

By **Eleanor Harding**  
and **Henry Goodwin**

LEADING university courses are providing less than six hours a week face-to-face teaching – despite charging fees of £9,250 per year.

Elite institutions in the so-called Russell Group are raking in the equivalent of £300 a week for less than a full day's tuition, research reveals.

The courses affected are all in humanities subjects, many of which typically lead to poorer earnings after graduation.

The revelation re-ignites the debate on whether universities provide value for money when students graduate with up to £50,000 of debt. Daily Mail analysis of first-year undergraduate timetables found Bristol and York – two of the country's highest ranked universities – were among those offering very low contact hours.

History students at Bristol receive an average of five and three quarter hours a week of face-to-face teaching by academics. Those studying philosophy get roughly five and a half hours and law students can expect seven and three-quarters.

At York, history students get an average of seven hours.

Universities often justify their low number of contact hours by saying the nature of the subject requires large amounts of independent study.

However, the number of hours offered for the same subject can vary between institutions – for example, law students at Birmingham get 13 hours' a week tuition.

The analysis, based on figures posted by universities on their own websites, follows a study by the Higher Education Policy Institute think-tank showing the average contact time across degree courses is now about 13.7 hours a week. The research found students who receive less than ten hours

are most likely to complain about low value for money.

The findings prompt questions over where the tuition fee money goes – with few universities offering truly transparent breakdowns. It is thought much of the money from humanities tuition fees goes

**'Find it difficult to adjust'**

into cross-subsidising subjects such as chemistry and medicine.

Many universities also spend money from fees on facilities and buildings, as well as expansion projects. Sir Anthony Seldon, vice-chancellor of the University of

Buckingham, said: 'Students moving from schools, where they were taught for roughly 18 hours a week, can find it difficult to adjust to life in universities where they're taught for a third of that every week in class sizes many times bigger.'

Russell Group universities pay their vice-chancellors handsomely – Bristol's Hugh Brady received £292,000 last year. And Koen Lambert, who stepped down as York's vice-chancellor in the autumn, received £249,000. Government data published this year shows history and philosophy are among the subjects producing the poorest graduate salaries.

Bristol said its teaching included seminars, structured tutorials, interactive lectures, practical ses-

sions and workshops. A spokesman added: 'As students progress through their course, curriculums promote greater freedom and independence. All students have a personal tutor who act as an academic mentor.'

York said its courses offered expert teaching and nurtured independent learning to 'help graduates progress confidently into the world as knowledgeable, thoughtful and employable people'.

A Russell Group spokesman added that the amount of contact time 'doesn't necessarily equate to a better experience for students' as the quality of teaching and the intellectual challenge faced by students were also crucial.

# The £9k-a-year degrees... with just six hours' tuition a week

## Mum of arson death Joel, 7: Officials knew of attack risk

By **Rebecca Camber**  
Crime Correspondent

THE mother of a seven-year-old boy killed in an arson attack told of her fury yesterday as it emerged authorities met days earlier to discuss a risk to the family after his drug dealer brother was attacked.

Joel Urhie, pictured, died when his family's home in Deptford, south-east London, was set alight on August 7 2018. His mother Efe and sister Sarah, 19, escaped by leaping from an upstairs window but



could not persuade Joel to follow. His brother Samuel, 21, a convicted drug dealer, had been shot at weeks earlier and it has emerged that the police, Lewisham Council and the probation service met ten days before the arson to discuss the risk to the family, who believed they might be targeted.

Yesterday the victim's mother told ITV News: 'They knew that our life was in danger. They did fail me.' No one has been charged over the attack.

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