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RECRUITMENT

How to put your best foot forward on career path

With a degree remaining a requirement for many professional jobs, here are five options to help would-be students gain their ideal qualification

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Hannah Msalila, centre, is studying aero mechanical engineering at the University of Strathclyde thanks to an F1 scholarship

FORMULA 1

Concerns around high fees, loan repayments and a reported 1.8 million graduates owing at least £50,000 in student debt has seen the number of 18-year-olds applying for university drop for the second year in a row.

As more young people seek alternative routes into work, official UCAS figures show just 41.9 per cent of 18-year-olds have applied for a university place, down from 44.1 per cent in 2022.

With A-level results day looming on August 15, research from Ipsos finds that a quarter of Britons no longer believe going to university is worth it for young people.

However, for many professional jobs, a degree remains a firm requirement and the qualifications are still seen as the key marker of intergenerational social mobility.

As more organisations devise new and creative ways to attract the top student talent, here are five alternative options to secure your chosen career.

University clearing

This year's decline in applicant numbers means there are already 30,000 courses available through clearing, including medicine and computer science at prestigious Russell Group institutions. Choosing a different but related degree can also launch your career.

Guy Longhurst, a property lawyer, hoped to go to Cambridge to study history, but after receiving a C and two Ds at A-level, he accepted a clearing place to take town planning at Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University. Now a managing partner and head of real estate at Ellisons Solicitors, he said: "Taking town planning undoubtedly sparked an interest in real estate that lasts to this day and led me to Ellisons. It's how you react to your results that's important."

See ucas.com/undergraduate/clearing-and-results-day/what-clearing

Scholarship support

A growing number of organisations are offering US-style scholarships to help students meet the cost of university study. Ranging from £5,000 to the full annual costs of fees and living expenses, the grants do not guarantee a job but usually provide internships and mentoring. The student finance site Blackbullion's annual National Scholarship Week highlights almost £1 million in funding, while companies in the most competitive fields are using scholarships to increase diverse hiring.



Adam Babiker, chief counsel, corporate, at Formula 1, set up the F1 Engineering Scholarships programme

FORMULA 1

Founded in 2021, the F1 Engineering Scholarships programme provides financial, academic and career support for ten students from under-represented backgrounds annually. The scheme was set up by Adam Babiker, chief counsel, corporate for F1, who explains: "The scholarship fully funds the students' studies and living expenses and

means that one of the blockers to social mobility — lack of finance — is removed, allowing the scholars to reach their full academic potential.”

Degree apprenticeships

One in six apprenticeship starts are now degree apprenticeships, blending debt-free Level 6 Bachelors or Level 7 Masters degree study with practical training. However, competition for these courses is as intensive as getting into Oxbridge.

See ucas.com/apprenticeships/degree-apprenticeships

Apprenticeships

Skipping university to head straight into the world of work is an increasingly popular option. Level 4 and 5 Higher apprenticeships are equivalent to a foundation degree and are offered by leading companies including GSK, Coca Cola and HSBC. Trainees can go on to take Level 6 and 7 degree apprenticeships.

See apprenticeships.gov.uk/

Retakes

Anecdotal evidence suggests around one-third of students gain results lower than expected in at least once subject. If you choose to resit your exams, you can study in college, online or at a specialist retakes college, but you will not be able to resit until the end of the next academic year.

Presentation is key to a good application

Scholarships, degree apprenticeships and clearing can all help with climbing the career ladder, but competition can be intense. Here’s how to best present your application.

- Push yourself to achieve the best you can academically. This doesn’t need to mean three A* but should be your own personal best.
- Convey that your education has not been limited to academic achievements. Highlight any volunteering, hobbies, part-time jobs and successful side hustles to show you are a well-rounded applicant.
- Understand why you want to work in a certain field. Identify a sector or career which really interests you and choose a course which links strongly to this.
- Present what you are aiming for as a passion, not just a path to a potential job.
- Be inquisitive and be prepared to challenge what you are told to gain more in-depth understanding.
- Try to gain practical work experience in a related field. This can be through work placements, part-time work or volunteering.

- Develop your presentation, communication and team-working skills. You'll need to communicate your ideas succinctly and effectively, if you want to influence people.
- Don't be afraid to apply. With the right research and preparation, you have as much chance as any other applicant in succeeding.

Scholarship puts Hannah in pole position

Hannah Msalila, an F1 engineering scholar, is studying aero mechanical engineering at the University of Strathclyde and receives full financial support for her degree fees and living expenses.

Hannah, 19, from Shetland, said: "I decided to apply for the scholarship as a challenge for myself and so I did not have to rely on my family as much for money.

"The scholarship has built my confidence and allowed me to meet and connect with so many different types of people. Being able to hear directly from people who work in motorsport is an invaluable experience.

"While there is no guaranteed job at the end, the work experience will reflect positively on students when applying for jobs after graduation. At the end of my degree, I hope to be in a position where I can give people who are in the same situation as me advice on how to pursue a career in engineering."

Are you in monk mode or on woliday?

- New research from employee rewards platform Rippl has revealed the latest workplace expressions. "Acting your wage" means putting in the appropriate amount of effort for the wage you earn, while a "woliday" is working on holiday. "Performance punishment" describes being overloaded with colleagues' work because you operate above expectations while "monk mode" is shutting out external distractions to optimise productivity. Chris Brown, Rippl's chief executive, said: "The world of HR moves incredibly quickly, bringing with it new viral terms and trends."

- The type of sport you prefer to play may influence your management style. The "Sport and Employability" study from EDHEC business school's NewGenTalent Centre suggests combat and adversarial sports promote critical thinking and resilience, while timed sports such as running develop autonomy, efficiency and reliability. Tennis was scored top for resilience, dancing for detail and football for collaboration. Geneviève Houriet Segard, director of the NewGenTalent Centre, said: "Sport seems to act as a catalyst for the development of management skills among young graduates."

- Mislabelling your CV could see jobseekers rejected from online job applications. With many organisations now using AI-powered Applicant Tracking System technology, which scans and ranks CVs based on how well they match a job description, jobseekers are being urged to name their CV using the format "Your Name — CV — Job Role . Kevin

Fitzgerald, managing director of Employment Hero, a platform that automates recruitment, HR, payroll and benefits, says: “It sounds simple, but a well-named file helps the AI systems quickly identify the candidate and position being applied for.”

● Despite increased demand for cost of living support, a third of UK companies are cautious about offering financial advice to their employees due to potential reputation risks. A new report from Close Brothers found just 12 per cent of companies offer full financial advice for all employees. Jeanette Makings, head of workplace financial wellbeing at Close Brothers, said: “All employees would benefit from this for all areas of personal finance; the need isn’t limited only to pensions or at retirement.”