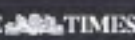


Top 100 Graduate Employers 2015-2016



THE  TIMES
TOP 100
GRADUATE EMPLOYERS

Top 100 Graduate Employers

Record number of job vacancies up for grabs

A total of 22,300 positions are being offered by the top 100 firms, reports **Martin Birchall**

This year marks a major milestone for *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers. The 2015 edition, published today, includes the one millionth copy printed since the guide to the UK's leading graduate employers was first produced in 1999. Its original aim was to help university leavers understand the increasingly complex graduate job market and identify the country's most prestigious and sought after employers. Sixteen years on, *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers — in print and online — continues to provide an independent annual assessment of the employers that new graduates rate most highly for their first job after university.

The latest rankings are based on

research with more than 18,000 graduates from the Class of 2015 who left UK universities this summer. The results confirm that PwC, the global accounting and professional services firm, has been rated the UK's leading graduate employer for an impressive twelfth year running. The firm took over the top spot in 2004 and has been at number one ever since.

There have been mixed fortunes for the leading City banking and financial firms. JP Morgan has climbed another four places to its highest rating in the league table since 2001, overtaking rival investment bank Goldman Sachs. It has also been a good year for strategic consultants: McKinsey & Company has moved up the rankings for the third consecutive year, taking it to just outside the top 20 employers.

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Elsewhere in the Top 100, GSK, the healthcare company, has moved up to

12th position, its strongest performance for 15 years. JP Morgan has climbed another four places to its highest rating in the league table since 2001, overtaking rival investment bank Goldman Sachs. It has also been a good year for strategic consultants: McKinsey & Company has moved up the rankings for the third consecutive year, taking it to just outside the top 20 employers.

There have been mixed fortunes for the leading City banking and financial

Highest climbers are Diageo and Newton Europe

institutions. Just six of the 15 employers featured in the Top 100 have improved their ratings, while Credit Suisse, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Blackrock and UBS are among those that are ranked lower.

The highest climbers this year are Diageo, the international drinks company, and consulting firm Newton Europe which have both jumped 43 places, to 54th and 55th respectively.



Frontline, the new children's social work programme that launched in autumn 2013 and was a new entry in last year's Top 100, has climbed an impressive 36 places to 40th position.

There are a total of 12 new entries or re-entries in this year's Top 100, led by Danone, the multinational food products company in 66th place.

Together, the employers featured in the new edition of *The Times* Top 100

Which way to turn? There are a record number of vacancies for graduates at the most sought after companies in 2015

Why Class of 2015 is smiling

Increased debt is being offset by more jobs and higher salaries, writes **Greg Hurst**

When the "Class of 2015" enrolled at university three years ago, it looked like they were facing a double blow of rotten luck. Students who matriculated three years ago were the first to incur university tuition fees of £9,000 a year, almost three times the amount of undergraduates just one year older.

Moreover, the graduate employment market looked grim — the number of jobs offered by leading employers shrank by 0.8 per cent, reversing two years of growth after the recession period of 2008-09.

Would the Class of 2015 leave university with much higher student debt, only to struggle to find work afterwards?

Now we know the answer, and it demonstrates how quickly the big picture can change. Robust growth as the economy bounced back meant private sector employers expanded

and the number of graduate jobs has increased rapidly over the past two years.

Many students who were the first to incur fees of £9,000 would have applied for jobs in the past academic year, or perhaps even earlier, as numbers of vacancies went up and up. Those who are still looking for work after graduating in June have more options open to them.

Undergraduates currently entering their final year, who include large numbers of students on four-year courses who also enrolled with the Class of 2015, are in an even stronger position.

Recruiters that comprise *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers expect to hire 22,300 graduates in the coming recruiting season, an increase of 9.6 per cent of last year's figure. It is the fourth year in succession that overall vacancies have risen.

The record number of vacancies being offered are in fields such as accounting and professional services, banking, engineering, information technology and retailing. The employers are investing heavily in recruitment to grow their businesses.

Despite severe pressure on Whitehall budgets, and a falling headcount in many areas, employers in the public sector are also increasing their graduate recruitment programmes, particularly Teach First and the civil service fast stream. This

Students should prepare for some serious wooing

illustrates the power of a degree: even in an era of public sector spending restraint there is a growing demand for highly qualified graduates.

Students at leading universities should prepare themselves for some serious wooing in the coming months from ardent employers. They will present undergraduates with a range of opportunities that they should embrace, from offers of internships and other work experience or skills workshops, to requests from recruiting firms to sponsor student societies.

Judging by past experience, this should mean more such opportunities for second and first year students, not just final year undergraduates, as fierce competition between graduate employers pushes the recruitment process earlier into the cycle of undergraduate life: summer internships are now extended auditions for a graduate job the following autumn.

Nor is it simply that more jobs are available; the likelihood is that starting salaries will be significantly more attractive, allowing graduates to begin repaying their loans more quickly.

The average starting salary for graduates has risen again to reach £30,000, while for City law firms it is £42,000. Increased competition between employers for the best-qualified applicants, particularly those with in-demand degrees such as engineering, maths, economics or the sciences, means recruiters may push these even higher.

So the Class of 2015 was not as unlucky as many people assumed at the time. Interestingly, nor did they prove to be the more demanding, less satisfied breed of student-cum-consumer that many predicted.

When third year undergraduates — the first to incur the £9,000 fees — filled in their national student survey questionnaires in the spring, university vice-chancellors feared satisfaction levels would drop, but they did not: in fact, they edged upwards. Perhaps they had more to be thankful for than the authorities realised.

Greg Hurst is education editor of *The Times*

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Cover image: Getty Images



Graduate recruitment programmes in the public sector are increasing, bucking the trend for cutbacks

Digital age fails to dent appeal of careers fairs

For new graduates leaving university in 1999, the year the first edition of *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers book was produced, it wasn't a bad time to be job hunting. Graduate vacancies at the UK's leading employers had shot up by more than 12 per cent the previous year, one of the largest annual increases since the late 1980s, and starting salaries continued to rise at nearly twice the rate of inflation.

Final year students taking part in The UK Graduate Careers Survey 1999 — the annual survey of new

graduates' career aspirations that produces the rankings for the Top 100 — voted Andersen Consulting (now known as Accenture) top employer, with PricewaterhouseCoopers (now PwC) in third place and British Airways, Marks & Spencer and Procter & Gamble elsewhere in the top 10.

It is interesting to compare the results of that survey with similar research carried out with the Class of 2015 earlier this year. In 1999, almost half of the top 20 employers that new graduates thought offered the best opportunities were manufacturing or

industrial companies. By contrast, just four of the organisations in this year's top 20 actually make anything — the latest rankings are dominated by accounting and professional services firms and public sector employers. In both 1999 and 2015, however, more university leavers applied for jobs in consulting than any other occupation.

This year, the average salary for new recruits at a Top 100 employer is £30,000, more than 70 per cent higher than the starting salaries advertised in 1999. The average then was £17,400 and fewer than 40 of the top

employers offered graduate packages worth £20,000 or more.

Sixteen years ago only half of students made use of the internet to research their career options, but at least 40 per cent relied on local university careers fairs. During the 2014-2015 recruitment season, although more than four-fifths of students turned to employers' websites as their main source of information on graduate jobs, attendances at campus recruitment events were at their highest level ever.

MARTIN BIRCHALL

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How hunters chose their 100 heroes

THE TIMES TOP 100 GRADUATE EMPLOYERS

To compile the latest edition of *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers*, High Fliers Research, the independent market research company, interviewed 18,412 final year students from the "Class of 2015" who left UK universities in the summer.

Graduate job hunters from a wide range of degree subjects and undergraduate courses were asked: Which employer do you think offers the best opportunities for graduates? The question was deliberately open-ended and students were not shown a list of employers to choose from.

Across the full survey sample, finalists named more than 1,500 different organisations, from the smallest local or regional employers to some of the world's best-known companies. Their responses were analysed and the 100 organisations mentioned most often make up the graduate employers' table for 2015.

It is clear from the research that this year's new graduates used various criteria to determine which employer they considered offered the best opportunities after university. Some evaluated employers based on the information they had gleaned during

their job search — the quality of recruitment promotions, the impression formed from meeting employers' representatives, or their experiences during the application and selection process.

Others focused on employers' general reputations, such as their commercial success, brands or public image. Job hunters also considered the level of graduate vacancies that organisations were offering as an indicator of possible employment prospects, or were influenced by employers' visibility and profile at their university.

Many new graduates, however, used the "employment proposition" as their guide: the quality of initial training and development offered, the starting salary and remuneration package, and practical aspects, such as location or working hours.

Regardless of the criteria used to arrive at their answer, the hardest part for many was just selecting a single organisation. To some extent, choosing two or three, or even half a dozen employers would have been an easier task. But the whole purpose of the exercise was to replicate the reality that you can only work for one organisation at a time. And at each stage of the job search there are choices to be made as to which direction to take.

The resulting Top 100 is a dynamic list of the UK's most exciting and well-respected graduate recruiters in 2015. **MARTIN BIRCHALL**
Editor, *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers*



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you think.
Turns out I'm tougher
than I thought.

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BECAUSE I'M ALDI. AND I'M LIKE NO OTHER.

The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers 2015-2016

Rank	2014	Employer	Industry or Business Sector	Graduate Jobs in 2016	Starting Salary	Rank	2014	Employer	Industry or Business Sector	Graduate Jobs in 2016	Starting Salary
1	1	PwC	Accounting & professional services	1500	Competitive	51	36	RBS	Banking & finance	500+	Competitive
2	4	Aldi	Retail	200	£42,000	52	45	British Airways	Transport	75+	£27,000-£31,250
3	9	Google	IT & telecommunications	No fixed quota	Competitive	53	44	Boston Consulting Group	Consulting	No fixed quota	Competitive
4	2	Teach First	Public sector	1050	Competitive	54	97	Diageo	Consumer goods	50+	Competitive
5	6	Civil Service	Public sector	910+	£25,000-£27,000	55	38	Hewlett Europe	Consulting	80	£39,000
6	3	Deloitte	Accounting & professional services	1000	Competitive	56	50	Bain & Company	Consulting	No fixed quota	Competitive
7	5	NHS	Public sector	100+	£23,259	57	30	Sainsbury's	Retail	Unknown	Competitive
8	11	EY	Accounting & professional services	1400	Competitive	58	73	Police	Public sector	No fixed quota	Competitive
9	7	KPMG	Accounting & professional services	1000	Competitive	59	69	Deutsche Bank	Investment banking & fund management	No fixed quota	Competitive
10	8	BBC	Media	50+	£24,000	60	90	DLA Piper	Law	85	£24,000-£40,000
11	10	John Lewis Partnership	Retail	40+	Competitive	61	63	Hogan Lovells	Law	80	£41,000
12	15	GlaxoSmithKline	Chemicals & pharmaceuticals	50+	Competitive	62	55	Airbus	Engineering & industrial	50-60	£26,000+
13	12	Unilever	Consumer goods	50	£30,000	63	67	Baker & McKenzie	Law	30	£42,000
14	16	J.P. Morgan	Investment banking & fund management	No fixed quota	Competitive	64	72	ExxonMobil	Oil & energy	No fixed quota	£37,500+
15	17	Goldman Sachs	Investment banking & fund management	Around 400	Competitive	65	66	Bloomberg	Banking & finance	300+	Competitive
16	13	Barclays	Banking & finance	300	Competitive	66	NEW	Deutsche	Consumer goods	25+	£26,500
17	20	Accenture	Consulting	650+	Competitive	67	53	Local Government	Public sector	120	£23,684+
18	21	HSBC	Banking & finance	500+	Competitive	68	59	McDonald's Restaurants	Retail	250-350	£21,000-£24,000
19	18	Jaguar Land Rover	Engineering & industrial	270	£29,000	69	63	Transport for London	Public sector	150	£26,000
20	14	BP	Oil & energy	Around 100	£33,000+	70	68	Boots	Retail	50	£25,000
21	22	IBM	IT & telecommunications	300+	£30,000+	71	NEW	Walt Disney	Engineering & industrial	300	£24,000-£28,000
22	29	McKinsey & Company	Consulting	No fixed quota	Competitive	72	35	WPP	Media	Up to 10	Competitive
23	19	Bentley Systems	Engineering & industrial	20+	£26,000	73	66	Siemens	Engineering & industrial	80	Competitive
24	23	Tesco	Retail	200+	£22,000-£30,000	74	94	Dyson	Consumer goods	70+	£22,000-£26,500
25	31	Lidl	Retail	100	£36,000	75	NEW	AstraZeneca	Chemicals & pharmaceuticals	80+	£26,000
26	25	Shell	Oil & energy	60-100	£32,500	76	NEW	Network Rail	Public sector	Around 200	£26,500
27	26	Prater & Gamble	Consumer goods	650+	£30,500	77	60	Adia	Retail	No fixed quota	Competitive
28	41	L'Oréal	Consumer goods	40	£29,000	78	64	North	Consumer goods	30-35	£27,000
29	24	Microsoft	IT & telecommunications	35	£34,700	79	61	BlackRock	Investment banking & fund management	100+	Competitive
30	30	Lloyds Banking Group	Banking & finance	Around 450	Competitive	80	91	Moncler International	Consumer goods	Around 40	£27,000-£29,000
31	37	Amey	Engineering & industrial	250+	£22,000-£25,500	81	NEW	Amazon	Retail	Unknown	Competitive
32	40	Freemove Bracknell Derog	Law	80	£41,000	82	NEW	First Derivatives	Banking & finance	200	Competitive
33	32	Clifford Chance	Law	100	£42,000	83	52	NIB - The Security Service	Public sector	80+	£26,500-£30,000
34	33	Maritz & Spencer	Retail	200	£23,500-£28,000	84	62	Bank of America Merrill Lynch	Investment banking & fund management	200+	Competitive
35	28	Armed Forces	Armed Forces	650	£25,472	85	62	Peaggle	Media	50+	Competitive
36	37	Morgan Stanley	Investment banking & fund management	No fixed quota	Competitive	86	29	Odyssey	Charity	50+ internships	Voluntary
37	42	Apple	Consumer goods	Unknown	Up to £32,000	87	87	Horizon Rose Fairlight	Law	Up to 50	£46,000
38	40	Marx	Consumer goods	50	£42,000	88	99	GE	Engineering & industrial	Around 50	Competitive
39	35	Allen & Overy	Law	90	£42,000	89	NEW	Facebook	IT & telecommunications	Unknown	Competitive
40	76	Frontline	Public sector	180	Competitive	90	62	Grant Thornton	Accounting & professional services	300+	Competitive
41	34	Uddelars	Law	110	£42,000	91	75	Centrica	Oil & energy	50+	£27,000+
42	49	Atkins	Engineering & industrial	300	£23,000-£26,000	92	61	URS	Investment banking & fund management	300	Competitive
43	54	Sky	Media	90+	£25,000-£32,000	93	60	Lloyds	Banking & finance	15-20	£26,000
44	43	BT	IT & telecommunications	250	£27,500-£31,500	94	NEW	BOO	Accounting & professional services	250	£26,750+
45	70	European Commission	Public sector	No fixed quota	£41,500+	95	NEW	Wellcome Trust	Charity	10-12	£26,000
46	56	Cancer Research UK	Charity	7	£42,000	96	64	Herbert Smith Freehills	Law	70	£42,000
47	68	Royal Navy	Armed Forces	No fixed quota	£25,472	97	NEW	AECOM	Engineering & industrial	400	£23,000-£26,000
48	47	CBI	Investment banking & fund management	100-220	Competitive	98	NEW	National Grid	Oil & energy	50	Competitive
49	46	BAE Systems	Engineering & industrial	350+	£25,000+	99	57	Credit Suisse	Investment banking & fund management	150+	Competitive
50	58	Slaughter and May	Law	80	£41,000	100	NEW	Bank of England	Public sector	60+	Competitive

Top 100 Graduate Employers

Supermarket's perks give others food for thought

2 Aldi

Aldi may seem like an unlikely candidate to be the second most sought-after graduate employer in the UK. But the company's demanding area manager training programme prepares university leavers to take charge of three or four of its stores — each one a multi-million pound business — within 12 months of joining. This formidable responsibility is matched by an equally impressive starting salary of £42,000, plus an Audi A4 company car: a package which has helped propel Aldi from 65th place in 2002, to very nearly the top of the rankings in 2015. And the good news is that Aldi is looking for 200 new trainees in 2016.



3 Google

Google's founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin met at Stanford University in 1995 and just a year later had built a search engine that used links to determine the importance of individual web pages. Twenty years on, Google is one of the world's best known and most successful tech companies and is increasingly appealing as a potential graduate employer, too. Since first appearing in the Top 100 in 85th place in 2005, it has risen up the rankings nine times in the last ten years — including a jump of six places in 2015 — to reach the top three for the first time.



4 Teach First

From its launch in 2003, Teach First has become one of the runaway success stories in the graduate job market, recruiting more than 8,500 graduates from the UK's top universities to teach in some of the country's most challenging schools. The two-year, fast-track teaching programme has proved highly popular, climbing from 63rd place in the Top 100 in its first year, to reach 2nd in 2014. It is preparing to recruit 1,860 graduates in 2016, the highest ever attempted by an individual graduate employer in the UK.



5 Civil Service

In an era of austerity and cuts to public services, the civil service Fast Stream programme is one of the few public sector recruitment schemes to be ringfenced by the government and has taken on a record number of new trainees over the last five years. Fast Stream is now the main entry route for graduates wanting to work in the major Whitehall departments, such as the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office or the Department for Education, as well as in government agencies or the Houses of Parliament. There are around 900 places available in 2016.



top100graduateemployers.com



Professional services with a smile: a PwC team at a campus recruitment fair

You must admit it's great work

1 PwC

In an outstanding achievement, PwC, the global accounting and professional services firm, has been named the UK's leading graduate employer for the twelfth year running. The firm is the largest private sector recruiter of graduates and during its time at number one in the *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers it has

hired more than 13,000 young people. PwC's reign at the top has been driven by its consistently high profile at many of the country's best-known universities. In a typical year it hosts up to 1,000 on-campus events and promotions for undergraduates at different stages of their studies and has a wide range of "try before you buy" work experience schemes.

Crucially, the firm puts a strong emphasis on graduate training, developing, mentoring and supporting

Recruitment for PwC's 2016 intake of 1,500 trainees is already underway. The firm is offering more than 20 different entry schemes for next year's graduates, based at 29 locations across the UK.

About half the vacancies are for its accounting practice (known as "assurance"), with an estimated 700 places available in the firm's consulting, tax, actuarial, legal and technology businesses in the year ahead.

supermarkets, the company expects to hire 40 graduates in 2016 for roles in buying, merchandising, technology, finance and general management.

12 GlaxoSmithKline

Winner of the "graduate employer of choice" for science, research and

A graduate at work at Jaguar Land Rover. The company is offering 270 places for 2016



development at The Times Graduate Recruitment Awards for 17 consecutive years, the global healthcare company offers more than a dozen different entry-level programmes for graduates, including marketing, sales, IT, engineering, HR and finance.

13 Unilever

Unilever is the consumer goods company behind brands like Persil, Marmite, PG Tips, Pot Noodle, Dove and Clif. Its products are sold in 190 countries and used by more than two billion consumers each day. The company has one of the UK's longest-running management development programmes and expects to recruit 50 graduates for its 2016 intake.

14 J.P. Morgan

This is the highest ranking yet for the global banking firm and means that, for the first time, it is the top-rated investment bank in the new Top 100. The bank doesn't publish recruitment targets but hires graduates to work as analysts in London, Bournemouth, Glasgow and Edinburgh, with many recruited via its popular internship programmes.

15 Goldman Sachs

Goldman Sachs is one of the world's

best-known names in investment banking and financial services, with a global staff of more than 34,000. It has been ranked as a top 20 graduate employer in every edition of the Top 100 for the last 15 years and is planning to recruit more than 400 graduates for its London office in 2016.

16 Barclays

The breadth of Barclays' operations — from retail and corporate banking, investment banking and wealth management, to mortgage lending and credit cards — have helped make the bank an appealing employer for new graduates. Barclays boasts more than 48 million customers worldwide and recruits around 300 graduates annually in the UK.

17 Accenture

A former number one employer in the Top 100, the global consulting and technology company continues to be a major recruiter of graduates in the UK and is expected to hire more than 650 university leavers during 2016, its biggest intake to date, to fill vacancies in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

18 HSBC

HSBC's return to the top 20 in this

Happy hellos... and sad goodbyes

The bumper crop of 12 new entries or re-entries in the 2015 edition of *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers includes employers from ten different industries and business sectors.

The highest is Danone, the consumer goods company, which has had a convincing return to the rankings in 66th place. Engineering company Mott MacDonald is back in the league table for the first time in 15 years in 71st place, while AstraZeneca, the pharmaceutical group, below, re-enters in 75th place following a three-year absence. Network Rail, above right, the organisation that manages the UK's rail infrastructure, was unranked in 2014 but returns to the Top 100 in 76th place this year.

Amazon, the online retailer, Facebook, the Wellcome Trust — the biomedical research charity — and engineering consultancy AECOM are each ranked in the Top 100 for the first time, as is First Derivatives, the technology and consulting company based in Northern Ireland.

BDO, the accounting and



professional services firm, National Grid, the energy infrastructure company, and the Bank of England, below, have each reappeared in 94th, 98th and 100th place respectively, after dropping out in previous years.



Together these employers are expecting to hire more than 1,500 new graduates in 2016.

Organisations leaving the Top 100 in 2015 include Morrisons, the supermarket retailer, the Arcadia Group, Channel 4 television, EDF Energy, Red Bull, banking group Santander, the RAF and the Department for International Development.

Three graduate employers that were new or re-entries in last year's rankings have also dropped out — E.ON, S&W, the property company, and British Sugar.

year's rankings coincides with a surge in entry-level vacancies at the bank. It plans to recruit at least 500 trainees in the year ahead for its global graduate programmes, with roles in commercial banking, global banking & markets, retail banking, wealth management and private banking.

19 Jaguar Land Rover

Jaguar Land Rover may have slipped back a couple of places in the latest rankings but the motor manufacturer holds the record for being the fastest-climbing employer in the history of the Top 100, having jumped more than seventy places between 2010 and 2014. The company is continuing to expand rapidly and is offering 270 places on its graduate programmes next year.

20 BP

The slump in the price of crude oil inevitably means fewer entry-level vacancies in the global oil industry. But energy giant BP — the best-rated oil company in the new Top 100 — still plans to recruit at least 100 graduates over the coming year for its engineering, science and business programmes in the UK.

Top 100 Graduate Employers

It's never too early to start job hunting

Make good use of every opportunity and remember to look smart, writes
Claire Carponen

For students who have just started university, the world of work can seem a long way off. However, with the graduate jobs market remaining hugely competitive, starting the hunt early on will help make your career aspirations more achievable.

Job hunting while studying is not easy but the good news is that universities are becoming much better at helping students to kickstart their career. Most will have a careers development service that will offer advice, guidance and practical support, such as reviewing CVs.

Arts University Bournemouth's careers service, for example, has a programme of timetabled and non-compulsory lectures for its students that are designed to support employability. Steve Gordon, the senior careers officer, says that lectures on teaching as a career,

portfolio presentation and freelancing are particularly popular. The university also holds events where groups of students can meet professionals from a range of industries.

Most universities will invite recruiters from industry-specific companies to careers events on campus. The companies are there because they are interested in recruiting graduates. For example, Deloitte, the financial services firm, has a target of employing 1,200 graduates per year.

Tammy Goldfield, head of the careers service at the University of Manchester, says: "Top employers hold a variety of recruitment events, including fairs, presentations, networking evenings and drop-in sessions. They come on campus to promote their opportunities to students and encourage early applications."

BP has recently launched a range of new recruitment "pods" designed to explain the company's key areas of business as part of its campus campaign. Suzy Style, the company's UK graduate recruitment manager, says: "Students have the opportunity to have one-to-one conversations with staff and they can ask about the interview and assessment process."

The events are mainly aimed at first



and second-year students. "We want to engage them early on and, if they are interested in the sectors we work in, they can apply for our 'discovery days' and internships."

While it is unlikely that companies will offer students an actual job at a careers event, students will have the opportunity to speak to representatives from the company about career opportunities, so it is worth spending time preparing for

first impressions count so job seekers should look smart and be positive and confident

the event. This means doing lots of research on the companies that you are interested in so you have a good understanding of what they do.

Rob Fryer, head of student recruitment at Deloitte, says that if you want to impress, do your homework.

"Don't ask bog standard questions that you can easily find the answers to online. Use the opportunity to find out about the working environment and culture of the company, and the social aspect of the job, so you can work out whether the company is the right fit for you," he says.

Careers fairs can be busy, so it is a good idea to have a plan for the day. It makes sense to focus on the companies that interest you to begin with. Outward appearances do count, so remember to look presentable; something you think makes you feel professional and smart.

Goldfield says: "It's important for students to attend events and be well prepared in order to make a good first impression. An employer might also ask you a few questions on the spot, so be prepared to speak about yourself in a confident and positive way."

"Finally, make a note of the names of the people you meet with as it may be useful when following up."

Style agrees: "[These events] are a good way of building a network of contacts. Lots of students contact me through LinkedIn."

Bob Athwal, the director of student experience at the University of Leicester, adds: "Speak to your peers and students on your course who are one or two years above you. Ask your tutor what career paths students historically take after they graduate."

Top 100 Graduate Employers

Work experience is key to success

Job 'tasters' are becoming a vital stepping stone to recruitment, finds
Laura Whateley

Work experience is becoming an essential part of the graduate recruitment process, for companies as well as for young people. According to the UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015, published this summer, a quarter of the biggest graduate recruiters offer internships and "taster experiences" to first-year students, and one in five university leavers begin work in a company that they know through an internship or work experience.

Half of this year's graduates, meanwhile, were able to improve their CVs and job applications with work experience averaging six months.

John Allan, national chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), says the UK's widening skills gap is a concern for business, and that FSB members often bemoan the lack of candidates with "softer skills" — a positive attitude to work, an ability to communicate with colleagues and

strengths in problem solving and self-management.

"Work experience is a useful way for students to get a feel for the workplace and better understand what skills are required," he says. "Over 85 per cent of small firms cite work experience as a key determinant when recruiting."

Last year, Jaguar Land Rover offered 230 placements across its business, from engineering to HR, marketing and sales, almost 100 more than the previous year.

The minimum programme duration is 12 weeks, over the university summer holidays, but the company also offers 12 month placements for students doing an industrial year out.

It has just introduced a policy of only accepting students in the summer before their final year of university, because it is such a successful way to recruit new graduates.

Robinder Gill, graduate recruitment manager, says: "On placements students do a real job and one of reasons we offer and have offered placements is that students are a feeder for our graduate scheme."

An increasing number of interns go on to the Jaguar Land Rover graduate scheme: of the 330 graduates that joined the company last month, 85 were ex-placement students. "This makes our recruitment process bit more efficient," Gill says.

"In theory, if they like us and we like them, we can offer them a graduate



job for the following summer."

As a result, Jaguar Land Rover's recruitment process for interns mirrors the graduate scheme application. Students have to do online tests and attend an assessment centre.

"If you get in and come in and do a good placement, and your supervisor recommends you, you will get a place on the graduate scheme without having to attend another assessment centre," Gill says.

Work experience on a CV helps applicants score highly. "If you have done work experience you are used to working with others as part of a team. Those candidates tend to do better at our assessment centre than those who have done well academically, are technically brilliant and clever but lack outside experience, communication skills or business acumen."

L'Oreal offers a structured, ten-week summer internship programme across various departments, including marketing, commercial, operations, financial and visual merchandising, and it is extremely important to the company. About 85 per cent of its management trainee roles are filled by people who have had work experience with the company.

Negin Cooper, graduate recruitment manager for L'Oreal, says: "Students on the summer internship are treated individually and become an integral part of their team. From day one, all summer interns work on key business projects and have real responsibility."

"We place strong emphasis on promoting internal succession to strengthen our company ethos and values, and we acknowledge that with our internship scheme we are creating a pipeline of talent for the future."

"This not only ensures the interns are able to focus solely on their degree in their final year, but when they return their previous experience will help them to hit the ground running."

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Firm puts personal strengths ahead of academic prowess

EY's online process will give everyone a chance to show potential, finds Virginia Matthews

In August, EY announced that it had removed academic qualifications from its graduate and school leaver entry criteria in favour of beefed-up online "strengths" assessment and numerical testing.

While intellectual rigour is still prized, an 18-month study of 400 graduates already in the business has concluded that academic prowess and long-term professional potential don't always go hand in hand.

From 2016, graduates looking to enter the firm will first have to navigate the online application and testing process, which takes around two hours. If successful, they will be given a telephone interview, followed by an EY assessment centre. But it won't be until the final face-to-face interview that recruiters will have access to their educational history.

Maggie Stilwell, EY's managing

partner for talent, says: "We believe that by removing academic records from much of the process, we are making it difficult for selectors to fall back on unconscious bias or recruit in their own image."

"Although our recruitment scheme remains highly competitive, at around 24,000 applications for 1,800 places, we believe our new approach will open up opportunities for all talented individuals, regardless of background."

EY may have dispensed with the traditional CV – on the grounds that it can favour privately-educated candidates or those with high-level contacts, Stilwell says – but not all blue chip employers take the same stance.

For Slaughter and May, one of the five Magic Circle leading law firms, a well-constructed CV and an eloquent covering letter can speak volumes about a graduate.

"In this profession you need excellent communication skills and nothing exemplifies your writing style better than a CV packed with personal detail and a persuasive covering letter," says Cathy Connolly, one of two partners in charge of graduate recruitment.

"While we use an initial online application to record basic details, our view is that too much reliance on online testing runs the risk of producing graduate clones, rather than

the diversity which so many businesses need."

Connolly believes that the personal, face to face interview with two partners which forms the centrepiece of the hiring process, and which is preceded by "live" written work, allows candidates with real potential to shine.

"If you are a bright person with energy and spark and can display the necessary grit under pressure, you'll have the perfect opportunity to demonstrate it when you meet us face to face."

Online psychometric testing – which comes in the form of personality and aptitude tests – is an increasingly popular way of exploring a graduate's personality, as well as

Employers are divided over where and when an applicant's academic qualifications should be introduced at interview

their spatial, verbal or numerical skills. In common with many large employers, Rolls-Royce offers practical advice as well as practice questions. Gaynor Nutty, early careers manager for the company, says: "We work hard to put the candidate experience at the heart of our recruitment process and given that these tests are unfamiliar to many undergraduates, we want to offer help in advance."

"Our online assessments help screen both for aptitude and behaviours but the scenarios they pose also offer candidates an early look at the struggles and challenges of the job."

"We look at all applicants in their entirety and as seasoned recruiters, we always look beyond the buzzwords."

Online application tips

- Download or print off the application form so you can read it at your leisure before you start
- Prepare any longer answers offline before pasting them in, particularly if there is no "save and return" option
- Avoid text speech, jargon and meaningless abbreviations if you want to be taken seriously
- Check your grammar and spelling thoroughly and make sure you are within any word count before you hit Send
- Print out your answers for when you learn you are through to the next stage



Recruiters adopt Generation Z technology

Video interviews are among digital ideas being used to screen candidates, says Mark Hunter

Let's face it, job interviews are scary. While the traditional panel of stern-faced inquisitors firing impossible questions from behind an oak desk may (largely) be a thing of the past, few of us look forward to an interview without trepidation.

The best recruiters know this and are increasingly using new technology, targeted testing and a commitment to diversity to ensure that applying for a job is more about your ability than your old school tie.

Barclays, for instance, has recently introduced a "contextualised screening" system that takes into account candidates' personal circumstances as well as their exam results.

"It is a way of reaching out to more diverse talent pools," says Christina Kerr, head of campus marketing,



diversity recruitment and university relations at Barclays. "It's an opt-in scheme, so we are not discriminating. But it helps us look at a candidate's academic results in the context of what school they went to, their economic circumstances, or whether they have been in care."

Barclays has also replaced its initial face-to-face interviews with a video system that can be accessed with a webcam. It has proved a big hit with Generation Z.

Today's candidates feel comfortable with firms using new technology to conduct early-stage assessments

"In the past, students have faced a bottleneck trying to book available slots for interview," Kerr says. "This allows them to schedule themselves at a time that suits them. For millennials this type of technology is not new or alien, it's how they keep in touch using Skype or FaceTime."

The 30-minute interviews use "strength-based" questions that focus on candidates' enthusiasm and motivation rather than previous experience. Completed interviews are reviewed by the recruitment team. "So there is still the human touch. We haven't just handed the judgment over to a computer."

Accenture, the management consultancy, also uses video interviewing but has taken the process one stage further for some of its technology applicants, who are asked to undergo an online coding test.

"We challenge them to write a program in one of the languages and we can then watch them code in real time," says Sam Clark, UK and Ireland HR managing director.

"It means that the quality of the candidates you invite to the office is strong, they have a good compatibility to the type of work we do, and you get a much more focused interview."

Both Accenture and Barclays stress

that the video and online assessments are precursors to more traditional face-to-face interviews, which remain a staple of job recruitment. At some point you do have to come face to face with your potential employer.

According to Samantha Marchant, UK graduate recruitment manager at McKinsey & Company, management consultants, the key to performing well at interview is preparation.

"I would advise all candidates, whoever they are applying to, to go to that organisation's website. Employers spend a lot of time on the careers part of their websites really making clear what they are looking for."

At McKinsey, interviews are split into two. The first part focuses on candidates' personal experience while the second asks them to work through a typical business case study.

"Candidates really need to acknowledge the importance of the personal experience interview and to think in depth about the experiences they have had at university, with extracurricular activities and any work experience," Marchant says.

For the case study, the company offers supporting materials on its website and runs workshops that candidates either may attend or view remotely.



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