

# Future Prospects

## Going Beyond the Grades

Advice on landing that first job

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# About me

I am a qualified finance professional for nearly 20 years, and have worked for a number of national and international Companies. I have worked for the John Lewis Partnership over the past 8 years in a variety of commercial and financial roles. **Alongside my day job, I lead our finance apprentice scheme (previously the graduate scheme), which successfully recruits a diverse range of talented individuals.**

Away from Work, I like to support the local community – I am a scout leader, a treasurer for the local school and I was a rugby coach for a year with the Chobham minis (a long time ago now). I took up playing tennis as my son was getting too good, and I didn't want him being better than me before he became a teenager. I also play football twice a week with a bunch of local Dads and like to spend as much time as possible with my family.



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# Intro

School Grades and University Degrees **are very important.**

They will get you an interview.

They will **not** however get you the job



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# Grade Inflation- some headlines

'We've been completely screwed over': The A-level grade inflation scandal (Telegraph)

UK Probes Grade Inflation After 'Sharp Increase' in Top Degrees at Universities (Bloomberg) - The education watchdog has launched an investigation into grade inflation

The proportion of students in England awarded first-class degrees continues to increase - rising by 80% since 2010-11, the university watchdog says. The University of Surrey increased its proportion awarded first-class degrees from 23% to 47% of students. (BBC)

"Today's figures are disappointing and risk compromising the public trust in the high standards of our universities," he said

A-levels: Regional inequalities widen as England reverses grade inflation



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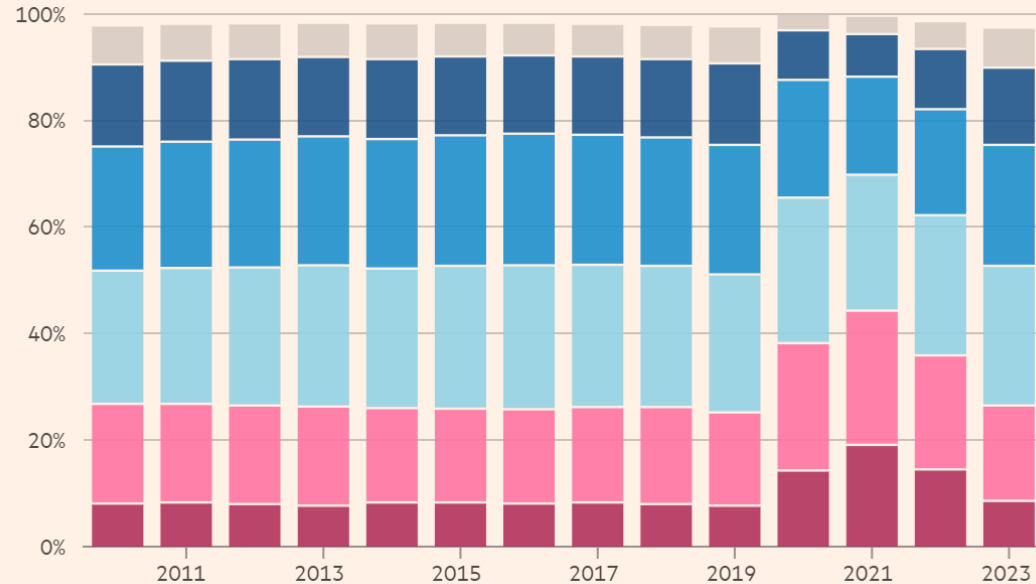
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# A- Level Grades- the stats

## A-levels return to pre-pandemic grading standards

% of entries in England across all subjects

■ A\* ■ A ■ B ■ C ■ D ■ E



It becomes trickier to identify top talent especially comparing A-level results from COVID years vs non COVID years



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# Degree Grade Inflation- the stats

**Table 1: Degree classifications for academic years 2010-11 and 2018-19 to 2021-22**

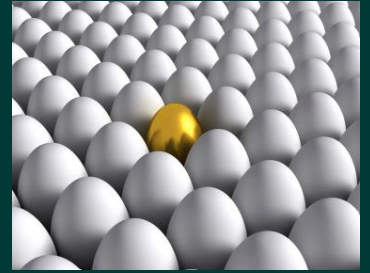
| Degree classification           | 2010-11 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Number</b>                   |         |         |         |         |         |
| First                           | 34,845  | 77,230  | 93,870  | 100,850 | 85,285  |
| Upper second                    | 114,125 | 130,115 | 125,085 | 125,000 | 121,680 |
| First and upper second combined | 148,965 | 207,345 | 218,955 | 225,850 | 206,965 |
| Other classifications           | 75,295  | 58,245  | 45,105  | 44,095  | 53,145  |
| Total                           | 224,265 | 265,590 | 264,060 | 269,945 | 260,110 |
| <b>Proportions</b>              |         |         |         |         |         |
| First                           | 15.5%   | 29.1%   | 35.5%   | 37.4%   | 32.8%   |
| Upper second                    | 50.9%   | 49.0%   | 47.4%   | 46.3%   | 46.8%   |
| First and upper second combined | 66.4%   | 78.1%   | 82.9%   | 83.7%   | 79.6%   |
| Other classifications           | 33.6%   | 21.9%   | 17.1%   | 16.3%   | 20.4%   |

It becomes trickier to identify top talent especially comparing Degree results from COVID years vs non COVID years.

Now around 80% of all degrees are at least a 2:1



# So how do you differentiate yourself?



1. Develop soft skills (personality traits) and take those opportunities presented to you
2. Have an interest in the world

‘Gordons is the perfect place to develop those skills’



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# I. Developing soft skills - a few basic pointers

**Leadership**- try to recognise those skills you are developing- skills in sports, cadets, debating, presenting, playing computer games online with mates. (you don't have to be the alpha male)

**Resilience**- have you worked hard to achieve something despite some adversity- a musical instrument grade, a sporting achievement, a personal achievement? How did you overcome the challenges?

**Empathy**- Ask someone how they are- ask open questions, see things from their point of view

Eye contact and a good handshake will get you far

Let your personality shine through\*, but remember your audience

There will be some students out there who struggle with **anxiety** or **lack confidence**. By developing the skills above it will go some way to mitigate that anxiety, but be aware additional support may be required. Don't wait until the interview.



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# 2. Have an interest in the world

This will help in any role you go into. An easy one is to scan the BBC business headlines every now and then, and have an opinion on them. Chat to your parents about them occasionally. Challenge their opinion. Think about how the news impacts the role you are going for.

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**Pay matches price rises even as unemployment climbs**  
Wages are no longer being squeezed by inflation, but there are signs the jobs market is beginning to turn.  
3m | Business

- What is the state pension and the triple lock?
- State pension set to rise by 8.5% in April

**State pension set to rise by 8.5% in April**  
It will be the second significant rise in the state pension in two years, but could pull more into paying tax.  
3h | Business

**Biggest UK pub chain to charge more at peak hours**  
Stonegate, which owns Slug & Lettuce and Yates's bars, will add about 20p to a pint during busy periods.  
1h | Business

**Shoptlifting an epidemic, says John Lewis boss**  
Dame Sharon White tells the BBC that shop workers are having to put up with abuse and attacks.  
28m | Business

**What is the state pension and the triple lock?**  
A second significant rise in the state pension is expected in April.

**Robots are trained to**

**Cyber-attack hits casino giant MGM's slot machines**  
Customers also report problems with slot machines.



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# Gordons is the perfect place to develop your skills

(Leadership, resilience, empathy)

- Inter House competitions (debating, cooking, sports)
- Parade
- Cadets, DoE
- P7 activities- the list here is endless- try get bath bomb making into an interview question
- Trips away –they all look epic!
- Start thinking about all of these skills you have developed, and make a note of them all.
- Think about how you can further develop skills



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# What work experience would help students within retail?

My focus is less on the type of work experience you did, but about **what you have learnt from that experience**. What skills have you developed, and how can you apply that to the job you are applying for?

I am not expecting you to have any prior experience of the role. I am looking for potential, not the finished product. Think carefully about your work experience, but don't limit yourself to doing something you have to do, rather than what you want to do. You are at the start of your journey. Be proactive and seek out those opportunities.

**However**, if your work experience is directly related to the role, then take advantage of it and chuck it right at the top of your CV.



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# What makes someone stand out on CV?

This is so tough to answer- most CV's today look really strong- there is so much support out there. What I would say though is to put the important bits at the top half of the first page - in your opening statement. We had over 500 applicants in our last apprentice round.

- If certain grades are needed for the role eg 2:1 from uni, then put that right at the top so I don't have to look for it. The same goes for any essential experience
- Put in anything you are proud of near the top- and say why you are proud. Celebrate your success
- Put in anything related to the job near the top- eg work experience, skills learnt, interests etc.
- Keep it simple and easy for me to read- don't use jargon/acronyms
- Put in contact info (including linkedin)- I will follow you!



So what type of person is  
John Lewis looking to hire?



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# The interview - a few sample questions.

Can you talk me through some of the **current challenges** facing the John Lewis Partnership?

Talk me through the steps **you** have taken when working in a team to deliver a project/task/goal successfully



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# The interview - a few tips in advance.

- Ask the Recruiter about the interview format -how many questions, how are the questions scored etc. Is it telephone or in person. How smart should I go?
- Research the company based on the role you are applying for
- Social Media- they will look at you, so please look at them. Like their stuff!
- Be prepared- look at interview techniques- both Individual (**STAR technique**) and Group exercises (**be inclusive**).
- Have some questions prepared to ask eg what do you feel are the main values a person needs to have to be successful?

It is very challenging to land that first apprentice or graduate role- competition is really fierce- there just are not enough jobs going round. Be mindful of that. Be resilient, and be the best version of yourself that you can be.



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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you.

Now it is your time to talk to me and each other



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