



## FORMER STUDENT JOINS HARRODS SCHOOL LEAVERS APPRENTICESHIP

One of our students has recently joined Harrods as part of an eighteen-month apprenticeship-backed programme for school leavers giving a fantastic insight into the luxury retail industry. Originally a Durham Gilesgate student, Damien Newton returned to Durham Sixth Form Centre after his GCSEs to complete his studies, gaining the top grades of three Distinction\* grades in BTECs in Business, Applied Law and Applied Science.

During his final year with us, Damien started searching for apprenticeships as he said "I knew that University wasn't for me as I am more of a practical learner. I knew I needed on the job training, as that is the best way I learn and develop." He worked closely with Ms Rayner, our CEIAG Manager for Vocational Education, to prepare a strong CV and answer career motivation questions for his application to Harrods Retail Academy. From there, Damien went through a rigorous selection

process, which included a series of online tests, digital interviews and an assessment day where he had to do a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of a department within Harrods and present and discuss it with key personnel. Throughout this challenging process, Damien was able to successfully demonstrate his passion for customer service and his enthusiasm for a career in retail.

Damien joined Harrods as a permanent Sales Associate in September and will be undertaking six-month placements across Harrod's high profile international fashion area, their world-famous Food Halls and Home department in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse retail luxury market. In addition to on-the-job learning in each placement, the Retail Academy members attend multiple guest speaker seminars and meet with senior stakeholders to discuss wider business developments. Members also study six core

modules covering a wide breadth of retail fundamentals from commercial finance to marketing and communications, in order to develop the technical and behavioural skills required by retail specialists.

In his first placement in the Home department in the run-up to Christmas, Damien was commended on LinkedIn by the General Sales Manager - Furniture, James Morgan, who singled Damien out for praise for his presentation skills during the Harrods Furniture Christmas Forum. Damien comments "I have learned so much already, especially the behind the scenes running of the business. It has given me such a wide insight into how a business works and how they survive with various external changing factors."

We are thrilled to hear of Damien's fantastic start at Harrods and we wish him continued success for the remainder of his time with the Retail Academy.



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