

## Open Forum 1 (1971) clip: Why were we chosen as students?

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**Female student:**

Can you tell us please, how we were chosen? I mean I'm sure most of us would like to know. Why we were chosen to be students. Because we're so mixed.

**James Barber:**

Can I make it short and snappy as an answer from staff. Naomi have you any ideas on this?

**Naomi McIntosh:**

It isn't quite a 'why', and I've got to say it very very quickly because of, it's a bit complicated. We had to start to decide it a long time ago before we had any possible knowledge of the numbers of people who were going to apply. So if one can remember that for a start. We also had to work out a system that would, in fact, be operated by the computer, because again if you're dealing with forty or fifty thousand you know we couldn't deal with it manually. Each form of course was looked at by counsellors, but the basic allocation of places had to be done on the computer, and we built up a system which gave us the facility to look at people's age, the region they came from, the course they wanted to apply for, their occupation, and a couple of other things and the date on which they applied. In the event, when we got to it, when we saw the numbers and we looked at the distributions, for example of age, we made a series of quite pragmatic and very public decisions, one of which is that, we would not take any account of age. There'd been a lot of pressure for example to say, don't let in any older people. We looked at the age distribution and it seemed to be reasonable and we left it. What we did decide is, and you know if you want to challenge this of course everybody's discussing it continually because there'll be decisions about next year to be taken quite soon, we did decide that we'd have to have a balance across the regions of the country and we did decide that we wanted a rough balance between the courses that we were providing. So although we've, although we had lots more applications for arts and social science we've only given them marginally more places so we've... If you applied for science and maths you clearly had a better chance of getting in than if you applied for arts and social science. We also had more applications in the South and the South East than we had in the North, so again you had a slightly better chance of getting in if you were in the North than you did in the South and South East.

So the region and the course were the main constraints, beyond that we looked at a set of occupational groups, very rough, in accordance you know, with registrar general and everything else. But basically categories of housewives, teachers, administrators, qualified scientists and so on and we tried to have a balance between these groups and the applications and the obvious one that everyone talks about is teachers, so I think teachers, you know, we did take a decision not to let in everybody in the first year, but to hope that some teachers wouldn't mind waiting.

So within these absolutely objective constraints, it was then first come, first served. So if you, for example, were applying for maths very late on you would almost certainly have got in. But if you were applying for Social Science very late on your chances would be very much worse, and that's really how it worked.