

Business Recruitment

There's more than one route to work

Studying for a degree is a well-trodden path to a professional career, but there are alternatives, writes **Jane Hamilton**

Concerns about high fees, loan repayments and a reported 1.8 million graduates owing at least £50,000 in student debt has led to a fall in the number of 18-year-olds applying for university. Ucas figures show that only 41.9 per cent of 18-year-olds have applied for a university, down from 44.1 per cent in 2022. Research by Ipsos suggests a quarter of Britons no longer believe that going to university is worth it for young people, yet for many professional jobs, a degree remains a firm requirement and is still seen as a path to social mobility.

Here are five alternative options to secure your chosen career.

UNIVERSITY CLEARING

This year's fall in applicant numbers means there are 30,000 courses available through clearing, including medicine and computer science at Russell Group institutions.

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 Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh. 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

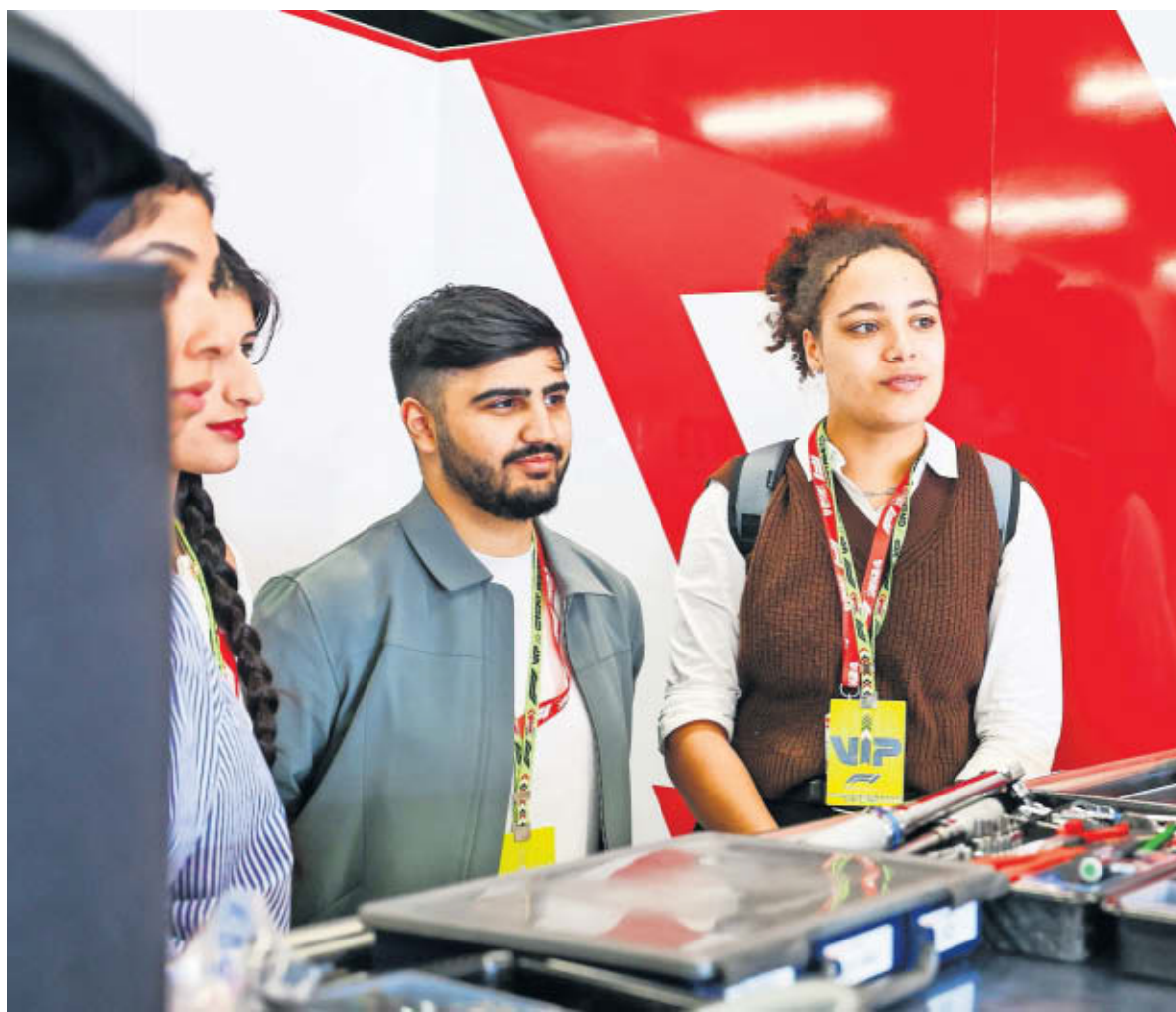
SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT

A number of organisations offer American-style scholarships to help students to 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 Blackbullions' annual National Scholarship Week highlights almost £1million in funding.

Founded in 2021, the Formula One Engineering Scholarships programme supports ten students from under-represented backgrounds annually. The scheme was set up by Adam Babiker, chief counsel, corporate for Formula One, who said: "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 potential."

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

One in six apprenticeship starts are now degree apprenticeships, blending debt-free Level 6 Bachelor or Level 7 Masters degree study with practical training.



Financial support is a winning formula

Case study

Hannah Msalila, a Formula One engineering scholar, is studying aero mechanical engineering at the University of Strathclyde and receives full financial support for her degree fees and living expenses. Msalila, 19, from Shetland, said: "I applied

for the scholarship as a challenge 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 motor sport 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."

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 that 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 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 teamworking skills. You 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

See ucas.com/apprenticeships/degree-apprenticeships

APPRENTICESHIPS

Level 4 and 5 Higher apprenticeships are equivalent to a foundation degree and are offered by 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 that about a third of students gain results lower than expected in at least one subject. If you choose to resit exams, you can study in college, online or at a retakes college, but you will not be able to resit until the end of the next academic year.

Six from the best

With the economy losing £57.2 billion annually because of the data skills gap, Steven Spier, vice-chancellor of Kingston University, is embedding "future skills" learning in every degree course. He shares how to prepare students for a digital-first world.



1 Focus on "human future-proofing". Employers will increasingly seek human skills, such as creativity and lateral thinking, that can't be easily replicated by technology

2 Adaptability is everything. Students today will have portfolio careers, doing jobs that don't yet exist, using tools unheard of today. Navigating that is a lifelong skill

3 Be curious and confident. In what will inevitably become more uncertain times, resilience will be crucial. Be bold, be inquisitive, be open to different options

4 Champion creativity and collaboration. A creative approach to problem-solving advances businesses. Innovate. Work closely with others

5 Adopt a global outlook. Technology doesn't recognise borders. Our differences add value. Broaden horizons

6 Be forward-thinking. Businesses need skills for innovation to drive economic growth. Despite this, employers say only 7 per cent of graduates are ready for an AI-first world, according to a YouGov survey

Appointment of the week

Programme director, Grenfell Site and Memorial

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is seeking a programme director for the Grenfell Site and Memorial. The successful applicant will play a crucial role delivering a memorial determined by the Grenfell bereaved, survivors and community.

Candidates must bring strategic vision, operational excellence and empathetic leadership, ensuring the programme is delivered with integrity, transparency and respect for the Grenfell community. The role includes ensuring the safe and secure management, operation and maintenance of the tower and site, leading delivery of the memorial project, providing assurance to the SRO, seniors, ministers and the IPA on delivery of the programme.

Candidates will need to be an experienced programme director capable of operating effectively in a high-profile, complex, political environment. Applications are particularly encouraged from those of an ethnic minority background and those with disabilities. Regular travel to London will be required.

Apply by August 18 at appointments.thetimes.com

Working week

Monk mode or holiday?

Research from Rippl, the employee rewards platform, has revealed the latest workplace expressions. "Acting your wage" means putting in the appropriate effort for the wage you earn, while a "holiday" 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.

Question of sport

The sport you play may influence your management style. The *Sport and Employability* study from EDHEC business school's NewGenTalent Centre suggests that 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.

Put your name forward

Mislabelling your CV could mean your application is rejected. With organisations now using AI-powered applicant tracking systems, which rank CVs on how they match a job description, jobseekers are urged to label CVs using the format: "Name — CV — Job Role." Kevin Fitzgerald, of Employment Hero, said "A well-named file helps the AI systems to quickly identify the candidate and position being applied for."

Financial advice for staff

Despite increased demand for cost of living support, a third of companies are cautious about offering financial advice to their employees because of potential reputation risks. A new report from Close Brothers said only 12 per cent of companies offered full financial advice for all staff. Jeanette Makings, head of workplace financial wellbeing at Close Brothers, said: "All employees would benefit from this for all areas of personal finance."