

# ‘Be flexible, imaginative and brave’: experts give career advice for an AI world

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Teenagers deciding their future this year have a lot to contend with. In England, those who sat their A-levels suffered the biggest results drop on record while the top grades in GCSEs also fell. And now they face the question: will the career I choose to pursue even exist by the time I enter the workforce? Artificial intelligence has hit the mainstream with the popularity of generative AI programmes driven by large language models such as ChatGPT. Businesses are increasingly adopting the technology. A study, which was published last week by the cybersecurity firm Kaspersky, suggests 57% of workers are using such tools to save time in the office, especially for summarising meeting notes and long documents. Yet the automation of such tasks also means the chance to eliminate or reduce certain roles, not just in administration, but across many fields as the technology becomes more sophisticated. According to a survey of professionals by Thomson Reuters published last week, 67% of respondents believe AI will have a great impact on their profession in the next five years, while more than half predict the technology will create new career paths. So exactly what are those new professional opportunities that the next generation of workers should be trying to pursue? ‘It’s all being disrupted’ “There is no such thing as a future-proof career anymore,” says Dr Andrew Rogoyski, the director of innovation and partnerships at the Surrey Institute for People-Centred Artificial Intelligence at the University of Surrey. “AI and other forms of automation have been disrupting and changing careers for years now and generative AI is the latest technology encroaching on careers that we previously thought safe from technological advances – it’s all being disrupted by AI.” According to Rogoyski, subjects such as science, engineering and cyber-security will continue to be in demand, despite AI assistive technologies that may be used in the field. Similarly, careers in healthcare that involve human-to-human interaction: nursing, social care and medicine for example. “I would advise students to become AI literate, you don’t have to be coding AI software but you will probably be using AI tools in your future career so get a head start. Careers may always evolve, change and dissolve, my advice to students is to be flexible, imaginative and brave,” Rogoyski says. James Knightley, the chief international economist at the Dutch banking group ING, doubts “very much that any career will be untouched by AI”. He suggests one safe bet is to become a skilled artisan, for example learning high-end carpentry. ‘Learning the machine’ One area that looks in real trouble is the creative sector, with Rogoyski saying roles such copywriting and graphic design could be gradually outsourced to AI. The sector has struggled with the advancement of generative AI tools: from writers striking in Hollywood against such tools being used to produce scripts and story ideas, to film-makers using image generators in their work such as DALL-E 2. But Prof Sunil Manghani at Winchester School of Art is encouraging his students to get acquainted with the technology. He has started bringing AI

into sessions with students, for example, in a project with Tate Britain: "One of the phrases we've found ourselves using is 'learning the machine'," Manghani says. AI can also make the industry more accessible, says Ed D'Souza, who is also a professor at Winchester. "It's a challenge to education: do you need to go to an art or design school to enter into parts of the industry? The good thing is that AI and the potential of using this for people without those skills is that they can learn through the machine, they can enter the industry at different points." The great leveller Kriti Sharma, the chief product officer for legal technology at Thomson Reuters, says professional workspaces are being radically redesigned by AI, with those changes already noticeable in legal and tax work. "We are seeing AI systems and solutions where you can create a first draft of a legal document within minutes, which would previously take hours and days," she says. "That's revolutionary because that means you can have the machine do the legwork while you focus on improving and enhancing it. People trained in using AI are therefore going to be at a significant advantage to those who are not. "We clearly have a skills shortage in many professions and the opportunity AI could open to have people from many different backgrounds enter the world of professional work without necessarily having to have the same qualifications. "If we can tap into it in the right way by investing in education and training, it really opens up the ecosystem. AI can be a great leveller." Another area of opportunity is health. Owen Addison, a professor of oral rehabilitation at King's College London, welcomes AI as a potential safety net for diagnosticians in the future. "I actually see AI as being likely to empower dentists to be better diagnosticians and to be able to provide preventative care and monitoring better with such support systems in place," he says. "But the surgical part of the role will remain something that requires highly skilled personnel to do and it's not something that's going to be quickly removed."