

'I expect to get an A': How the *FT* writers thought they would do – how they actually did.

James Blitz, Chris Giles, Lucy Kellaway and John Lloyd *Financial Times*

Candidate name: James Blitz

CANDIDATE OCCUPATION: political editor, *FT*

PAPER: Government of the UK (AS-level Politics)

CANDIDATE INPUT: no preparation; one apple, one Food Doctor energy bar

OUTPUT: 11 pages of barely legible, multicoloured scrawl

PREDICTION: "I expect to get an A. I think the questions were not difficult for a political correspondent, and dare I say they were a cinch for someone who did the three-hour Oxford M. Phil paper on Marxist Leninist social and economic theory."

RESULT: Grade C (63 out of 100)

MARKER'S COMMENTS: "The candidate clearly has a good understanding of contemporary government and politics but lacks the detailed knowledge and technique required to access the higher levels of the assessment matrix at A-level. The legibility of the answers is an issue: marks are awarded for communication and significant parts of the script, particularly towards the end, are indecipherable."

Candidate name: Christopher Giles

CANDIDATE OCCUPATION: economics editor, *FT*

PAPER: The National and International Economy (AS-level Economics)

CANDIDATE INPUT: previous papers, specimen answers and mark scheme researched; one apple and one tuna sandwich consumed

OUTPUT: six pages of meticulously completed answers with minimal crossing out

PREDICTION: "I will not be able to hold my head up high if I do not get an A. I mean if I do not know 'the economic consequences of inflation' – my essay question – I should not be in the job I am."

RESULT: Grade A (39 out of 45)

MARKER'S COMMENTS: "A strong performance. The candidate answered questions directly, paid attention to the directive words and applied relevant macroeconomic terms and concepts. On a few of the questions, however, he could have explained the points he made rather more fully and analytically."

Candidate name: Lucy Kellaway

CANDIDATE OCCUPATION: work columnist, *FT*, and author of *Who Moved My BlackBerry?*

PAPER: Businesses, Their Objectives and Environment (AS-level Business Studies)

CANDIDATE INPUT: perusal of a one-page brief on a business case study; one apple and one wholenut chocolate bar consumed

OUTPUT: six pages of neat script and concise answers, one question attempted and then crossed out

PREDICTION: "I think I've got a C. If I get less than that I'll be ashamed and outraged, as in the end I did manage to think of something to say and didn't leave anything out."

RESULT: Grade B (31 out of 45)

MARKER'S COMMENTS: "The candidate demonstrated a sound understanding of business issues on this paper in almost every question but would have scored more highly if the 'trigger' words in the question had been used as a guide as to how to approach the answer."

Candidate name: John Lloyd

CANDIDATE OCCUPATION: editor, *FT Magazine*, and author of *What the Media are Doing to our Politics*.

PAPER: Media Issues and Debates (A-level Media Studies)

CANDIDATE INPUT: Sample exam paper read, children were asked for help but this was not provided; one apple and one egg sandwich consumed

OUTPUT: 13½ densely covered pages of essay questions

PREDICTION: "If there is any justice in the world I should get an A star. I was interested at how connected to current issues the media studies paper was – and how much it demanded in terms of thought."

RESULT: Grade A (60 out of 60)

MARKER'S COMMENTS: "There could be an argument for deducting marks on the basis of omissions. But to do so would be churlish in view of the quality of the answers in other respects. Faced with these answers in the exam season, the candidate would receive maximum marks in each case."

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Financial Times (London, England)

FT Weekend, p. 2

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