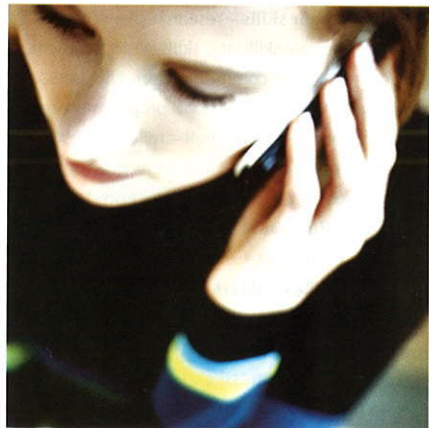


What to do with a 2:2

In an ideal world we would all get a First, follow our career plans to the page and find a job before our degree certificate had landed on the doormat. In reality, graduation can throw up all kinds of unexpected surprises and leave you feeling like everything is going wrong. To help turn things round, Finalist investigates two of the most common bumps in the road and finds out what you can do to get back on track.



Grade expectations

You've wrestled with finals, jumped through the hoops of assessment and are finally ready to reap the rewards of your hard-earned final grade. But then, shock horror, you tear open the results envelope to find a Desmond (2:2) staring right back at you. The end of the world? We think not.

While it is an unavoidable fact that many blue chip graduate training schemes do only accept applications from candidates with a 2:1 or above, that's not the cue to put your career plans on the backburner. As Sarah Evans, Director of Client Services at Discovery Recruitment and Training, explains:

'I would say a 2:1 is important but it isn't imperative. It's not absolutely essential. There are other ways of getting a good graduate job. Research the market that you

want to go into, speak to companies and find out what else you would need to do. Will work experience help you get onto a graduate scheme? Perhaps there are even different roles within the business that you could go into to take a different angle in.'

It's also worth exploring vacancies with smaller organisations who offer good graduate opportunities but who may not be quite as specific about the degree classification held by candidates.

If you do want to apply to the big graduate schemes without a 2:1, one hurdle you may face is the large number of online application forms which screen applicants by degree classification at the first stage of the online process. 'What I would always recommend doing in that situation is contacting the graduate recruitment department and making them aware of why you are still interested in applying for the role,' says Sarah. 'And if you do have any extenuating circumstances it's always just worth making people aware of them.'

TURNING IT AROUND The most important thing to remember if you are disappointed with your result is that there are plenty of avenues open to you. In many cases it's just a matter of maximising the opportunities that you are presented with in order to shape your own success, as the following two graduates discovered:

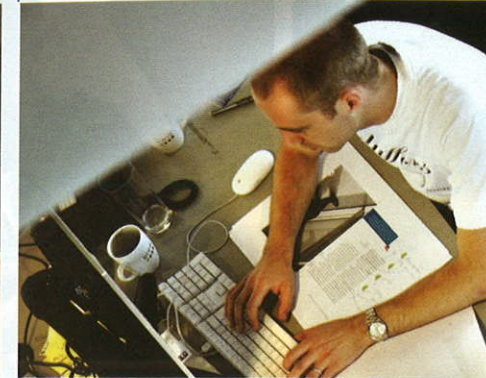
CARA WILLIAMS After graduating with a 2:2 in Chemistry with Medicinal Chemistry

from Warwick University Cara was worried she wouldn't find a position within the science sector. However, her decision to enrol on a Masters programme after graduation has led her to a PhD in the sector researching dentinal hypersensitivity funded by GlaxoSmithKline.

'Towards the end of my undergraduate degree I thought I was done with chemistry for good. Everything I was interested in seemed to require a 2:1; most schemes actively discouraged applications if you had less than that. Ironically I couldn't apply for the GlaxoSmithKline graduate scheme because of my 2:2 but now I'm carrying out research for them!'

DAVID SHRIGLEY After graduating from the Glasgow School of Art with a 2:2 in Fine Art in 1991, artist David Shrigley self-published a number of books to get started in the art world. Fifteen years later, he exhibits worldwide and his cartoons are regularly featured in newspapers throughout the world.

'Getting a 2:2 made me worry about not being accepted into the art world. But I soon realised that art school and the art world are two very different places with very different opinions. Grades do not matter except on the day that they give them out. People never ask you what degree mark you got. The only thing that's important in the art world is the quality of your work.'



Bumps in the road are a fact of life. You may run, you may even try to hide but eventually, at some unavoidable point or another, something will go wrong. Unfortunately for finalists, graduation and the quest for the perfect job are no exceptions to this rule.

Accepting rejection

It's horrible, it's painful and it is going to happen. Yes, folks, we're talking about rejection. Try as you might to avoid hearing 'I'm sorry you have not been successful on this occasion', it's likely that sometime soon a letter will drop through your letterbox saying just that.

As hard as it may be to brush off a wave of rejection, it's important not to take it to heart. As Simon Kent, author of *What Next After University*, explains: 'Graduates can't afford to take rejection personally because it's going to happen – not just now but throughout their working life. Take it personally and you could put yourself in an eternally negative frame of mind. It's far better to just say "oh well, it didn't work out this time" and move on to the next, better, more appropriate opportunity.'

When faced with rejection it's important to remember that in many cases the decision is not as personal as it might feel. Employers will make their final selection based on a wide set of criteria. The culture of the organisation and the skills and experience of other applicants will all come into consideration and are factors which are essentially out of your hands. As Simon explains, 'If you don't get a job it may have nothing to do with how good or bad you are and everything to do with what that particular employer is looking for at that particular time.'

One way to deal with rejection is to seek some constructive feedback in order to increase your chances of success in future applications. Mock interviews and application-checking services provided by university careers services are also an

invaluable resource for feedback. 'My gut feeling is that if you apply to twelve jobs and aren't even short-listed, it might be time to rethink your application strategy,' says Carl Gilleard, chief executive of the Association of Graduate Recruiters. 'If you're being continually rejected there does come a point where you probably need to consider whether you're marketing yourself as well as you could. Find someone who knows you well enough to appreciate your strengths, and have them look through your CV, and tell you how you're coming across.'

Once you have taken on board any feedback you have received it is vital that you stay focused. Though it may be hard to resist the temptation to apply for each and every vacancy that comes your way, the generalist approach will limit your chances of success.

'Employment possibilities involve a lot of difficult decisions, and many graduates struggle to decide what to apply for,' explains Carl. 'Unfortunately, if you're applying in a haphazard way your level of rejections is going to be higher. In this case it may be more sensible to go back to your careers service and ask for advice to enable you to conduct a job search in a more focused way.'

So avoid the 'one application form fits all' mentality and carefully target each and every application to the specific vacancy you are applying for. Though this will increase the amount of time you have to spend on each form, targeted applications will ultimately reduce the time it takes to secure that all-important job offer.

Zannah Ingraham