Graduate recruitment explained

What are the main types of graduate job?

**Graduate schemes / programme**

- A job in a company that usually recruits several graduates annually in a specific cycle/timeframe (usually a large company).
- Usually include banks, financial companies, retail, government agencies, law firms, local authorities, engineering, utility companies etc.
- Undergo training programme, possibly with professional qualification.
- Can be specific (e.g. marketing, IT, finance, buying etc.) or allow you to work within different career areas. This can be helpful if you haven’t decided about the type of role you would like to do!
- Many require full UK mobility but others will only expect mobility within a defined area e.g. North West England, or within a defined division of 50 stores.
- High starting salaries and/or good promotion prospects; expect strong competition.

These schemes/programmes typically begin recruitment up to a year in advance; multiple application/interview stages are the norm, so be sure to do plenty of research – with our help – before completing your application.

Larger employers with formal graduate schemes usually have an annual recruitment process with deadlines between October and February for their graduate schemes which start the following summer/ autumn. Other recruit throughout the year. Be aware some schemes may close if employers make enough job offers to successful applicants. Read about the *graduate recruitment cycle* below.

**Entry level/ other graduate jobs**

Graduate schemes don’t suit everybody. Some graduates prefer to start their working life with a smaller company which may have a different working culture. Alternatively, you may not meet the requirements for graduate schemes or there are simply not many suitable schemes available in the job area that you wish to go into. If you want to go into a career area where there are not a lot of graduate schemes on offer, this does not mean that there will not be job opportunities for you but it may be that you will need to take a different, more creative approach to your job search.

- The majority of graduates find work in these types of jobs.
- Could be with smaller company or large recruiter who recruits small numbers.
- Usually has specific job title e.g. Marketing Executive, Web Developer, Account Manager.
- Roles in some sectors are often 'entry level' e.g. media, culture, charity, leisure.
- Can be less specific on minimum degree classification and minimum UCAS points.

Such opportunities are likely to be less widely advertised so you may need to think more creatively in your job search. Smaller or medium sized companies will typically recruit when it is necessary to replace someone or for a new position. Read about the *graduate recruitment cycle* below.

Do all graduates do these types of job straight after graduation? No. Some will:

- Continue in their part-time jobs and gain further skills through work experience and voluntary work.
- Do internships or voluntary programmes.
- Go on to further study at postgraduate, professional or continuing education (part-time/evening) level.
- Start work at non-graduate level and move to graduate level role after gaining enough experience.
- Travel and/or work abroad.

**Who employs graduates in the UK?**

Graduate recruitment in the UK varies amongst small and medium sized businesses which employ fewer than 250 people (SMEs) and larger employers. SMEs and large employers recruit in different ways so it is important to recognise what vacancy sources are available to you.
99% of businesses in the UK are small or medium sized. SMEs often hire graduates and more are recruiting as time goes on. The smaller size of these businesses means that your presence can be highly valued. Without the large hierarchy of a major corporation constricting your position, you could find yourself working alongside more senior staff very early in your career. Compared to graduate schemes salaries in SMEs may be lower and there may be a lack of formal career path.

Employers will be part of three main employment sectors in the UK:

- The **private** sector – privately/shareholder owned companies and limited liability partnerships like Rolls Royce, Jaguar LandRover, Unilever, Deloitte – range from large multinationals to SMEs.
- The **public** sector – national and local government, the Civil Service, the National Health Service.
- The ‘**third**’ sector – charities, ‘not for profit’ organisations and non-governmental organisations.

### The graduate recruitment cycle

Larger employers with formal graduate schemes usually have an annual recruitment process with deadlines between October and February for their graduate schemes which start the following summer/autumn. Some employers have ‘ongoing’ or ‘open’ recruitment processes meaning they take applications year round. Employers offering graduate schemes are very active on campus during the autumn and spring terms.

Be aware some schemes may close if employers make enough job offers to successful applicants. It is possible to apply for graduate schemes after you graduate but you may have to wait a year before you start the scheme. Examples of career areas with early applications include:

- Management training schemes – usually before Christmas e.g. engineering, law, science.
- Advertising, PR, marketing, accounting, finance etc.
- Public sector – Civil Service Fast Stream, NHS Management Scheme, NGDP.
Smaller or medium sized companies will often be more flexible in the way they recruit and will typically recruit when it is necessary to replace someone or for a new position. The smaller company process is much simpler and you can apply much later (sometimes after final exams).

Some employers (regardless of their size) won’t advertise so contact them directly. Learn more about making speculative applications. Others will use recruitment agencies or consultants to recruit on their behalf. Reputable agencies should be registered with the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC). It has a find a consultancy database by either type of job or town. Once registered stay in touch with them on a regular basis so they remember you and offer you work. We produce a list of recruitment agencies in the Merseyside area looking for students to fill their opportunities.

If you are an international student considering the Tier 2 visa route to work in the UK, the largest graduate recruiters who take on hundreds of graduates annually will be more likely to process Tier 2 visas.

Graduate to Merseyside helps graduates find paid work experience and jobs and careers in SMEs throughout Merseyside and wider region. These opportunities are managed and supported by Careers & Employability staff and come from a wide variety of sectors and industries. Registered job seekers receive weekly updates with all current opportunities. Register towards the end of your final year.

What will recruiters look for?

Most employers will set requirements for the post in terms of qualifications, skills and experience.

- Most employers (around 60%) will accept any degree discipline.
- Some will ask for specific degree subjects or specific A level subjects.
- Some (usually large) recruiters will ask for specific degree classification or specific A level grade.
- Some will ask for relevant work experience but…
- All will ask for relevant employability skills.

Many employers have a certain skills set in mind and it is important that you are able to give evidence of how you match the require skills profile both in your application and at interview. Types of qualifications are important for some jobs, although for many graduate jobs, the degree does not need to be in a specific discipline as the employer will not require specific subject knowledge. Read our leaflet How to develop & demonstrate the skills recruiters look for.

What is the selection process?

Selection processes for many graduate schemes can start with a telephone interview, progress to a face-to-face interview and in some cases move on to an assessment centre. For entry level or other graduate jobs you may have similar processes or just a written application followed by an interview. We offer advice on all these stages:

- Application form (usually online) – most common for large employers… or a CV and covering letter.
- Interview (telephone, video or in person). You may have more than one.
- Psychometric, personality or aptitude tests – used mainly by larger employers.
- Assessment centres (group exercises, presentations).

How employers will “test” your skills

Most jobs have a person specification that lists the skills required for the job. Graduates are selected through:

- Competency based application forms - enables the employer to compare candidates’ answers on skills.
- CVs and LinkedIn - enables the employer to see your relevant skills.
- Psychometric tests/Situational judgement tests - verbal, numerical or problem solving tests/assembling how you react in certain work related situations.
Competency based interviews - enables the employer to compare answers from candidates and see your personal qualities and suitability for role.

**Where are graduate schemes and entry level jobs advertised?**

There are lots of places to look for up-to-date opportunities. Increase your chances of success by using a variety of different approaches in your job search. Find links and resources on our website.

Remember:

- Be organised – set time aside for your career planning.
- Find the best vacancy sources for your career aims.
- Don't rule yourself out of the job – competition is just numbers – it’s quality that matters.
- Use the Careers & Employability Service as many times as you need.
- Research different careers and what recruiters require from applicants.
- Apply early for graduate training schemes.
- Apply well.

Careers & Employability Service

Tel: 0151 794 4647 | careers@liverpool.ac.uk | www.liverpool.ac.uk/careers | Twitter/Facebook: livunicareers

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