This book is both a concise history of British universities and their place in society over eight centuries, and a penetrating analysis of university problems and policies as seen in the light of that history. It explains how the modern university system has developed since the Victorian era, and gives special attention to changes in policy since the Second World War including the effects of the Robbins report, the rise and fall of the binary system, the impact of the Thatcher era, and the financial crises which have beset universities in recent years. A final chapter on the past and the present shows the continuing relevance of the ideals inherited from the past, and makes an important contribution to current controversies by identifying a distinctively British university model and discussing the historical relationship with the state and market. Robert Anderson shoves that knowing the history of British universities is just as essential today if we are to understand their nature and problems.