

UNIVERSITY

Students choose to buy textbooks over trainers

By RICHARD GARNER
Education Editor

University students in 2012 are no longer the party animals their predecessors were reputed to be. Research shows they would give top priority to paying their bills rather than going out for an evening's fun – and would be more likely to buy a key textbook than a new set of trainers. The findings emerge by comparing the responses of 130 of today's students and those who have already graduated by Milkround, the online graduate recruitment agency. In all, 81 per cent of today's students said they would prioritise paying their bills before going out – compared with 73 per cent of graduates. In addition, 85 per cent said they would buy an important textbook for their course rather than trainers – compared with 76 per cent of graduates. Perhaps surprisingly as average

debt has increased, those graduating this year were less concerned about leaving university with student debts than their predecessors from the previous year – only 48 per cent perceived debt as a worry compared with 60 per cent the previous year. Abbie Baisden, of Milkround, said: "Money is tight for everyone at the moment – not least for students. The times of frivolous student spending are gone and have been replaced by budgeting and financial scrutiny." The findings follow figures that showed this year's university applicants were aiming higher than their predecessors – with more state school pupils applying to Cambridge university as fees rise to up to £9,000 a year. This bucks the national trend of a 10 per cent drop in home applications. Academics saw this as proof they were considering their university options more seriously.

POLICING

Family wants answers on shooting

The family of Mark Duggan says it remains in the dark about the circumstances surrounding his fatal shooting by police one year on from the events that triggered the summer riots. The police watchdog is continuing the inquiry into Mr Duggan's death after the car in which he was travelling was stopped by armed Scotland Yard officers in Tottenham, north London. The family's solicitor, Maria Willis-Stewart, said: "The family are waiting to be able to hear one day – not too far in the future – the answers to the key questions as to what happened and why." She said they were pinning their hopes on an inquest that has been delayed until at least next year and may not be held at all because of issues about phone-intercept evidence.



IRELAND

Hundreds pay respects at Maeve Binchy funeral

The life of best-selling novelist Maeve Binchy was remembered at her funeral yesterday. The worlds of the arts, journalism and politics joined forces to pay tribute to Ireland's national treasure, who died on Monday. Her husband, the writer Gordon Snell (above left), brother William and sister Joan led hundreds of mourners, including the actress Brenda Fricker, above right, who starred in the screen versions of some of Binchy's books. Father William Stuart told the congregation in her native Dalkey in south Dublin each had their own memory of the 72-year-old storyteller: "There isn't a person here or beyond here who cannot recall her infectious personality."

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AN EXCLUSIVE DISPATCH FROM KIM SENGUPTA IN SALAHEDDINE, ALEPPO



Medics defy the regime and treat a wounded Syrian rebel in a hospital near Aleppo EPA/STR

'You can only patch up people for so long. Most of the seriously injured we can't save. The only way to end this is to defeat Assad'

We need supplies from the West, we are desperate," the doctor said as another of the injured, covered in blood, was carried in by three men to be taken to a makeshift surgery, one of a rising number of casualties from the regime's attacks. "We need weapons, anti-tank, anti-aircraft, anything we can get hold of." Later, as he scrubbed his hands in a basin stained with blood and ointment, Dr Mahmoud al-Shami continued: "This will sound strange, a medical man saying something like this. But you know you can only patch up people for so long. Most of the seriously injured we can't save anyway. You realise that the only way to end this would be to defeat Bashar al-Assad. Civilians are being killed by the regime." Among those killed were doctors. The burned bodies of Basel Aslam, Moussab Barad and Hazim Batikh were found a few days after their arrest by the Mukhabarat, the secret police, at the end of June. They were all young and had been working in the poorer sections of the city. Later a pharmacist, Abdel Baset Arja, died while in detention. All had been accused of helping terrorists; their real crime, say the opposition, was to treat victims of the regime; the executions were a warning to colleagues not to make the same mistake. Many medics have taken

heed. The director of a hospital near the fiercest front line of the city described to *The Independent* the frustration of not being able to get his staff to work at such a desperate time. Dr Mohammed Ahmed (not his full name) said: "I am not blaming them, people are very scared, for themselves, for their families. Some are too scared even to talk to me on the phone. I called 19 people and only two even answered. They do not want things like that on their record if Assad, Allah protect us, returns. Arja, the fourth man they killed, did not even come to the hospital, he was just selling us medicine." The conditions, even for a conflict zone, were grim. There is never enough medicine and the power supply fluctuates. In addition to coping with the medical problems, the hospital faces the danger posed by this brutal conflict. It has been targeted by missile and mortar attacks half a dozen times in the past two weeks. The background noise of explosions, helicopters and ambulances careering around on streets of rubble were reminders of how critical the situation was on the outside. The hospital is treating about 50 patients a day, almost all of them injured in the fighting. At present, it has five doctors and two nurses working a rota. Dr Ahmed, an orthopaedic surgeon, the only specialist, said: "We really need around 12 doctors, some with specialisation, and two nurses per

border into Turkey, but I don't think he'll survive the journey. We have to concentrate on lives we can save." The patient, in his early 20s, stretched out his right hand, eyes wide open and imploring. He died the next day in the hospital. The use of dum-dum bullets is illegal under international law. "So you think Assad's people are abiding by the law in other matters? Is the shelling of residential areas with tanks legal? The use of aircraft to bomb civilians? Do you think this regime will stop and say, 'Oh no, we must not do that, it's illegal,'" Dr Shami said. Hazem al-Halali (another adopted name) graduated from the hospital and decided to stay and help in Aleppo rather than return to his home in Damascus. He is a member of a group of doctors called Nur Al-Hayat (Light of Life) working in areas that had seen the worst violence. The three doctors who were killed were fellow members of Nur and Dr Halali is believed to be on a Mukhabarat death list. "I am a single man and if Aleppo falls to the regime, I'll just go somewhere else in Syria. There is no question of leaving Aleppo, there are few enough doctors as it is. The government would like us to die, or if that does not happen, just go away," he said. "They have told us not to treat people here, to send them to the government hospital. But a lot of people don't want to go, they think they might be arrested or killed. We are talking about ordinary people here, not revolutionary fighters." The opposition boasts that unlike the regime it does not mistreat its prisoners. There have been, in fact, instances of summary executions of captured officials, especially those belonging to the loyalist paramilitary, the Shabiha, and the Mukhabarat. A field hospital had been set up by the revolutionaries further to the east of the city. Three soldiers, prisoners, arrived, all of them wounded. The two soldiers able to speak gave the familiar refrain to the one heard from others in the same situation; they were conscripts and had no choice but to serve President Assad. They said they had tried to defect in the past but never had the opportunity and pleaded they did not know just how bad things were. A few rebel fighters heckled, calling them liars, but not in a threatening way. The soldiers continued to look scared. One repeated that the situation was calm where he came from in Damascus; he could not have known about the dreadful things happening elsewhere. A doctor cleaned his wounds and told him he would be all right. As the soldier was led away, the doctor said: "He comes from Kofar Batna. He said nothing was going on there. That is not true, I know of three people who were killed there; one of them was my wife's cousin. Who knows, this man may have been among the killers."

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