

Planning the future

Level: Pre-intermediate upwards

Timing: 90 minutes plus

Material needed: One copy of the worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Any

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 6/2009. The article is a dialogue between two adult students who have both decided to study abroad. They talk about matters that are important to them, such as tuition fees and future job prospects.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students to not only learn and use new business vocabulary and functional language related to the topics of higher education, tuition fees, life as a students and studying abroad, but also to bring their own professional experiences into the classroom.

The teacher's notes aim to provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys, and extension tasks and lesson plans.

Introduction

The article is a dialogue between a male Greek student who has chosen to study in the Netherlands and a female German student who is studying in the UK. They discuss their reasons for studying abroad and why they have chosen that particular country to study in, where they might go to gain further qualifications and international and intercultural experience, their worries concerning their professional futures, the costs involved in studying abroad compared to at home, different ways of financing their studies and how they are managing financially and socially.

Warmer

The students should scan the article to find two types of degree. If they have any difficulties, explain that what they are looking for acronyms and not whole words.

Note: An MScBA (Master of Science in Business Administration) is a postgraduate business degree.

It differs from the MBA (Master of Business Administration) in that it is for recently graduated students who have no previous experience in business.

The next two questions rely on the students having some knowledge of the higher education system in their own country. If they have difficulties, ask prompting questions such as: *What education or degree do you need to become a lawyer, doctor, engineer, etc. in your country?*

Key:

MScBA and MBA

Reading for detail

The students should read through the table and decide what information they should look for in the article to be able to complete the table.

Key:

	Intends to gain further international experience by studying in ...	Cost of accommodation	Cost of course	Studying where?	Studying what?	Nationality	Name
	Siena, Italy	£350 per month (small room)	£3,225 (or £11,750 for foreign students)	Oxford University, UK	law	German (and possibly British too as her father is English)	Victoria Parr
	Shanghai, China	€500 per month (nice flat)	€1,600	Rotterdam School of Management, Netherlands	MScBA in strategic management	Greek	Tasos Arampatzis

Note: At the time of publication the exchange rate was 1.00 GBP = 1.10502 EUR. It would be helpful for the students' comprehension if you could provide them with the exchange rates between their currency and the pound and the euro.

Planning the future

Teaching and learning strategy: Reading for detail

This is also known as *intensive reading*. This is when we ask students to read a text to find very specific details. It is the opposite of extensive reading and skimming in which students are asked to read quickly and superficially to get the gist of a text. In intensive reading students need to read certain parts of the text closely and carefully in order to understand and extract specific information – especially information that may contain similarities and fine differences. It is a very useful skill for students to develop in a Business English context as it will help them when they read business documents such as contracts, legal documents, application forms, etc.

Article summary

In writing the answers to these comprehension questions students will find that they have written a short summary of the article.

Extension task

To extend this task the students should work in pairs, cover up the article and report/retell the contents of the article to their partner using only the information in the table in exercise 2 and their answers to exercise 3.

Key:

1. Her father is English and she always wanted to experience living in England.
2. He thinks they are very relaxed.
3. The tuition fees are lower than in Greece and (young) Dutch people have fewer money problems than Greeks.
4. She took out a student loan and her parents give her a fixed amount each term.
5. No they can't.
6. If a student works more than eight hours a week, the Dutch government supports them with extra money and free public transport.
7. In Rotterdam there are many university social events. In Oxford, too, life centres round the colleges and its social events.
8. Victoria is worried that there aren't enough jobs for lawyers. Tasos has the same worries in his chosen field – graduates with top qualifications cannot get jobs or even interviews.

Talking points

If you have a large class, divide them into groups of three to five students. Ask them to discuss the talking points within their groups, bringing in their own personal experiences and opinions. One person in the group should take notes for a class feedback session after the students have talked in their groups for approximately ten minutes.

Writing

This task requires the students to bring in their own knowledge of their countries' higher education systems and use their imagination. Although they should for the main part only rewrite one role – that of Tasos – it will be necessary to reword some of Victoria's questions or responses to fit in with the new dialogue. If students have difficulty beginning this task, brainstorm and invent a character together on the board first giving him/her a name, age, nationality, background, ambition, etc. and decide what he or she is studying and where. If the students are still insecure, suggest that they work in pairs to rewrite the dialogue.

Role play

Unless they worked in pairs in exercise 5, each student will have a slightly different script. The students should now work in pairs and decide which of their two scripts they prefer. They should practise reading through their preferred script concentrating not only on the vocabulary but also on pronunciation, intonation and body language. When they feel confident, they can read through (or even act out) their script in front of the rest of the class.

Vocabulary record

Here students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

More about planning the future and higher education

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the Business skills bank and the Business tasks series on onestopenglish:

Business tasks: Studying and learning

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=59913&docid=156955>

Business tasks: Getting and losing jobs

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=59913&docid=156741>

Choosing a job

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=60008&docid=149181>

Planning the future

1 Warmer

Scan the article to find two types of university degree. _____

What types of degree can students do at university in your country?

Which of these do you think are internationally recognized (e.g. are useful when applying for a job in another country)?

2 Reading for detail

Fill in the table with information from the article.

Name	Nationality	Studying what?	Studying where?	Cost of course	Cost of accommodation	Intends to gain further international experience by studying in ...
Victoria Parr						
Tasos Arampatzis						

Planning the future

Planning the future

by Marley Obi

A German studying in Oxford and a Greek studying in Rotterdam find that the criteria for their studies are different. What they have in common, though, is the worry that they will not be able to find jobs in their chosen professions in their own countries.



VICTORIA PARR: Hi, Tasos. I'm Victoria. Great to speak to you. Where are you from?

TASOS ARAMPATZIS: Hello, Victoria. I'm from Greece but I'm doing an MScBA, specializing in strategic management at the Rotterdam School of Management in the Netherlands. What about you?

PARR: I'm from Germany and I'm studying law at Oxford University in England. I've just finished my first year. How long is your course?



ARAMPATZIS: It's one year but I'm extending it by five months to do an exchange in China. I'm going to take some of the MBA courses at the Fudan School of Management in Shanghai.

PARR: Wow! Why China?

ARAMPATZIS: It's an emerging economy, which I find interesting. But I'm also going because I've been trying to learn Chinese for four years — unsuccessfully! Why did you decide to study in the UK?

PARR: Well, my father's English, so I've grown up with both cultures. I've always wanted to experience living in England.

ARAMPATZIS: And is it what you expected?

PARR: So far, yes. But I don't think I'm really experiencing everyday British life, because I'm here to study and there is a lot of pressure at Oxford to work hard. How do you find the Dutch?

ARAMPATZIS: They're very relaxed. And Dutch students do have far fewer money problems than Greek students. If you have an ordinary job here, it pays enough to live well. But young people in Greece need a really good job to be able to live alone.

PARR: Is that why you decided to study there?

ARAMPATZIS: Yes, but also because the tuition fees are lower. My parents pay €1,600 for my course. In a good Greek university, it would cost about €7,000!

PARR: That's a huge difference!

ARAMPATZIS: Yes, but the lower fees here are for EU citizens. Other students have to pay around €11,000! It must surely be more expensive to study at Oxford.

PARR: No, it's about the same. My tuition fee is £3,225, and it's £11,750 if you are an overseas student. I took out a student loan, which I'll have to pay back when I start earning a certain amount. Oxford students aren't allowed to work during the term time — they are really strict about that. My parents give me a fixed amount every term and I have to make sure it lasts. That's why I try and earn as much as possible in the summer, so I can do things like go on holiday. Do you have student loans in Greece?

ARAMPATZIS: No. Some people work their way through university but generally kids don't go to university if their family can't afford it. It's not a fair system.

PARR: Can't students get grants?

Planning the future

Planning the future

by Marley Obi

ARAMPATZIS: No. And the state doesn't help at all. In the Netherlands, if a student works at least eight hours a week, the government supports them with extra money and free public transport. I don't work but I occasionally take part in experiments for PhD students that pay around €10 per hour.

PARR: University accommodation is really expensive in Oxford and it's only available for the first year. So, I'm now sharing a rented house with friends. My room is tiny but it costs £350 per month.

ARAMPATZIS: My roommate and I each pay €500 per month for a really nice flat – about the same price as university accommodation.

PARR: Is your roommate Dutch?

ARAMPATZIS: No, he's also Greek. Dutch students usually stick together. I only have one Dutch friend. I think about 30 per cent of the students here are foreign. Actually, it's easy to make friends here, especially because of the many university social events.

PARR: It's the same here. Oxford social life centres round one's college. There are lots of themed nights, where everyone dresses up, or sports events, fundraising events or course-related dinners.

ARAMPATZIS: What field of law do you want to practise?

PARR: Oh, I don't even know if I want to become a lawyer! With law, you've got to start job-hunting quite early. You start signing training contracts by the end of your second year and I'm worried that there aren't enough jobs. I've read articles about how hard the next few years are going to be even for graduates with top qualifications, so I don't know whether to do a master's until the job market improves. What are your plans, Tasos?

ARAMPATZIS: I want to work as a strategy consultant for a prestigious company like McKinsey but it's going to be difficult. A lot of the students I know who graduated in June can't get jobs. They don't even get called for interviews because nobody is recruiting. That's why I'm extending my studies. After that, I'd like to get more international experience.

PARR: You've got it all mapped out! All I know is that I want to work at an international level, using my languages. I've got a place on the Erasmus programme, so I'll be spending my third year in Siena in Italy studying their first year of law. I also want to improve my Italian, which I learned at school. I think it's very important to have international experience.

ARAMPATZIS: Greeks aren't very open but I think it's very important to understand other cultures. I've also spent five months in Belgium on an exchange. My mother grew up there and taught me some Flemish.

PARR: So by the time you finish your studies, you'll speak Greek, Flemish, English, Chinese and Dutch!

ARAMPATZIS: And German! My girlfriend is German.

PARR: Good choice! Well, good luck, Tasos!

ARAMPATZIS: And to you too, Victoria! Goodbye!

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Planning the future

3 Article summary

Answer these questions to summarize the main points of the article.

1. Why did Victoria choose to study in the UK?

2. What does Tasos think about the Dutch people?

3. Why did Tasos decide to study in the Netherlands?

4. How is Victoria financing her studies?

5. Can students in Greece get financial help from the government?

6. How does the Dutch government help students financially?

7. What factors make it easy to make friends with other students in Oxford and Rotterdam?

8. What worries do Victoria and Tasos have about their future professional lives?

4 Talking points

Victoria and Tasos talk about the costs involved in studying abroad – tuition fees and rent for an apartment.

- How does this compare to the amount a student would have to pay in your country?
- Have you or anyone in your family studied at home or abroad?
- What costs did studying involve?
- Do you think the fees are acceptable?
- Should the costs of higher education be higher or lower? Why?

Planning the future

5 Writing

Rewrite Tasos' role in the space given using another character. The new character should be someone studying in your country. He or she should answer Victoria's questions. You may have to adjust some of the details in Victoria's questions or responses to make the new role fit into the dialogue.



VICTORIA PARR: Hi, Tasos. I'm Victoria. Great to speak to you. Where are you from?

PARR: I'm from Germany and I'm studying law at Oxford University in England. I've just finished my first year. How long is your course?



PARR: Wow! Why China?

PARR: Well, my father's English, so I've grown up with both cultures. I've always wanted to experience living in England.

PARR: So far, yes. But I don't think I'm really experiencing everyday British life, because I'm here to study and there is a lot of pressure at Oxford to work hard. How do you find the Dutch?

PARR: Is that why you decided to study there?

PARR: That's a huge difference!

PARR: No, it's about the same. My tuition fee is £3,225, and it's £11,750 if you are an overseas student. I took out a student loan, which I'll have to pay back when I start earning a certain amount. Oxford students aren't allowed to work during the term time – they are really strict about that. My parents give me a fixed amount every term and I have to make sure it lasts. That's why I try and earn as much as possible in the summer, so I can do things like go on holiday. Do you have student loans in Greece?

Planning the future

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PARR: Is your roommate Dutch?

PARR: It's the same here. Oxford social life centres round one's college. There are lots of themed nights, where everyone dresses up, or sports events, fundraising events or course-related dinners.

PARR: Oh, I don't even know if I want to become a lawyer! With law, you've got to start job-hunting quite early. You start signing training contracts by the end of your second year and I'm worried that there aren't enough jobs. I've read articles about how hard the next few years are going to be even for graduates with top qualifications, so I don't know whether to do a master's until the job market improves. What are your plans, Tasos?

PARR: You've got it all mapped out! All I know is that I want to work at an international level, using my languages. I've got a place on the Erasmus programme, so I'll be spending my third year in Siena in Italy studying their first year of law. I also want to improve my Italian, which I learned at school. I think it's very important to have international experience.

PARR: So by the time you finish your studies, you'll speak Greek, Flemish, English, Chinese and Dutch!

PARR: Good choice! Well, good luck, Tasos!

6 Role play

Read through your role play with another student. Try to extend the dialogue by asking further questions and giving spontaneous answers.

Planning the future

Vocabulary record: Planning the future

verb	noun	adjective (+ opposite)	adverb (+ opposite)
study			
	support		
loan			
			costly
qualify			

Vocabulary record

