



Press Release *Strictly embargoed until 00.01hrs Tuesday 22nd May 2012*

New survey of final year university students reveals an unprecedented race for this year's graduate jobs

A major new survey of more than 17,000 university undergraduates from the 'Class of 2012', to be published on **Tuesday 22nd May 2012**, shows that final year students leaving Britain's leading universities this summer have made a record number of applications to employers and began looking for graduate jobs earlier than ever.

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2012 was conducted by **High Fliers Research**, the independent research company that specialises in student and graduate research. The survey was based on face-to-face interviews with **17,737 final year students** from thirty key universities, completed in March. This sample includes more than a **fifth** of the finalists due to graduate from these universities this summer.

The research confirms that a significantly higher proportion of this year's finalists are hoping to go straight into work after university and that the number of final year students planning to take time-off or go travelling for a gap year is at an all-time low.

The survey also shows that more than a third of students started researching their career options in the first year of their studies and that over two-fifths of finalists made job applications to graduate employers at least 12 months before leaving university.

The key findings from **The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2012** about the 'Class of 2012' are:

- For the second year running, the percentage of final year students expecting to join the graduate job market after university has increased noticeably. **42%** of finalists – the highest proportion for twelve years – believed they would either **start a graduate job** or be **looking for a graduate job** after university, compared with 40% in 2011 and 36% in both 2010 and 2009.
- **Postgraduate study** is a popular alternative to employment with 25% of final year students hoping to go on to further study, but the number of students numbers planning to **take time off or go travelling** after university has dropped to its lowest level ever – just 12% of finalists intend to have a break after their studies.
- Students' **confidence in the graduate job market** has dipped again, with an increased proportion of finalists describing the employment prospects for university-leavers as 'limited'.
- A **record 42%** of finalists made job applications to graduate employers almost a year before graduation – applying for graduate vacancies in September or October at the very beginning of their final year at university. This compares with 37% who applied early in 2011, 31% in 2009, 28% in 2006 and 25% in 2001.

- In total, 61% of finalists had made graduate job applications by the time the survey took place in March, a compared with the 59% who had applied by the same point last year and 55% in 2010. The average number of graduate job applications made by finalists has increased too, from 5.7 applications per student in 2009-2010 and 6.8 applications per student in 2010-2011, to a record **6.9 applications per student** this year.
- Together, these results account for an unprecedented **40% rise** in the overall volume of graduate job applications, compared with two years ago. This means that students at the thirty universities included in the survey have made an estimated **360,000 job applications** this year, compared with 343,000 in 2011, 257,000 in 2010, 244,000 in 2008, 215,000 in 2006 and 200,000 in 2004.
- For the first time since 2002, **marketing** is the most popular destination for new graduates, ahead of teaching, the media, charity or voluntary work, and consulting. Applications for graduate jobs in **investment banking** have returned to their highest level since 2008.
- Fewer finalists have applied for graduate positions in **engineering, law** and the **Armed Forces**, whilst the number of graduate job hunters keen to work for the **Government** or elsewhere in the **public sector** has now dropped by more than a fifth over the last two years.
- Expected **graduate starting salaries** have stalled at an average of **£22,600**, the same level that was recorded in the 2011 survey. After five years in work, today's graduates expect to be earning an average of **£39,900** and a sixth of this year's university-leavers believe their salary will be **£100,000 or more** by the age of 30.
- **London** is again the **preferred employment destination** for finalists and a record 49% of student job hunters hoped to work in the capital after graduation. London remains the first choice at 25 out of the 30 universities included in the survey but finalists at the other universities – Queen's University Belfast, Glasgow, Strathclyde, Lancaster and Liverpool – aspired instead to work within the region in which they'd been studying.
- The majority of students are **very positive about their time at university**, their choice of institution and the course they've studied. Fewer are certain that they've developed the right skills for employment or that being at university has prepared them adequately for the working world.

Managing director of High Fliers Research, **Martin Birchall** commented:

“Our latest research shows just how hard today's university students are working to get a graduate job at the end of their degree. The proportion of final year students planning to take time-off or go travelling after their studies is at an all-time low and record numbers of students are now opting to research their career options in their first or second year at university, rather than leaving job hunting until the final six months before graduation.

Just two years ago, during the worst of the recession, many of the country's brightest university-leavers opted out of job hunting altogether and instead enrolled for further study or took a gap year, in the hope that employment prospects might be better when they returned. So whilst the 'Class of 2012' may not be any more optimistic about the graduate employment market than their predecessors, those leaving university this summer have taken an especially pro-active approach to the challenges of finding a graduate job.”

Notes to Editors:

1. *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* has been produced annually since 1995 by **High Fliers Research**, an independent research company which specialises in researching graduate recruitment at UK universities. The company also conducts regular surveys of the leading graduate employers, recording the latest starting salaries, graduate vacancy levels and recruitment practices.
2. The **thirty universities** included in the survey in 2012 were: Aston, Bath, Belfast Queen's University, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, London Imperial College, London King's College, London School of Economics, London University College, Loughborough, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Sheffield, Southampton, St Andrews, Strathclyde, Warwick and York.
3. The **graduate employers** who funded the research programme in 2011-2012 are: Accenture, Aldi, Apple, BAE Systems, Balfour Beatty, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Barclays, Barclays Capital, Barclays Wealth, Barclays Corporate, BDO, Bloomberg, BNP Paribas, The Body Shop, BP, British Sugar, Cancer Research UK, Citi, Credit Suisse, Danone, Deloitte, Dstl, dunnhumby, E.ON, Ernst & Young, ExxonMobil, European Commission, Fidelity Worldwide Investment, Grant Thornton, GlaxoSmithKline, HSBC, IBM, Jaguar Land Rover, J.P. Morgan, KPMG, Lidl, Lloyds Banking Group, Mars, Microsoft, Morgan Stanley, Network Rail, NHS, npower, nucleargraduates, PwC, RBS Group, Rolls-Royce, The Royal Navy, Sainsbury's, Shell, Siemens, Sky, Standard Life, Tata Steel, Teach First, Tesco, Training & Development Agency for Schools (TDA), Transport for London, Thales and Unilever, plus ACCA, CIMA and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales.
4. **Martin Birchall**, Managing Director of High Fliers Research is available for interview.
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