Ministry has arranged special six-months courses at 10 Universities for intending members of the R.A.F. who volunteer at or after the age of 17. In addition to technical training, the students follow a University course either in the Arts group (politics, economics, philosophy, morals, modern history) or the Science group. Candidates, in addition of course to a keen desire to fly, must have special leadership qualifications. Their entire expenses are paid by the Air Ministry.

## iii. Special Pre-Military Training Courses

There are special short courses for students wishing to enter the Artillery, Engineers, Armoured Corps (Tanks, etc.) and Signal Corps; however, these specialized pre-military courses are said to be of rather disappointing practical value, and may be discontinued.

## iv. Special Courses in Medicine, Statistics, Social Welfare, and Oriental Languages

There are also special courses in Tropical Medicine and War Medicine, and a special course in Statistics for Civil Servants, at Treasury expense, at the London School of Economics. Special three months' training courses have been instituted for social workers chosen to become Personnel Managers and Factory Welfare Supervisors. They must be over 25, are carefully selected, and full maintenance is provided where necessary. A month at the University is followed by a month in the factory, then by a final University month. There are also special courses, with full maintenance, in Oriental languages.

## v. Training for Youth Service

The Board of Education is encouraging Universities and other approved institutions to set up courses for those who are going to work in youth service. These may be full-time courses up to a year's duration, or part-time up to two years. The scheme applies to men when available, but at present most candidates will be women. The Board makes tuition grants, and where bursaries are granted by Universities or other institutions, the Board will make a refund. The Board suggests that the subjects covered should include: mental and physical characteristics of adolescents; social and industrial environment; personal and social hygiene; responsible work with groups of young people. At Bristol University such a course, starting in September 1942, has been jointly designed by the departments of Economics and Education. It has been partly based on an experimental course for youth organizers carried out in Canada. The University staff will be assisted by representatives of a number of non-academic bodies. It is hoped that such schemes may grow into a very important factor in the provision of leaders of youth in post-war Britain.

## VI. Student Activities in War-Time

Except for most of the schools and colleges of the University of London, which are scattered in half a dozen centres, usually in close cooperation with the local institutions, all the Universities are now functioning in their own cities, although some buildings have been commandeered, and others damaged by bombs. The students are working hard: in addition to cramming most of two or three years' work into one or two, and to their weekly Fireguard and Military training duties, they have undertaken much agricultural and some industrial work in week-ends and vacations—many women students, with their later calling-up age, formally pledging themselves to a large amount of part-time National Service. Sports have continued on a reduced scale, but such cultural activities as are not prevented by the black-out have proceeded very actively. The following is a description of King's College, London, in its war-time home in Bristol:—

“They all do weekly night firewatching duties, both on University premises and at their billets or hostels. Between lectures — which run at peace-time capacity and sometimes fuller — they drill, practice First Aid, work in college, service, and public canteens, and organize continuous paper and pigfood salvage, dig-for-victory, mending-for-the-army, baby-minding, entertainment for the forces (including Information Please and 'Brain Trust' features), and similar campaigns. The women tie up closely with the Women's Voluntary Services. Yet — look at the social notice-boards. They were a-flutter with layers of bills and posters advertising a college production of 'Quiet Wedding,' an Easter presentation of the 'Messiah' by a King's London-and-Bristol choir, a debate 'that the faculty of arts must be maintained, being a contribution to British life and thought influencing a far greater number than ever enter the university lecture rooms themselves.'”

This close-up picture is typical of any University in Britain today. Birkbeck College, an evening branch of London University that stayed behind to cater for the thousand teachers, civil servants, typists, industrial workers, chemists, clerks, and others who comprise its student body, was blitzed night after night in the winter of 1940-41. In the great fires of May 1941, the students retrieved 2,000 charred and sodden books.

The National Union of Students has played a considerable part in war-time University life. Over 1,500 delegates attended its annual conference in April 1942.

## VII. Students and Faculties of the United Nations

The Universities have given extensive hospitality to students and members of the staffs of institutions now in Nazi hands. The British Council, in consultation with the United Nations' governments has awarded a number of scholarships and grants, and has cooperated with the Universities to ensure that admis-

sions shall be equitably spread among the various nationalities. Belgian, Dutch, French, Polish, Czechoslovak students have received grants enabling them to attend a year's course on British Life and Institutions at Birmingham University. In March, 1941, a Polish School of Medicine was established in Edinburgh, at the invitation of Edinburgh University. Czechoslovak students, particularly medical, are completing their professional preparation at Universities throughout Great Britain. In the summer vacation of 1942 the British Council and the Oxford Delegacy for Extra-Mural studies organized a three-weeks' course for foreign students. The courses, more advanced than in peace-time, were attended by students of 21 nationalities. The central feature was a series on the development of the British Commonwealth and its relations with the United States.

### **VIII. University Courses for Members of the Armed Forces and for Prisoners of War**

Many members of the armed forces, officers and other ranks, are registered as external students of the University of London, and are studying for nearly all its examinations. (The External Division of the University of London has long been famous. Some of the students receive tuition or guidance from the University, but the great majority work on their own or with private assistance. The standards maintained are high. One half of these external students are now in the armed forces). Various correspondence schools, of no official University status, but some of them staffed by University graduates of considerable academic standing, offer courses for the forces: the best of these usually aim at London external degree, or lesser, examinations.

Apart from such work for regular degrees, the Universities offer varied courses for the armed forces in the 23 regions into which Great Britain and Northern Ireland have been divided for the purposes of the Central Advisory Council for Adult Education in His Majesty's Forces—the regions corresponding to the normal extra-mural areas served by each University or University College. In addition to the various general educational schemes, the Universities have offered much informal personal tuition to serious students with special needs.

The University of London ran a summer school intended primarily for members of the Canadian forces who wished to spend 7-days' leave as students. Service personnel attending comprised 175 Canadians, 40 British (including women), 8 Indian officers, 5 Royal Netherland's Brigade, 4 Czechs and 1 American sailor. Similar courses are being held at Oxford, and American officers and men are invited to attend at a total cost of \$14.50 and \$6.50 respectively. The most eminent lecturers are participating. Cambridge had, by early 1942, provided over 2,500 lectures for the forces, especially on international affairs. Birmingham has a week-end course for army officers, and Edinburgh a course on Scottish Local Government for Polish officers who were lawyers or Civil Servants in peace-time.

British prisoners of war are not neglected. Working through the educational departments of the Red Cross and the Order of St. John, some sixty professional and educational organizations are cooperating in setting examinations and providing syllabuses for prisoners. For example, men may study under the regulations of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Law Society, the London Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Bankers, the Institute of Transport. Oxford will grant a certificate or diploma to those attaining honors standards in special prisoners-of-war examinations to be held next spring. This is probably the first time that Oxford has given academic recognition to adult students without demanding any kind of University residence.

## **IX. The Universities and Post-War Planning**

The pressure of immediate necessities, and the loss of many members of University staffs to the armed services, Government offices, or other branches of National Service, has, of course, restricted the attention that can be given to post-war planning. However, important studies are being undertaken by, amongst others, Nuffield College, Oxford, (of which Mr. Harold Butler, now British Minister in Washington and head of the British Information Services in the U.S.A., was the first Warden), which is the centre for the extensive Social Reconstruction Survey directed by Mr. G. D. H. Cole. This Survey, which receives an official subsidy, uses the facilities of other Universities and colleges in the various regions of the country, and at present is chiefly considering the location of industry. Nuffield College is also engaged on important Colonial, and jointly with other research bodies, International surveys. The Manchester Economics Research Section, the London School of Economics, and the Oxford University School of Statistics, are actively engaged. The University of London has set up a special advisory board in Colonial studies, and the various schools of architecture and town-planning are, of course, working out plans for physical reconstruction. Oxford University, once again benefiting by the generosity of Lord Nuffield, has established a Chair and Institute of Social Medicine. All the British Universities are now giving increasing attention to post-war problems.





