

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #577
A Short History Of Universities
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Transcript

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today it's the start of our next three-part mini-series, this time on the theme of "university".

[00:00:31] In part one, today's episode, we'll go on a [whirlwind¹](#) journey through the history of universities and higher education, from the Medieval period to the present day.

[00:00:42] In part two, we'll zoom in and talk about universities in the UK, the different types of universities, what life is like at a British university, and I'll share [a load of²](#) my personal experience too, as I spent a total of five years studying at universities in the UK.

[00:01:02] And in part three, the final part, we'll talk about something that said it was a university, but was later accused of being a complete [fraud³](#): Trump University.

¹ happening very fast and full of activity

² a large amount of

³ a dishonest act meant to trick people for money

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[00:01:14] OK then, let's not waste a minute and get right into it.

[00:01:20] There are practically no [institutions](#)⁴ that have survived for 1,000 years.

[00:01:26] The Vatican City only goes back just over 700, the “ancient” city of Machu Picchu is not yet 600 years old, and even sandwiches have only been around for 250.

[00:01:40] Yet in just over 60 years’ time, one [institution](#)⁵ will celebrate its 1,000 year anniversary.

[00:01:50] The University of Bologna is, by some measures, the world’s oldest university. It was founded in the year 1088, some 937 years ago.

[00:02:05] If you go there today, the university doesn’t seem very old, or at least it doesn’t look so different from the rest of the city.

[00:02:15] But of course, 1,000 years ago, it was very different.

⁴ important organisations that have existed for a long time

⁵ an important organisation that has existed for a long time

[00:02:20] It bore little [resemblance](#)⁶ to any modern university: no [sprawling](#)⁷ campus, no central library, no stone [quadrangles](#)⁸ where students wandered around in [gowns](#)⁹.

[00:02:34] In fact, the “university” was more of an idea than a formal structure; it was really an informal gathering of young men who [congregated](#)¹⁰ in the same place and hired older, more [learned](#)¹¹ men to instruct them.

[00:02:52] Now, before we get into how this worked in practice, and what they were studying, we should address the question of “why?”.

[00:03:03] Why then, and why there?

[00:03:05] Why do we see universities [springing up](#)¹² in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries?

[00:03:13] Why in Europe in particular?

⁶ likeliness or similarity

⁷ spreading out over a large area

⁸ square or rectangular open spaces surrounded by buildings

⁹ long, loose robes worn by students or teachers at universities

¹⁰ came together in a group

¹¹ having a lot of knowledge, very educated

¹² appearing or starting to exist suddenly

[00:03:16] Well, a few things were happening at once.

[00:03:20] Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries was finally becoming a little more [stable¹³](#).

[00:03:27] Populations were growing, towns were expanding, and trade was starting to [flourish¹⁴](#).

[00:03:34] In places like northern Italy, new city-states were [booming¹⁵](#) with merchants, bankers and [notaries¹⁶](#). These were societies that needed contracts, [charters¹⁷](#), and legal expertise.

[00:03:50] At the same time, something extraordinary happened. Through contact with the Islamic world, in Spain, Sicily, and during the Crusades, European scholars rediscovered long-lost works of ancient philosophers, physicians, and thinkers.

[00:04:09] In Bologna, a copy of Justinian's Corpus Juris Civilis, the great code of Roman law, re-emerged. This was alongside works of Aristotle, the great Greek physician Galen, and more.

¹³ steady, not likely to change

¹⁴ grow or develop well

¹⁵ growing very fast and being successful

¹⁶ people who wrote and checked legal documents and made them official

¹⁷ official papers giving rights or rules to organisations

[00:04:24] Suddenly, there was a [sophisticated](#)¹⁸ [body](#)¹⁹ of knowledge just waiting to be studied.

[00:04:32] The Catholic Church was also a huge factor.

[00:04:36] It was the single most powerful [institution](#) in Europe, owning vast amounts of land, collecting taxes, and even running its own courts.

[00:04:47] Historically, it had been where knowledge and learning was [confined](#)²⁰ to.

[00:04:52] [Monks](#)²¹ were practically the only group in society that could read and write; books had to be [meticulously](#)²² copied by hand, by [monks](#), of course, and these sources of knowledge were kept in [monasteries](#)²³, often [under lock and key](#)²⁴.

[00:05:10] But by this point, the church's needs had evolved.

¹⁸ complex or advanced, showing great knowledge or skill

¹⁹ a large collection

²⁰ kept inside, limited

²¹ religious men who lived together in a monastery and followed special rules

²² very carefully and with great attention to detail

²³ buildings where monks lived and worked

²⁴ safe and hidden, locked away

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[00:05:15] To manage its **sprawling** empire it needed more than just **monks** who could pray and copy **manuscripts**²⁵. It needed educated **clergy**²⁶: men trained not only in theology but also in law, philosophy, and the practical business of administration.

[00:05:35] So, on the one hand you had these **booming** towns and **ambitious**²⁷ rulers who wanted lawyers and administrators.

[00:05:44] On the other, you had the Church demanding skilled administrators and legal experts.

[00:05:50] And in the middle, you had rediscovered texts of Roman law and classical philosophy providing the material to study.

[00:05:58] It was a case of right time, right place.

[00:06:02] Now, importantly, these early universities weren't "founded" in the sense we might think of today. It wasn't the Church or a king who founded the University of Bologna.

[00:06:16] It was the students themselves.

²⁵ handwritten documents, especially old ones

²⁶ people who worked for the Church, like priests

²⁷ wanting to be successful or powerful

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[00:06:18] They **banded together**²⁸ in **guilds**²⁹, **pooled**³⁰ their money, and hired masters to teach them. This is what “universitas” originally meant, not “a university” as we think of today, but a corporation of students.

[00:06:36] And what gave these communities **staying power**³¹, the ability to continue year after year, was recognition from the pope.

[00:06:48] Popes issued **charters granting**³² universities **privileges**³³, such as **exemption**³⁴ from local taxes, the right to be **tried**³⁵ in church courts, and most importantly, the authority for their degrees to be recognised across Christendom.

[00:07:04] In other words, someone could take their degree from the University of Bologna and show it to their master in Paris, and it would be recognised as valid.

²⁸ joined as a group for a common purpose

²⁹ groups of people who did the same job and worked together for their rights

³⁰ collected money or resources from several people to use together

³¹ the ability to last or continue for a long time

³² giving or allowing officially

³³ special rights or advantages

³⁴ permission not to pay something that others must

³⁵ judged in a court of law

[00:07:15] Now, in terms of what students would study at these universities, the

[curriculum³⁶](#) was surprisingly [uniform³⁷](#).

[00:07:25] A young man, and they were almost always men, would typically begin with

what was known as the trivium: grammar, [rhetoric³⁸](#), and [logic³⁹](#).

[00:07:36] In practical terms, this meant first mastering Latin, which was the language

of the church.

[00:07:43] Then, mastering how to [craft⁴⁰](#) an argument and deliver a speech.

[00:07:48] And then it was [logic](#): the art of reason, [evaluating⁴¹](#) statements logically and

[systematically⁴²](#).

[00:07:56] It wasn't so different from some of the skills that you might have learned at university.

³⁶ the subjects or topics taught

³⁷ the same everywhere, not changing

³⁸ the skill of speaking or writing in a clear and persuasive way

³⁹ clear and correct thinking, reasoning

⁴⁰ make or create with skill

⁴¹ judging or deciding how good or useful they were

⁴² in an organised and careful way

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[00:08:03] And once the young man had mastered those, he would move on to the quadrivium: [arithmetic](#)⁴³, [geometry](#)⁴⁴, music, and [astronomy](#)⁴⁵.

[00:08:14] Together, these seven subjects made up the so-called “liberal arts,” which were the foundation of medieval higher education.

[00:08:25] After this, the most [ambitious](#) and wealthy students could progress to the higher faculties of law, medicine, and theology.

[00:08:34] And, not unlike the modern day, different universities [excelled](#)⁴⁶ at different subjects.

[00:08:41] Law was especially important at Bologna, theology [dominated](#)⁴⁷ in Paris, and medicine was strong in places like Salerno.

[00:08:51] Degrees could take years, even decades, to complete, and many students never finished, again, not so [dissimilar](#)⁴⁸ to some modern universities.

⁴³ basic maths like adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing

⁴⁴ maths about shapes, sizes, and space

⁴⁵ the study of stars, planets, and space

⁴⁶ did very well

⁴⁷ was the most important

⁴⁸ not the same, different

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[00:09:03] And by the 13th and 14th centuries, universities had appeared in Oxford, Cambridge, Salamanca, Padua, Prague, and Heidelberg.

[00:09:14] Wherever they were founded, they became [magnets⁴⁹](#) for [ambitious](#) men and symbols of [prestige⁵⁰](#) for the rulers who would often [sponsor⁵¹](#) them, paying for their fees and living expenses, with the expectation that they would return and serve them after they graduated.

[00:09:32] A little like an employer today paying for someone to go and do an MBA.

[00:09:38] After all, for these young men, there was a clear [incentive⁵²](#) to go to university.

[00:09:45] Mastering Roman and [canon⁵³](#) law wasn't just an intellectual exercise; it was a ticket to a career as a [notary⁵⁴](#), a judge, or an adviser to a bishop or prince.

⁴⁹ things that had a powerful attraction

⁵⁰ respect or admiration that came from success or importance

⁵¹ a person who paid for or supported them

⁵² motivation or reason

⁵³ a set of religious laws or rules of the Church

⁵⁴ a person who wrote and checked legal documents and made them official

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[00:09:58] In a society where almost all power was [mediated](#)⁵⁵ through law or the Church, education became a [pathway](#)⁵⁶ to influence, and one that was worth paying for.

[00:10:12] Now, although by the 14th century or so, universities were well-established, and there were around 50 [scattered](#)⁵⁷ across Europe, they still only educated an extreme minority of the population, so we're probably talking about fewer than 50,000 students at every university in total.

[00:10:36] And most graduates would become [clergyman](#)⁵⁸, priests, or some form of administrator within the church or a city state system.

[00:10:47] But as Europe moved into the Renaissance, universities began to change.

[00:10:54] Instead of focusing almost entirely on theology and law, a new movement of scholars known as humanists [championed](#)⁵⁹ the studia humanitatis: the study of [grammar](#)⁶⁰, [rhetoric](#), history, poetry, and moral philosophy.

⁵⁵ controlled or managed

⁵⁶ a way of achieving it, a route

⁵⁷ spread (over a wide area)

⁵⁸ people who worked for the Church

⁵⁹ supported or fought for (a cause or idea)

⁶⁰ the rules of how words are used in a language

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[00:11:11] These were subjects drawn⁶¹ from the classical world, inspired by the rediscovery of Greek and Roman texts.

[00:11:20] They shifted the focus away from purely preparing men for service in the church or the courtroom, and towards shaping a more rounded⁶², critical, and eloquent⁶³ citizen.

[00:11:33] Then came the Scientific Revolution, and with it, the university became a place not only for preserving existing knowledge but also for producing it.

[00:11:45] Now, this is an important distinction to make. For the first four to five centuries, universities were places for students to learn from the current corpus⁶⁴ of knowledge; there was no focus whatsoever on discovery, of challenging accepted knowledge and research to uncover new ideas.

[00:12:08] Science, of course, is all about pushing human understanding forward, questioning why the world is how it is.

⁶¹ taken or inspired

⁶² having all parts developed; complete and balanced

⁶³ able to speak or write clearly and well

⁶⁴ a collection of texts

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[00:12:18] If you were Galileo Galilei at the University of Padua, in Italy, this meant asking yourself whether the sun goes around the Earth or the Earth goes around the sun.

[00:12:29] If you were Sir Isaac Newton in Cambridge, in England, this meant asking what causes an apple to fall from the sky.

[00:12:38] It might sound obvious, especially now when a large [chunk](#)⁶⁵ of a university lecturer's time is supposed to be dedicated to research, but at the time, it wasn't.

[00:12:50] And by the 18th and 19th centuries, universities were being reshaped again, pushing them even further towards what we see today.

[00:13:01] In Berlin, Wilhelm von Humboldt developed a new model: the idea that research and teaching should go [hand in hand](#)⁶⁶, that scholars should be free to pursue knowledge wherever it might lead.

[00:13:16] This so-called "Humboldtian" model [spread](#)⁶⁷ quickly and influenced universities across Europe, and later the United States.

[00:13:25] It is, of course, the [basis](#)⁶⁸ for much of modern higher education.

⁶⁵ large piece or part

⁶⁶ happening together or connected closely

⁶⁷ moved and reached more people or places

⁶⁸ the main idea or reason

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[00:13:31] Universities should educate young, curious minds, but they should also be centres of research and discovery.

[00:13:40] So, by this point, at the turn of the 20th century, there were something like 200 universities worldwide, depending on exactly what you [classify](#)⁶⁹ as a university.

[00:13:52] The student body had also expanded, but there were still only around 500,000 university students worldwide, a tiny [fraction](#)⁷⁰ of the estimated 250 million students today.

[00:14:08] University was still [exclusive](#)⁷¹, expensive, and an option only for a tiny [sliver](#)⁷² of society.

[00:14:17] This all started to change in the post-war period, when governments across the developed world invested heavily in higher education.

[00:14:28] In the United States, the [GI Bill](#)⁷³ gave returning soldiers the chance to go to college.

⁶⁹ list or label

⁷⁰ a very small part

⁷¹ limited to only some people, not for everyone

⁷² a very thin or small piece

⁷³ a US law that gave soldiers money to go to university after the war

[00:14:34] In Europe, new universities opened their doors for a generation hungry for opportunity.

[00:14:41] And across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, universities were established as symbols of independence, progress, and modernity.

[00:14:52] For the first time in history, higher education was no longer the [preserve](#)⁷⁴ of a tiny [elite](#)⁷⁵.

[00:15:00] And that brings us to the modern day.

[00:15:03] There is no single accepted figure for the number of universities worldwide, with estimates ranging from 25,000 to 50,000, educating an estimated 250 million students.

[00:15:19] It is, for many professions, still an almost [mandatory](#)⁷⁶ requirement, making university a necessary next step after school.

[00:15:30] In the UK, like most countries, getting a “good” job is significantly harder without a university degree, and the better the university you went to, and the better grades you got, the more likely you are to find a good job after graduation.

⁷⁴ field or area

⁷⁵ the richest, most powerful, or best people in society

⁷⁶ required, not optional

[00:15:48] There are plenty of [counter-examples](#)⁷⁷ to this, of self-made millionaires who [dropped out](#)⁷⁸ of school and [carved their own path](#)⁷⁹ to success, but these are [anomalies](#)⁸⁰, in the UK at least.

[00:16:01] If you look through the CV or Wikipedia page of almost anyone who has achieved “career success” in some form of professional environment, you will almost certainly find the name of a reputable university on there.

[00:16:17] And in the UK, [successive](#)⁸¹ British governments have pushed to get as many young people into university as possible, [proclaiming](#)⁸² that the percentage of people graduating from university is a success metric. High = good, low = bad.

[00:16:35] In 1997, Tony Blair famously stated that he wanted 50% of British young people to go to university.

[00:16:45] At the time, it was seen as [ambitious](#), almost [utopian](#)⁸³.

⁷⁷ examples that show something different

⁷⁸ left school or university before finishing

⁷⁹ made their own way in life; did things differently from others

⁸⁰ things that are unusual or don't fit the normal pattern

⁸¹ happening or existing one after another

⁸² announcing publicly and proudly

⁸³ perfect, like in an ideal world that doesn't really exist

[00:16:50] It took 20 years, but in 2017, it happened. 50.2% of young people in the UK went on to higher education. And in fact, if you removed men from the [equation](#)⁸⁴, the target would have been hit much faster, as only 44% of men go on to higher education while 57% of women do.

[00:17:15] Now, 50% is significant, and moving above 50% means it's something most people do.

[00:17:25] And if it is something that most people do, it has, by definition, become less valuable.

[00:17:32] And students are no longer studying the trivium: grammar, rhetoric, and logic, or at least, most aren't.

[00:17:40] There has been a [boom](#)⁸⁵ in [vocational](#)⁸⁶ courses, courses that teach students practical skills and prepare them for a particular job or career: hospitality management, journalism, and so on.

[00:17:56] And the criticism of many of these courses is that, perhaps [ironically](#)⁸⁷, they don't do a very good job at preparing students for the professional world. A degree in

⁸⁴ case or situation

⁸⁵ a period of great increase

⁸⁶ teaching practical skills for a specific job

⁸⁷ in a way that is opposite to what is expected

“golf management” might sound perfect for a 17-year-old fan of golf, but the reality is that it probably isn’t even the best course to study if they want to work in the golf industry.

[00:18:22] And alongside this, we must mention the cost.

[00:18:26] As you might remember from episode number 513, on the UK university crisis, the cost of university has expanded dramatically in the UK.

[00:18:38] Before 1997, it was free, and it has risen to almost €10,000 per year today.

[00:18:47] It is expensive, and that’s before you [factor in⁸⁸](#) the cost of living as a student.

[00:18:54] Indeed, according to a report that came out this summer, the average student in the UK graduates with £53,000 in [debt⁸⁹](#), around €60,000.

[00:19:07] Interestingly enough, this is actually more than the average student in the US.

[00:19:13] The difference is that the cost of tuition in the US varies wildly, so the most expensive degrees at the most prestigious American universities can cost over \$100,000 a year, while some universities can be completely free.

[00:19:30] In the UK, the best university can cost the same as the worst university, which leads to the situation that everyone has relatively equal high costs, but of course, not

⁸⁸ include, take into consideration

⁸⁹ money that they owe

everyone graduates with degrees of equal value, which is something we'll talk more about in the next episode.

[00:19:49] Now, to [wrap up](#)⁹⁰ this exploration of higher education through time, I want to leave you with one last thought, and that's about things that have and haven't changed over the almost 1,000 years of the existence of university.

[00:20:07] One theme is the university student's perpetual feeling of not having enough money. It's understandable; students are, theoretically speaking, too busy studying to work, and with often [hefty](#)⁹¹ tuition fees to pay and rent to make, history is filled with examples of students complaining about being [short on cash](#)⁹².

[00:20:30] Something that might have changed, however, is students' priorities about what they spend their money on.

[00:20:37] So I'll leave you with a quote from one 15th-century Dutch student, Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, or Erasmus of Rotterdam, as he is most commonly known.

[00:20:49] He famously said, "When I have a little money, I buy books; and if I have any left, I buy food and clothes."

⁹⁰ finish or bring to an end

⁹¹ large or expensive

⁹² having little or no money

[00:20:59] If Erasmus were a student today, I wonder whether he would still have the same priorities...

[00:21:06] OK, then, that is it for today's episode on the history of universities.

[00:21:11] I hope it's been an interesting one and that you've learnt something new, at least something you might not have learned at university.

[00:21:18] As a reminder, this is part one of a three-part mini-series on the theme of “university”.

[00:21:24] Next up, in part two, we'll be talking about universities in Britain: the different types of universities, the application process, university culture, and what life is like if you choose to study at a British university.

[00:21:37] And in part three, we'll also be talking about something that called itself a university, but got into a lot of trouble for doing so: Trump University, and the scandal that followed.

[00:21:49] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:21:54] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Whirlwind	happening very fast and full of activity
A load of	a large amount of
Fraud	a dishonest act meant to trick people for money
Institutions	important organisations that have existed for a long time
Institution	an important organisation that has existed for a long time
Resemblance	likeness or similarity
Sprawling	spreading out over a large area
Quadrangles	square or rectangular open spaces surrounded by buildings
Gowns	long, loose robes worn by students or teachers at universities
Congregated	came together in a group
Learned	having a lot of knowledge, very educated
Springing up	appearing or starting to exist suddenly
Stable	steady, not likely to change

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Flourish	grow or develop well
Booming	growing very fast and being successful
Notaries	people who wrote and checked legal documents and made them official
Charters	official papers giving rights or rules to organisations
Sophisticated	complex or advanced, showing great knowledge or skill
Body	a large collection
Confined	kept inside, limited
Monks	religious men who lived together in a monastery and followed special rules
Meticulously	very carefully and with great attention to detail
Monasteries	buildings where monks lived and worked
Under lock and key	safe and hidden, locked away
Manuscripts	handwritten documents, especially old ones
Clergy	people who worked for the Church, like priests
Ambitious	wanting to be successful or powerful
Banded together	joined as a group for a common purpose

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Guilds	groups of people who did the same job and worked together for their rights
Pooled	collected money or resources from several people to use together
Staying power	the ability to last or continue for a long time
Granting	giving or allowing officially
Privileges	special rights or advantages
Exemption	permission not to pay something that others must
Tried	judged in a court of law
Curriculum	the subjects or topics taught
Uniform	the same everywhere, not changing
Rhetoric	the skill of speaking or writing in a clear and persuasive way
Logic	clear and correct thinking, reasoning
Craft	make or create with skill
Evaluating	judging or deciding how good or useful they were
Systematically	in an organised and careful way
Arithmetic	basic maths like adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing

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Geometry	maths about shapes, sizes, and space
Astronomy	the study of stars, planets, and space
Excelled	did very well
Dominated	was the most important
Dissimilar	not the same, different
Magnets	things that had a powerful attraction
Prestige	respect or admiration that came from success or importance
Sponsor	a person who paid for or supported them
Incentive	motivation or reason
Canon	a set of religious laws or rules of the Church
Notary	a person who wrote and checked legal documents and made them official
Mediated	controlled or managed
Pathway	a way of achieving it, a route
Scattered	spread (over a wide area)
Clergyman	people who worked for the Church

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Championed	supported or fought for (a cause or idea)
Grammar	the rules of how words are used in a language
Drawn	taken or inspired
Rounded	having all parts developed; complete and balanced
Eloquent	able to speak or write clearly and well
Corpus	a collection of texts
Chunk	large piece or part
Hand in hand	happening together or connected closely
Spread	moved and reached more people or places
Basis	the main idea or reason
Classify	list or label
Fraction	a very small part
Exclusive	limited to only some people, not for everyone
Sliver	a very thin or small piece
Gi bill	a US law that gave soldiers money to go to university after the war

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Preserve	field or area
Elite	the richest, most powerful, or best people in society
Mandatory	required, not optional
Counter-examples	examples that show something different
Dropped out	left school or university before finishing
Carved their own path	made their own way in life; did things differently from others
Anomalies	things that are unusual or don't fit the normal pattern
Successive	happening or existing one after another
Proclaiming	announcing publicly and proudly
Utopian	perfect, like in an ideal world that doesn't really exist
Equation	case or situation
Boom	a period of great increase
Vocational	teaching practical skills for a specific job
Ironically	in a way that is opposite to what is expected
Factor in	include, take into consideration

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Debt	money that they owe
Wrap up	finish or bring to an end
Hefty	large or expensive
Short on cash	having little or no money

Language spotlight

1. Carve (one's) own path

- **Meaning:** To choose a unique or independent way to live or work.
- **Synonyms:** make your own way, be independent, go your own way
- **Antonyms:** follow the crowd, copy others, conform
- **Examples:**
 - Some successful people **carved their own path** instead of going to university.
 - She decided to **carve her own path** as a freelance designer.

2. Band together

- **Meaning:** To join with others in order to do something as a group.
- **Synonyms:** unite, join forces, come together
- **Antonyms:** separate, split up, go alone
- **Examples:**

- The students **banded together** to hire teachers and start the first university.
- People often **band together** in times of crisis to help one another.

3. Hand in hand

- **Meaning:** Closely connected; happening together.
- **Synonyms:** connected, linked, go together
- **Antonyms:** separate, unrelated, independent
- **Examples:**
 - Humboldt's idea was that research and teaching should go **hand in hand**.
 - In many jobs, experience and confidence go **hand in hand**.

4. Wrap up

- **Meaning:** To finish or complete something.
- **Synonyms:** finish, conclude, end
- **Antonyms:** start, begin, open

- **Examples:**

- The podcast host said it was time to **wrap up** the episode.
- Let's **wrap up** the meeting so everyone can go home.

5. Short on cash

- **Meaning:** Having little or not enough money.
- **Synonyms:** broke, low on money, out of money
- **Antonyms:** well-off, rich, financially comfortable
- **Examples:**
 - Students often complain about being **short on cash**.
 - I'd love to go on holiday, but I'm a bit **short on cash** right now.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. What did medieval students mostly study at university?
 - a) Science and engineering
 - b) Medicine and technology
 - c) Law and theology
 - d) Art and music

2. What was special about the University of Bologna?
 - a) It was the first to teach medicine
 - b) It is considered the world's oldest university
 - c) It was founded by the Pope
 - d) It was destroyed and rebuilt many times

3. What caused European scholars to rediscover ancient texts?
 - a) Trade with China

A Short History Of Universities

- b) Contact with the Islamic world
- c) The invention of the printing press
- d) The fall of Rome

4. Who originally “founded” the University of Bologna?

- a) The king of Italy
- b) The Pope
- c) Wealthy merchants
- d) The students themselves

5. What happened to universities after World War II?

- a) Governments invested heavily in higher education
- b) Many closed down due to lack of money
- c) Only rich people could attend
- d) Most universities moved to the countryside

True or False

6. The first universities were created mainly to train soldiers. (True/False)
7. Monks were among the few people in medieval Europe who could read and write. (True/False)
8. The trivium included grammar, rhetoric, and logic. (True/False)
9. In the Renaissance, universities started to teach more about law and religion. (True/False)
10. Today, around half of young people in the UK go to university. (True/False)

Fill-in-the-Blank

11. Why then, and why there? Why do we see universities springing ___ in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries?
12. These sources of knowledge were kept in monasteries, often under _____ and key.
13. And what gave these communities _____ power, the ability to continue year after year, was recognition from the pope.

14. There are plenty of counter-examples to this, of self-made millionaires who dropped ____ of school and _____ their own path to success, but these are anomalies.
15. The Catholic Church was also a huge factor. It was the single most powerful _____ in Europe, owning vast amounts of land, collecting taxes, and even running its own courts.

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct definition of the word or expression.

16. “**Flourish**” means:

- a) To fail or collapse
- b) To grow or do well
- c) To stay the same
- d) To move slowly

17. “**Guild**” means:

- a) A small family business

- b) A student dormitory
- c) A group of teachers
- d) A group of people who work in the same trade

18. “**Privilege**” means:

- a) A special right or advantage
- b) Something everyone automatically gets
- c) A new law or rule
- d) A problem or difficulty

19. “**Ambitious**” means:

- a) Not interested in success
- b) Wanting to achieve a lot
- c) Afraid of hard work
- d) Tired of studying

20. “**Excelled**” means:

- a) Did something very badly
- b) Refused to try
- c) Did something very well
- d) Learned something new

Answers

1. c) Law and theology
2. b) It is considered the world's oldest university
3. b) Contact with the Islamic world
4. d) The students themselves
5. a) Governments invested heavily in higher education
6. False
7. True
8. True
9. False
10. True
11. up
12. lock
13. staying
14. out, carved
15. institution
16. b) To grow or do well
17. d) A group of people who work in the same trade
18. a) A special right or advantage
19. b) Wanting to achieve a lot
20. c) Did something very well