

State of the nation

The low-down on the graduate career front line, sector by sector

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A very modern internship

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TOP 100 GRADUATE EMPLOYERS

You've got the degree, now get the job. Search our roll call of Britain's most coveted places to work



PwC still tops the lot

More than 20,000 university leavers have had their say in the search to find the country's leading graduate employers and the report card is in

When The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers was first published in 1999, its aim was to help university students understand the increasingly complex graduate job market and identify the country's most sought-after graduate employers. Eighteen years on, the guide continues to provide an independent annual assessment of the employers that new graduates rate most highly.

The 2017 edition is based on research from more than 20,000 graduates of the Class of 2017, who left university earlier this year. The results confirm that PwC, the global accounting and professional services firm, has been named the UK's top graduate employer for an impressive fourteenth time.

The prestigious Civil Service Fast Stream has moved up to second place, its highest ranking for 12 years, overtaking Aldi's popular trainee area manager scheme and the widely acclaimed Teach First programme. Despite reaching the top three in 2015, the internet giant Google remains in fifth place for a second year. Accounting and professional services firm Deloitte has moved up to sixth place, just ahead of rivals KPMG and EY.

GSK, the pharmaceuticals and consumer goods company, has climbed three places to reach the top ten for the first time. Lidl, the discount retailer that joined the top 100 as a new entry in 89th place in 2009 and has risen up the ranks in seven of the eight years since, is now in 13th place.



You've come a long way, baby: what's next for graduates?

And Rolls-Royce, the engineering and industrial company, has steamed eight places ahead to 15th place, its best-ever position.

By contrast, there have been mixed fortunes for the City's leading banking and financial institutions in this year's top 100. Just six of the leading investment banks remain in the latest league table and none has improved its ranking year-on-year. Among the other eight banking or financial institutions listed in the top graduate employers, only Barclays, RBS and Santander have moved up the list this year.

The highest climbers in the new top 100 are led by Cancer Research UK, which has shot up 38 places to 53rd place. Industrial conglomerate Siemens, the BMW Group and law firm Herbert

Smith Freehills have each climbed more than 20 places this year. Meanwhile Newton, the Oxford-based consulting firm, and online retailer Amazon are both ranked inside the top 50 for the first time.

There are nine new entries or re-entries in this year's top 100, the highest being for engineering firm Dyson, which has had a convincing return to the rankings in 52nd place. Organisations leaving the top 100 in 2017 include Transport for London, the European Commission, British Airways and investment management company BlackRock.

Martin Birchall is editor of The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers and managing director of High Fliers Research

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Life as a graduate

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A royal thanks to the grads making a difference

Martin Birchall takes a look at the graduate schemes that focus on giving back to the community, from teaching to social work and mental health

Prince Charles hosted a reception at Buckingham Palace earlier this year to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the charity Teach First, marking another significant milestone for one of the UK's most inspiring graduate employers.

From its first intake of fewer than 200 recruits in 2003, Teach First has hired more than 12,000 top graduates to work in challenging schools – in many of the country's most disadvantaged areas – in their first two years after university.

The scheme has been transformative for the graduates taking part in the programme and for the thousands of children who have benefited from their teaching. It has also encouraged a generation of students to consider "giving something back" before starting their careers – more than 80 per cent of graduates from the Class of 2017 said this was an important consideration when deciding what to do after university.

The Teach First programme has inspired four new initiatives that are now recruiting from the UK's leading universities. Frontline trains graduates for careers in children's social work and has jumped almost 50 places in The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers rankings over the past three years to 28th place.

Meanwhile, this year's second-highest new entry is Think Ahead. Launched in 2016 it prepares university leavers to work in mental health.

"Mental health social workers play a crucial role in supporting people to get well and stay well," says Ivan Wise, recruitment director at Think Ahead.

"Our programme is a great opportunity for graduates to take on a meaningful job that makes a difference. We've worked hard to put mental health on the map as a rewarding career choice."

Top 100 Graduate Employers

The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers 2017

Rank	2016	Employer	Industry or business sector	Graduate vacancies in 2018	Starting salary
1	1	PwC	Accounting & professional services	1,200	Competitive
2	4	Civil Service	Public sector	1,000	£25,000-£28,000
3	2	Aldi	Retail	100	£44,000
4	3	Teach First	Public sector	1,750	Competitive
5	5	Google	IT & telecommunications	No fixed quota	Competitive
6	7	Deloitte	Accounting & professional services	900	Competitive
7	8	NHS	Public sector	200	£23,000
8	6	KPMG	Accounting & professional services	About 1,000	Competitive
9	9	EY	Accounting & professional services	900	Competitive
10	13	GSK	Chemicals & pharmaceuticals	70+	Competitive
11	10	BBC	Media	130	£20,800
12	11	Unilever	Consumer goods	45-50	£30,000
13	14	Lidl	Retail	250+	£36,000-£44,000
14	12	JP Morgan	Investment banking & fund management	400+	Competitive
15	23	Rolls-Royce	Engineering & industrial	200+	£28,500
16	17	Accenture	Consulting	500+	Competitive
17	16	HSBC	Banking & finance	500+	Competitive
18	15	Goldman Sachs	Investment banking & fund management	Around 300	Competitive
19	20	Barclays	Banking & finance	300+	Competitive
20	19	Jaguar Land Rover	Engineering & industrial	250-300	£29,000
21	21	McKinsey & Company	Consulting	No fixed quota	Competitive
22	18	John Lewis Partnership	Retail	Not recruiting in 2018	-
23	26	BP	Oil & energy	100+	£33,000+
24	22	L'Oréal	Consumer goods	28	£30,000
25	24	IBM	IT & telecommunications	300+	£30,000
26	27	Shell	Oil & energy	60+	£33,000
27	33	Arup	Engineering & industrial	250+	Competitive
28	42	Frontline	Public sector	352	Bursary of up to £19,500
29	25	Lloyds Banking Group	Banking & finance	300+	£28,000+
30	36	Allen & Overy	Law	No fixed quota	£44,000
31	43	BAE Systems	Engineering & industrial	350	£28,000-£30,000
32	29	Microsoft	IT & telecommunications	40	£34,700
33	34	P&G	Consumer goods	40	Competitive
34	35	RBS	Banking & finance	200+	Competitive
35	28	Army	Armed Forces	650	£31,232
36	45	Mars	Consumer goods	35-40	£30,000-£32,000
37	53	Newton	Consulting	40	£45,000-£50,000
38	52	Amazon	Retail	250+	Competitive
39	31	Morgan Stanley	Investment banking & fund management	200+	Competitive
40	37	Boston Consulting Group	Consulting	No fixed quota	Competitive
41	40	Atkins	Engineering & industrial	250+	£22,000-£26,500
42	44	Apple	Consumer goods	Varies	Competitive
43	30	Clifford Chance	Law	Unknown	£44,800
44	32	Tesco	Retail	100+	£26,000-£32,000
45	38	Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer	Law	Up to 80	£43,000
46	39	Linklaters	Law	110	£43,000
47	69	Herbert Smith Freehills	Law	60	£44,000
48	41	Sky	Media	90+	£25,000-£32,000
49	56	Slaughter and May	Law	80-85	£43,000
50	54	M&S	Retail	200	£23,500-£28,000
51	46	AstraZeneca	Chemicals & pharmaceuticals	80+	£28,000+
52	NEW	Dyson	Engineering & industrial	100	£26,500
53	91	Cancer Research UK	Charity	10	£25,000
54	68	Airbus	Engineering & industrial	100+	£27,000
55	63	Santander	Banking & finance	Up to 50	£30,000
56	83	Siemens	Engineering & industrial	70-80	Competitive
57	51	ExxonMobil	Oil & energy	20-30	£38,500+
58	57	Baker McKenzie	Law	33	£45,000
59	59	Citi	Investment banking & fund management	Varies	Competitive
60	64	Virgin Media	Media	40+	£29,000
61	49	WPP	Media	Up to 10	Competitive
62	NEW	Think Ahead	Public sector	100	Bursary of up to £19,100
63	67	Royal Navy	Armed Forces	No fixed quota	£25,984
64	74	DLA Piper	Law	70	£27,000-£44,000
65	62	Police	Public sector	350	£29,607
66	76	Network Rail	Transport	Around 175	£26,500
67	47	BT	IT & telecommunications	250+	£28,250+
68	58	Nestlé	Consumer goods	25	£27,000
69	55	MI5 - The Security Service	Public sector	150	£30,000
70	71	Boots	Retail	30-40	£25,000
71	NEW	Charityworks	Charity	150	£18,000-£20,000
72	88	Local government	Public sector	Over 150	£24,174+
73	90	Facebook	IT & telecommunications	Unknown	-
74	50	Bain & Company	Consulting	No fixed quota	Competitive
75	99	BMW Group	Engineering & industrial	20-30	£31,000
76	96	Bloomberg	Banking & finance	250+	Competitive
77	61	Penguin Random House	Media	20+	Competitive
78	66	Bank of England	Public sector	80+	£30,000
79	80	Diageo	Consumer goods	Varies	Competitive
80	70	AECOM	Engineering & industrial	350	£24,000-27,000
81	72	Wellcome	Charity	10+	£26,000+
82	65	Deutsche Bank	Investment banking & fund management	100+	Competitive
83	94	Savills	Property	90	£26,000
84	NEW	Centrica	Oil & energy	50+	£27,000-£38,000
85	60	Danone	Consumer goods	Varies	£29,500
86	81	Grant Thornton	Accounting & professional services	200	Competitive
87	82	Hogan Lovells	Law	60	£44,000
88	73	RAF	Armed Forces	500-600	£30,000+
89	NEW	GE	Engineering & industrial	Varies	Competitive
90	75	Mott MacDonald	Engineering & industrial	250	£25,000-£28,000
91	NEW	White & Case	Law	50	£46,000
92	92	UBS	Investment banking & fund management	300	Competitive
93	NEW	GCHQ	Public sector	200+	£25,000+
94	79	Lloyd's	Banking & finance	10	Competitive
95	84	Oxfam	Charity	50+ voluntary internships	Voluntary
96	78	Norton Rose Fulbright	Law	45	£44,000
97	85	Irwin Mitchell	Law	45	£25,000+
98	98	McDonald's Restaurants	Retail	50	£22,000
99	NEW	CMS	Law	65	£26,000-£40,000
100	NEW	E.ON	Oil & energy	Unknown	-



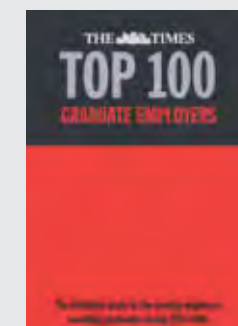
£18K-£50K

HOW IT WORKS

The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers was compiled from face-to-face interviews with 20,102 new graduates who left the UK's leading universities earlier this year.

Undergraduates involved in the research were asked: "Which employer do you think offers the best opportunities for graduates?"

The 2017-2018 edition of The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers is published as an informative guide, providing details of graduate jobs and work experience at the country's top employers in 2018.



The hardback book is available now, for £19.99, from top100graduateemployers.com

Range of starting salaries at the Top 100 Graduate Employers. 'Competitive' = employer hasn't finalised 2018 salaries or doesn't disclose them

Don't be dismayed by the dip

 Banks and retailers may be cutting back, but there are still plenty of jobs if you know where to look, says **Rosemary Bennett**

For those graduating next summer under a mountain of debt, the news from the jobs front line is not encouraging. Graduate vacancies are set to dip in 2018 with up to two in five of the biggest employers cutting their numbers in response to uncertainty over Brexit and wider economic concerns.

Having enjoyed years of growth, the big firms are pausing for breath, and the number of graduate vacancies from The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers will be around 19,435, a fall of several hundred, or 2.2 per cent, compared with their graduate intake in 2017.

Closer inspection shows a more mixed picture, with some parts of the graduate

jobs market offering plenty of opportunities. Accountancy and professional services companies remain the largest recruiters of university leavers with 4,200 positions available in 2018.

Despite all the talk of austerity, the public sector is also expanding its recruitment. Government departments and other public-sector employers will take on more than 4,100 graduates next summer, their biggest intake to date.

Teach First, the recruitment scheme to encourage graduates into teaching, is offering 1,750 places on its widely praised two-year scheme.

Frontline, a similar scheme to recruit child protection social workers, is expanding, and offering 352 places, up from 300. "We are already planning for 2019 and will have an intake of 452. This will make us one of the largest graduate recruiters," said Mark Potter, external relations director at Frontline.

"We've been able to expand the graduate programme from its pilots in London and Manchester because of a three-year commitment from the Department for Education and support from, among others, Credit Suisse, the Queen's Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation."

Placements are now opening up in the northeast, northwest and the Midlands.



Teach First will be recruiting 1,750 graduates next year

Other sectors expecting to increase graduate recruitment include engineering, oil and energy.

Elsewhere things are looking less positive. It is largely banking that is paring back the number of graduate positions. Entry-level vacancies at the City's investment banks and fund managers have been cut by nearly a

fifth. Opportunities in financial services are down by 10 per cent, a response to many firms having implemented a global recruitment freeze and to concern over whether London will continue to be the European financial centre.

Retail is also feeling the pinch, mainly because of the vast expansion of online shopping, with almost a quarter fewer graduate jobs expected to be available next summer. One leading employer, John Lewis, has suspended its graduate employment programme altogether for the next year while it reviews its future.

Graduate starting salaries at this year's top 100 organisation averaged £30,000 in 2017, and more than half are keeping them the same for 2018. A limited number of employers have announced increases of £500 to £2,000. The biggest pay packet is at Newton, the consulting firm, which is starting graduates on between £45,000 and £50,000 next year.

Although two in five employers describe their salary packages simply as "competitive", one in 10 organisations – mainly investment banks, city law firms and strategic consulting firms – plan to pay upwards of £40,000 to graduates.

Rosemary Bennett is education editor of The Times

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Kickstart your career before you graduate

You're working hard for great grades, but how do you get the edge when applying for graduate positions? Try an internship, writes **Zoe Thomas**

For the millennial generation, with sought-after graduate jobs in their sights, work experience is more than just a bonus point on a CV or the cherry on top of a glittering academic pedigree. The path to graduate positions is paved with internships of all shapes and sizes. Skip this step and you risk missing out on that prized post-university position.

Alumnus of the Class of 2017, Ciaran Deasy (inset), 22, finished his computer science degree at the University of Leicester last July, and joined Barclays as a graduate data scientist in the same

month. Deasy was already an old hand on his first day as an employee, having spent two of his student summers interning with Barclays – first in the corporate bank, then in the investment arm.

"I applied back in 2014," says Deasy, who heard about Barclays' internships at a recruitment fair and was interested to discover if he could find a career that would offer the technical exposure he wanted. "I remember it being my first big interview," he says of his rigorous internship application process, which included an assessment-centre session with about 20 fellow candidates.



“Some of the code I produced over my internship actually went into production”

Internships are a valuable opportunity to road-test potential employers

"They assessed me on my skills, my values and whether these aligned with Barclays," he says. "I wanted to perform my best," Deasy adds, noting that he was made to feel at ease throughout the recruitment process.

Once successfully onboard as a paid Barclays intern there was no tea-making or photocopying to plough through. Deasy was set to work as a business analyst on his first placement, and as a Python programme developer for his second assignment.

"Some of the code I produced over my summer internship actually went into

production," he says, proudly. "So I did feel at the end that I'd delivered work that was meaningful."

Deasy also took the opportunity to co-organise a hackathon for interns and networked with directors and managing directors while on his placements.

"We give them real work to do," explains Lynn Harris, Barclays' head of graduate recruitment and development. "Our interns don't job shadow, they actually get their hands dirty and get involved in delivery or customer interactions, depending on where they work," she adds.

£26k • £23k

Expected starting salaries for men and women in 2017. Male graduates anticipate earning £3,000 more per year than their female peers

Barclays runs about 350 nine-week internships in the UK each year, with vacancies distributed in growth areas across the entire business. "So we do see quite a large proportion in our investment bank," Harris says, "while in technology, we've seen a 400 per cent increase in our early careers talent for next year."

There is also "spring week" – mainly for first-year undergraduates who spend a week immersed in different parts of the business. "Spring week feeds the internship, and the internship feeds the graduate programme," says Harris.

If an intern fits in well and delivers top notch work during their time at Barclays, "We would look to offer a place on the graduate programme," continues Harris, though Barclays does not fill all of its graduate positions that way. "We've always got some straight-to-market roles on the graduate programme."

At law firm Herbert Smith Freehills, 80 to 90 per cent of trainee lawyers are recruited via internships. With about 4,000 applications for the 60 training contracts up for grabs each year, the company's Vacation Scheme work placements provide an opportunity to whittle down the final cohort of candidates, says the company's senior recruitment manager, Mary Carpenter. "For us it's a much safer bet if you've seen someone for two to three weeks doing work, rather than just seeing them during one day at an assessment centre."

The trainee hopefuls come in "anywhere from their second year onwards", says Carpenter. "We also run first-year programmes, we don't recruit from those at the moment," she adds.

The message to university students is loud and clear: get involved in work placements as soon as you possibly can.

Top 100 Graduate Employers

Q&A Rob Farace

Senior programme lead resourcing at NHS Leadership Academy

WHAT makes a good internship? Don't be seduced by irrelevant details, an internship should give you the experience and/or skills you need to successfully apply to a graduate scheme. Target what you hope to get – is it a specific experience or are you seeing if you'd like to work somewhere in particular?

WHEN do internships take place? The majority run over the summer, although internships are normally available all year round. Do your research 12 months in advance to avoid disappointment. There is nothing worse than contacting a company when you are ready to do an internship only to discover they closed their scheme two weeks ago.

HOW many organisations should undergraduates apply to? Don't expect to make one application and be successful. There is normally a lot of competition for internships. However, don't spread yourself too thinly as the quality of your application will suffer. Research the company and scheme, allow a couple of hours at least for applications and about a day for assessments.

HOW much should interns expect to be paid? Most companies pay interns and it should be at least minimum wage. Think long and hard before accepting

an internship that is unpaid or pays so little it will cause you challenges. In some sectors, it is still common for internships to be unpaid so check if that is common practice in your target industry.

WHAT should interns wear? It will vary, so do your homework. Chat to your manager before you start and ask what they expect. Do they have casual Fridays? Are there rules about how you dress around customers? Even if you can dress casually think carefully about your choice of clothes, as it will shape your personal brand in that company.

HOW to convert an internship into a graduate job Treat the whole placement as one long job interview. Everything you do will help determine whether you will be fasttracked into the graduate scheme. Be keen, be helpful but don't overdo it! Make connections, network and use those networks to help you. But be considerate in how you do this. Ask yourself: "What is it like to be on the receiving end of me?"

WHAT if you can't get an internship at your first choice? Try to get one with a competitor, it will give helpful industry knowledge you can share in your application process.

Various NHS organisations offer internships and placements. Alternatively, you can volunteer at any hospital

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The top 20 graduate employers of 2017-2018



Martin Birchall, the editor of The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, assess the strengths and specialities of this year's leaders - from hot household names to high-flying stalwarts

1. PwC

In a remarkable achievement, the global accounting and professional services firm PwC has been voted the UK's top graduate employer for the fourteenth consecutive year.

The firm's success in graduate recruitment has been driven by its consistently high profile at many of the country's best-known universities, through its annual programme of more than 900 on-campus events, as well as promotional activities for students at every stage of their studies. The global business also provides a wide range of "try before you buy" work experience schemes for students and invests heavily in the training and development of new graduates.

PwC is currently the largest private sector recruiter of graduates, and during its time at number one in The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers it has hired more than 16,000 university-leavers for its 29 offices across the UK.

Recruitment for next year's intake of 1,200 trainees has already begun, with graduate roles available in each of the firm's key business areas: accountancy, consulting, tax, actuarial, deals, legal and technology.

£40.1k • £47.2k

Expected graduate salaries after five years in work. Male graduates anticipate annual pay packets £7,100 higher than their female counterparts

2. Civil Service

Over the past decade the Civil Service Fast Stream has become the main entry-point for graduates wanting to work in the major Whitehall departments, such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence, Cabinet Office and even the Department for Exiting the European Union, as well as government agencies and the Houses of Parliament.

The Fast Stream is a structured, accelerated learning and development programme designed to prepare the Civil Service's future leaders. It recruits graduates for 16 key areas of government, including science and engineering, finance, economics, statistics, commercial, human resources, project delivery, social research, the Diplomatic Service, data and technology. Training typically lasts three or four years and includes a mix of six-month and one-year placements in different government departments.

The 2018 intake is set to be one of the largest ever, with 1,000 places available, but applications for the scheme have already closed.



3. Aldi

The discount retailer Aldi may seem an unlikely candidate to be one of the UK's most sought-after graduate employers. But it is now the fifth-largest supermarket in the country and is currently opening at least one new store a week. The company's demanding area manager training programme prepares new

graduates to take control of three or four stores within 12 months of joining. This considerable responsibility is matched by an equally eye-catching starting salary of £44,000 and a fully expensed Audi A4 company car - a package that has helped to keep Aldi in the top three of the top 100 for three consecutive years.

15. Rolls-Royce

Not to be confused with the luxury car maker, this is the highest ranking yet for Rolls-Royce, the global engineering company that manufactures power and propulsion systems for aircraft, ships, trains and the nuclear industry. About 200 graduate vacancies in 2018 include roles in engineering, commercial, procurement and project management.

16. Accenture

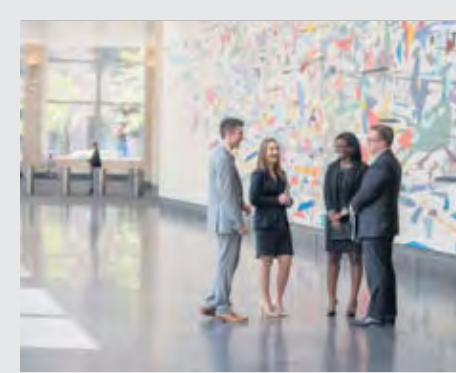
A former No 1 in The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, Accenture is a global consulting and technology company. It's a major recruiter of graduates in the UK and has more than 500 vacancies in 2018 across its five key business areas of strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Roles are in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Edinburgh.

17. HSBC

HSBC is one of the world's most recognisable names in banking, with 4,000 offices in 70 countries and more than 37 million customers. It is planning to recruit more than 500 new graduates in 2018 for its global graduate programmes in commercial banking, global banking and markets, retail banking, private banking and wealth management.

18. Goldman Sachs

Goldman Sachs, the global investment banking and financial services firm, may have slipped back in the latest ranking, but it has been rated a top-20 graduate employer in every edition of the top 100 for the past 18 years. Headquartered in New York, it has more than 34,000 employees worldwide and is expecting to hire 300 graduates for London in 2018.



Top performer: Goldman Sachs has more than 34,000 staff worldwide

19. Barclays

One of the UK's most familiar high-street banks, Barclays is an international banking and financial services group, with 120,000 employees in more than 40 countries. In 2018, the bank has more than 300 graduate jobs available, including roles in personal and business banking, wealth management, investment banking, credit cards and technology.

20. Jaguar Land Rover

Over the past six years, Jaguar Land Rover has more than doubled its sales and is now producing more cars than at any other time in the company's history. This rapid expansion means it is hiring up to 300 graduates to work in engineering, technology, research and development, logistics, purchasing, finance, marketing and sales in 2018.

Top 100 Graduate Employers



4. Teach First

Since its launch in 2003, Teach First has been one of the runaway success stories in the graduate job market, recruiting university leavers to work in the country's toughest and most demanding schools. The two-year fast-track teaching and leadership programme has been ranked one of the top five employers in the top 100 for the past six years and is now the largest individual recruiter of graduates in the UK. Recruitment for the 2018 intake is already under way, with up to 1,750 places available in both primary and secondary schools.

5. Google

Google 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. Google is now one of the world's best known and most successful technology companies, and among the UK's most sought-after employers. From its top 100 debut in 85th place in 2005, Google rose up the table nine times in ten years and reached the top five in 2015. It has graduate vacancies in sales, technology, engineering, HR and marketing.



9. EY

EY is the fourth of the Big Four global accounting and professional services firms to be ranked in this year's top ten. Worldwide, it employs more than 230,000 people in over 150 countries. Since rebranding from Ernst & Young four years ago, the firm's graduate recruitment in the UK has jumped by more than 50 per cent. In 2018, it will hire 900 trainees to work in areas such as consulting, assurance, technology, tax, actuarial, transactions and legal. EY has 18 UK offices, including Leeds, Manchester, Bristol and Newcastle.



6. Deloitte

The largest of the Big Four global accounting and professional services firms, Deloitte has more than 260,000 staff in over 150 countries worldwide. In the UK, the firm has 23 offices and is expecting to recruit 900 new graduates in the next 12 months for its nine entry-level programmes. These include audit and assurance, tax consulting, business advisory, technology, cyber security, human capital, strategy and operation, real estate and governance, risk and regulation. The firm was ranked in second place in the top 100 for eight years until 2013.

7. NHS

With more than 1.6 million staff, the National Health Service is the UK's largest employer. Tens of thousands of new graduates join the NHS each year as junior doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and other health professionals, but it also offers up to 200 places for the prestigious NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme. Designed as a fast-track route to senior management, the scheme enables graduates to specialise in finance, general management, human resources, health informatics, policy and strategy or health analysis.



10. GSK

This is the highest ranking yet for GSK, the global healthcare giant that researches, develops and manufactures medicines, vaccines and consumer healthcare products. The company - which expects to recruit 70 graduates in 2018 - has won the Graduate Employer of Choice award for science, research and development at The Times Graduate Recruitment Awards every year since 1998. GSK's Future Leaders programmes include: sales and marketing, business operations, manufacturing and supply, and research.



11. BBC

As the world's best-known public service broadcaster, the BBC has long been a popular choice for graduates wanting to work in the media after university. Its graduate training schemes extend across television, radio and online, with opportunities in journalism, production, broadcast engineering, research and development, software engineering and legal. There are up to 130 places available in 2018.

12. Unilever

Unilever is the consumer goods company that makes some of the world's best-loved brands, such as Ben & Jerry's, Hellmann's, Bovril, Sure and Flora. Its products are sold in 190 countries and used by more than two billion people every day. The company employs more than 168,000 staff worldwide and there are up to 50 places available for graduates on the Unilever Future Leaders programme in 2018.



13. Lidl

With more than 670 supermarkets across the UK, Lidl has become one of the country's best-known discount retailers and is an increasingly popular graduate employer, too. From a new entry at number 89 in the 2009 top 100, Lidl has climbed the ranking every year since and expects to hire at least 250 graduates in the year ahead, with sector-leading salaries of up to £44,000 on offer.

14. JP Morgan

For the third consecutive year, global banking firm JP Morgan is the highest-ranking investment bank in the top 100. It has vacancies for more than 400 graduates in 2018, working in areas such as asset management, investment banking, sales, markets, operations, risk management, human resources and technology. Graduates will work as analysts at the bank's operations in London, Bournemouth, Glasgow and Edinburgh.



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Top 100 Graduate Employers

Top tips for landing that sought-after position

The battle for graduate scheme places is fierce, and the application process rigorous. Focus and preparation are essential for success, says **Fay Schopen**

Competition for places on the top graduate schemes is intense: organisations in The Times Top 100 averaged 37 applications per vacancy in 2017. With odds like this, it's never too early to start thinking about your application.

"Anyone who wants to go into the financial or banking sectors should be going to careers fairs in their first year of university," says Jonathan Black, director of the University of Oxford's careers service. If you are aiming for other sectors, you can relax for a while – up to a point. Everyone at university, regardless of career aspirations, should ensure they join a society or take part in activities, he says.

"They don't have to be career related. You're looking to demonstrate responsibility and achievement." So anything from volunteering with the elderly to playing a team sport can pay off in a job interview. "You want to be able to start sentences with 'I was responsible for...'" says Black, "even if it was handing out flyers."

Summer holidays should have a degree of structure, but if you don't fancy a 12-week internship any sort of part-time job or a leisure activity can demonstrate to would-be employers that you are focused and motivated. Black remembers, in particular, a student who cycled across America.

In your second year (or third, if you are doing a four-year course) you enter the exploratory phase. This means evaluating your skills, likes and dislikes. Attend career fairs and research companies. Talk to alumni who work for companies that you're interested in. "You need to know what the culture of a firm is like," he says. "Part of your role as a student involves research and preparation – the same is true of applying for a job."

In your final year, "focus" is Black's mantra. He warns against

A few excellent applications are better than many weak ones



applying to multiple schemes by just cutting and pasting between application forms. "Do a few applications well," he says. "The questions are challenging – it takes time to answer them properly."

And use your university careers service, says Black, as a place to get impartial and confidential advice.

If you follow Black's guidance, you may reach the assessment stage of the recruitment process. Black recommends taking online practice tests, talking to people who've been through the process, and brushing up on your numeracy and literacy. Interviews can be intimidating – Black suggests studying 100 possible questions and formulating answers. Focus in particular on tricky ones, such as examples of things that didn't go well, or disappointing exam results. And don't forget the obvious. A regular interview question is: "What attracted you to

this job?" Employers are genuinely interested in the answer. "They're not trying to trap you," says Black.

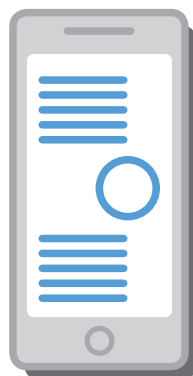
An application process can be long and laborious, so to speed things up the professional services firm KPMG last year introduced its Launch Pad initiative. Candidates still have to go through several online stages – an application form, situational judgment tests, numerical and verbal reasoning, and an audio submission. But whereas many companies spread the next three stages over several weeks, Launch Pad combines them into one day: a first interview, assessment centre and final interview. Successful graduates receive a job offer within two working days.

Linda Emery, KPMG's head of graduate recruitment, says the firm made the change because previous applicants had expressed frustration at lengthy recruitment processes and the "waiting to hear". "It's tough," she says. "They put in all that effort and then wait and wait."

Launch Pad's assessment day stands out from traditional recruitment methods, she says, because of its "lively atmosphere". There are lots of opportunities for candidates to meet people from KPMG, which gives them a real feel for the firm's culture.

The response to the new scheme has been positive, she says, and it is now in its second year. "The aim is to fill as many roles as possible before the end of December. It benefits the candidates to know they've got a job offer so they can relax and finish their studies," she says.

Launch Pad has had benefits for the firm, too, says Emery: "Candidates have a good experience, so they want to join us. It allows us to attract and hire really talented people."



HOT TOPIC

What to do if more than one of your applications is successful

If you have more than one job offer, the first thing I'd say is congratulations, *Jamie Stuart writes*. To pick the right graduate scheme, look at how each one aligns with your longer term career goals. Weigh up the pros and cons, and make sure you really understand what the programmes offer. Know what skills you will be developing and what you will be doing on a daily basis.

If you are in doubt, talk to an employer. Generally, you will be in contact with a company's graduate recruitment officer. It's reasonable to pick up the phone

Application deadlines are looming for graduate schemes with these Times Top 100 Employers:

Employer	November 2017 deadline date
Think Ahead	1st
WPP	9th
Mott MacDonald	13th
Bank of England	13th
Airbus	17th
Frontline	20th
Centrica	21st
JP Morgan	26th
Mars	30th

Employer	December 2017 deadline date
NHS	1st
Network Rail	4th
Newton Europe	18th
Allen & Overy	31st
Jaguar Land Rover	31st
Lloyds Banking Group	31st

and give him or her an opportunity to allay any concerns.

If you are turning down a place on a graduate scheme, be professional and be adult – this is your first step into the working environment. Think about your reputation. Be open and transparent, and communicate with an employer in a timely manner. Have a conversation and explain why you are not taking the job.

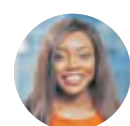
Don't drop out at the last minute. If you let down an employer in

this way, it can have significant consequences for them; jobs can be left unfilled. In the case of Teach First, the organisation I represent, it could mean that a class is left without a teacher. Above all, treat an employer with respect – as you would like to be treated.

Jamie Stuart is director of graduate recruitment for Teach First (teachfirst.org.uk)

A head start: meet the grads

You've survived the application process and landed your dream job, but will it live up to expectations? Here, three university leavers tell all...



Khalida Abdulrahim
• Degree: international business
• University: Liverpool
• Employer: BP

A lightbulb moment during a lecture led Khalida Abdulrahim, 23, to her graduate job at BP.

"I was applying for internships in my second year at university and I knew that I wanted a commercial role in a corporate. But I didn't really have a fixed target company or industry," she says.

Then, her professor happened to mention BP – the multinational oil and gas company – in a case study and that propelled Abdulrahim straight to the company's website to investigate work

experience opportunities there. The company's supply and trading internship "sounded exactly like the sort of thing I wanted to do," she says.

There was a cultural fit, too, she discovered during the interview process: "BP stood out to me because it seemed like a company of nice people who actually liked what they were doing."

Abdulrahim's 11-week paid summer internship in 2014 translated into a three-year graduate scheme job right after completing her degree. Based at BP's financial and trading office in London's Canary Wharf, she is in the last of her 12-month rotations.

After a year in analytics learning the fundamentals of the oil business and analysing the oil market, she joined

Khalida's internship with BP led to a three-year graduate scheme job



“BP took a chance on me when I was just a student without much experience

the operations team as a shipping co-ordinator, eventually getting to grips with the logistics of transporting oil across the world – even climbing on board an oil tanker at a BP terminal in Scotland, which was "pretty cool", Abdulrahim enthuses.

"I've just started my third year rotation now," she continues. "It's something completely different – I'm working in strategy." Being immersed



Nathan Paterson
• Degree: economic history with economics
• University: LSE
• Employer: Civil Service

Working for the greater good guided Civil Service "Fast Streamer" Nathan Paterson's graduate job hunt.

Moved by his time as a pupil at a struggling secondary school in Leeds, the 26-year-old says: "I felt from a young age that I wanted to give back and be involved in things that were either based in the third sector or something like the Civil Service."

He began his career journey with a 10-week summer internship at the Civil Service. "I had experience of owning a project and seeing the impact of that work," he says.

Nathan's dedication to his calling was tested when he did not make it through the Fast Stream application process first time. Instead he took a job at a consulting firm.

"It was easy to feel like a cog in a machine at a large private sector employer," Nathan recalls. So, he applied to the Civil Service again – successfully – and joined the Fast Stream's generalist programme



in September 2016. "There is support offered to candidates coming through the internship in translating to the graduate programme now," he notes.

Nathan enjoys working alongside people with "similar values and ethics" and is now on secondment to Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, where, he says: "It's incredible to see the range of responsibility you get and the impact that your work has on people."

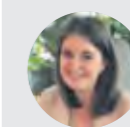
in different arms of BP's business has been an invaluable experience for a young graduate with the world at her feet, as Abdulrahim explains:

"A lot of us don't know what we want to do full time in the long term and I'm certainly guilty of that. So getting this opportunity to move around the business is allowing me to identify areas that I enjoy, which is the best way possible to build my knowledge."

Will she apply to BP for a permanent job when the graduate scheme ends? "Definitely. All my roles have been rewarding in terms of how much I've learnt and grown as a person."

Added to that, she says: "I feel loyal to BP. They took a chance on me when I was just a student without much experience. Giving me that opportunity to come in and do adult work – I will always be grateful to BP for that."

Top 100 Graduate Employers



Victoria Cane
• Degree: philosophy and Spanish
• University: Sheffield
• Employer: Mars

There is more to Mars than the chocolate bar, as Victoria Cane attests. The 25-year-old is currently in her third and final year of the Mars European finance graduate programme, and hopes one day to become a chief financial officer.

Victoria fell for finance after interning at an asset management firm. A Google search for European finance schemes led her to Mars, whose brands include Whiskas and Uncle Ben's as well as confectionary. The graduate programme stood out for Victoria because "it wasn't just operational", she says. "With Mars I felt there were real roles with quite a lot of responsibility and I felt you'd be really close to the business."

The job has lived up to her expectations. "I started in chocolate, in supply finance business partnering with our logistics team and with some of our factories," she says. "In my second year I moved to Germany, working for the pet care and food team in a financial control mode." That, she says, "was quite a big project with a lot of responsibility. Mars really helped with the move and supported me with language lessons," adds Victoria, who describes her year in Germany as "a great experience".

This year she is working in Somerset on Mars' premium pet-food brand. "I'm supporting with the sales and marketing and analysing what the impact of online is to our business model," says Victoria, who would "definitely recommend" the programmes at Mars, because, "you're in genuine roles, and they put a lot of trust in you to deliver on those roles. But they support you along the way."

£47,000

The highest paying employers in 2017 were the investment banks, with a median graduate starting salary of £47,000

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You've got the job so it's an easy ride from here on, right? Not quite, says **Sue Leonard**, there are still decisions to be made – from where to live to what to wear

After years of hard work you've bagged a good degree and a coveted place on a top graduate scheme, so the next bit should be plain sailing.

However, the exciting world of work inevitably brings with it new challenges – from where to live and what to wear to how to manage your money.

Even getting to the office and turning up to meetings on time can come as a shock to the system for some, says Dave Heath, head of resourcing at engineering consulting firm Arup. "It is something we talk to them about – adjusting to the workplace. We need to make it clear early on what is expected."

Looking the part can also be harder than it sounds when you are starting out. Dress codes can be not only industry specific but company specific, and while firms do offer guidelines, deciphering just what smart-business, business-causal or smart-casual means in practice can be tricky. "I wasn't sure if people would be wearing heels," says Bristol-based Arup graduate mechanical engineer Ana Recio. "I think we overthink it. After a week you will know what to expect."

The biggest decision graduates will make is where to live and work. London remains the most popular destination, with 46 per cent of final-year students taking part in the UK Graduate Careers Survey – produced earlier this year by High Fliers Research – hoping to end up in the capital.

While your first proper income will give you more money than you have ever had, you'll have a lot of outgoings: student loan repayments, rent and travel costs, not to mention food, clothes and going out. Rents are high in many cities but they really put a dent in your take-home pay in London where a room in a two-bedroom flat can cost more than £1,000 a month. Even £30,000 a year, the average graduate salary offered by The Times Top 100 Employers, won't go very far. "London always performs well when it comes to job prospects and social life, but housing is the main barrier for graduates," says Nick Marr, co-founder of property marketplace TheHouseShop.com.

Student debt, expected to average £37,700 among this year's graduates, according to High Fliers Research, will eat into your disposable income, particularly as your pay rises. Graduates pay student loans back through the tax system at a rate of 9 per cent on anything over a threshold which ranges from £17,775 (Scotland and Northern Ireland) to £21,000 (rising to £25,000 next April)



Moving on: more than a quarter of graduates want to work in London, far left; but rents in Leeds, left, are up to three times cheaper

Welcome to the working week

for students from England and Wales. Any outstanding debt will be written off after 25, 30 or 35 years depending on where you are from in the UK.

Hope Levy-Shepherd, a trainee solicitor with City law firm Linklaters, where graduates start on £43,000 and can expect to earn £90,000 when they qualify, has decided to live at home in Croydon so she can save for a mortgage. "The overall amount of my student debt is high and I would rather not have such a large sum owing over a long time period. However, the amount that I pay monthly has not yet impacted my lifestyle on a day-to-day basis. This is helped by the fact that I currently live in my family home and so my living costs are fairly low," adds Levy-Shepherd, who is taking advantage of an interest-free season-ticket loan to save on travel costs.

Over a quarter of graduates want to work in the area they studied and with three quarters of top graduate jobs based outside London there are plenty of

opportunities for a high flying career around the UK. Lower salaries would be offset by lower costs, particularly rent, so you will almost certainly be financially better off living outside of London. Rents in the capital are more than double those in Manchester and three times the cost of living in Leeds.

Companies offer benefits that can help balance costs or save money – from interest-free rent-deposit loan schemes to cycle to work schemes, lift shares and subsidised staff restaurants. So take advantage where you can. Rolls-Royce engineering graduate Isabel Banister used her joining bonus to buy a car, clothes for work and a rent deposit in Derby when she moved from Kent.

Starting a new job can be daunting, but remember: your employer wants you to thrive, so don't be afraid to ask questions – you are a trainee and are not expected to know everything. So enjoy it, join in the social events and watch what you put on social media.



Stay in touch, eh? A parent writes

Lucy Norris's daughter, Emily, 21, left Edinburgh to study at Oxford and is now living in London and halfway through a graduate training programme with Samsung

"It was a huge wrench when Emily went to university but the terms were short and it was nice when she was home for the long holidays.

When she went on to live in London it felt different again because it is so far away and she can't pop home easily for the weekend. She wants to be there in the longer term and is unlikely to come back here for any length of time again.

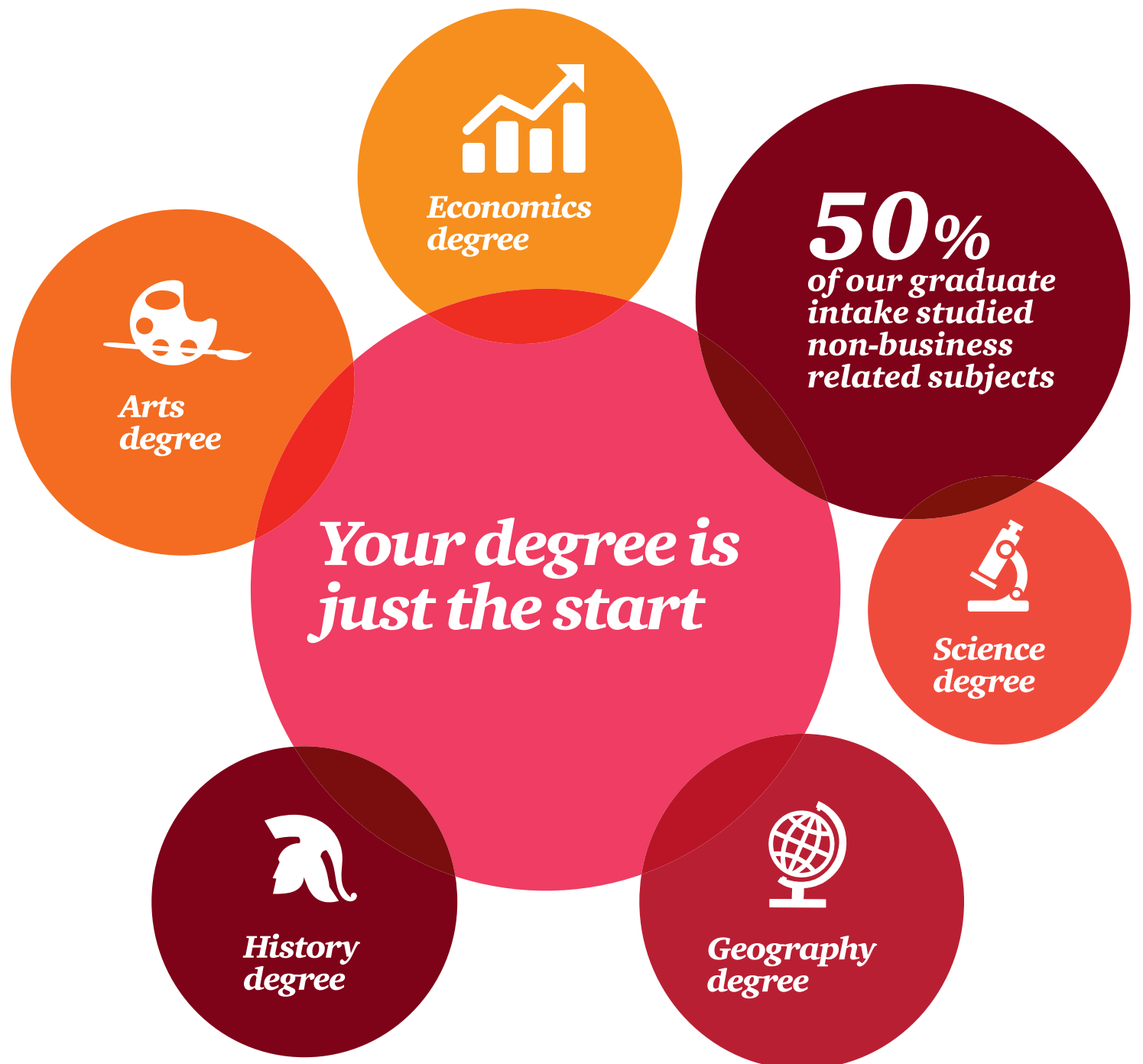
“

One part of you misses them and the other is happy they are getting on

I did find that another wrench but I have gradually got used to it. She is good at keeping in touch and I speak to her quite frequently.

She is sensible and I trust her. The amount of student debt is a worry and makes it harder to save towards one day buying a flat. Living in London, particularly, means huge rents and unaffordable house prices.

It is a mixed feeling. One part of you misses them and another is pleased that they are getting on with their life and you can get on with yours."



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