

Graduate Market Trends



In Brief

Social skills and earnings later in life

The shift to a service economy has made the acquisition of personal and social skills more important than ever before, according to research from the Institute for Public Policy Research (www.ippr.org).

IPPR's analysis of surveys of people born in 1958 and 1970 shows that personal and social skills - such as communication, self-esteem, planning and self-control - became 33 times more important, between generations, in determining earnings later in life.

Qualifications, however, still matter. GCSEs add around 10% to wages compared to those with no qualifications, A-levels add a further 15% for women and 20% for men and a degree adds a further 25% for women and 15% for men.

Review calls for shake-up in skills training

At least 40% of the adult population in the UK will need to be qualified to degree level or above by 2020, up from 29% in 2005, for the UK to become a world leader in skills, says the final report of the Leitch Review.

Setting this new target would mean measuring attainment rather than participation, as well as covering the whole adult population rather than subsets. The Review, however, warned that the 40% target would only deliver economic benefits if 'they are based on economically valuable skills that are effectively used in the workplace', and that there should be a demand-led system.

The Review also recommends that individuals and employers should pay the bulk of the additional costs in higher level skills training, as they will benefit most.

For more information, go to www.hm-treasury.gov.uk.

BCS warns of long-term IT graduate shortages

The year-on-year reductions affecting the number of students studying computing within higher education will continue until at least 2009, says Professor Nigel Shadbolt, President of the British Computer Society (BCS).

Academic members of the BCS (www.bcs.org), including nearly all the heads of computer science at British universities, are predicting that the growing demand for skilled IT professionals will be frustrated by a 25% shortfall of computer science graduates by 2009, with public services more heavily hit than private companies. Although nothing can now halt the decline in the number of computing graduates through to 2009, action is required now to reverse the decline from 2010 onwards, says Professor Shadbolt.

First degree in retail banking Barclays has launched the UK's first retail banking degree in partnership with Nottingham Business School.

Selected students start on the Retail Development Programme at the end of the first year of their business management course at Nottingham Business School. Over the remaining two years of their course, they will undertake four five-month placements in Barclays

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branches, while working full-time towards their degrees.

Students will be paid £12,000 per annum, and Barclays will fund their university fees for the two years they spend on the programme. Students are also guaranteed a full-time position immediately after graduating.

For more information, see press release on www.barclays.com.

More students stay put at home
Rising financial concerns have resulted in more students staying at home than ever before. More than one in five (22%) undergraduates live at home with their parents - a jump from 16% in 2005, according to the 2006 NatWest Student Money Matters survey.

The survey of over 2,000 students and graduates also found that a rising number of graduates are admitting their original choice of university was influenced by location: 19% of graduates in 2005 picked a university based on location, up from 15% in 2004 and 14% in 2003.

Similarly, a study from Scottish Widows Bank reported that 60% of graduates believe they do not earn enough to get them on the housing ladder, and almost a third said they just cannot save for a deposit. Even for those graduates that have succeeded in getting on the property ladder, almost two thirds bought with a partner, and if they were to split up, 68% would not be able to buy

their other half out. This rises to 75% of women.

For more information, see the press releases at www.natwest.com and www.scottishwidows.co.uk.

Universities and employers working together

A new report from Universities UK showcases the many ways universities are working with employers to develop business-focused degrees and to enhance graduate employability.

Higher level learning: universities and employers working together features case studies from 26 universities across a range of industries including sport and leisure, construction, brewing, media, fashion, and financial services. It also looks at how universities connect with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and help instil entrepreneurship.

Professor Drummond Bone, President of UUK, said: "Critics and media commentators have sometimes referred disparagingly to some of these courses as 'Mickey Mouse degrees'. This publication - which we could equally have called *The Mouse that Roared* - is our response. While some of the degrees featured were unheard of a few years ago, graduates with the skills developed on these courses are essential to the success of the UK economy." The report is available at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk.

New research reports from HECSU

The Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) has recently published two reports as part of the longitudinal programme 'Career Making'.

The first report, *Credit-Bearing Career Education*, presents the findings from research into the degree of integration of credit-bearing careers education in the higher education curriculum, which has identified a rich diversity of practice within the sector. The study was carried out by Ros Foskett and Brenda Johnston from The University of Southampton.

The second report, *A Systematic Literature Review of Research into Career-related Interventions for Higher Education*, by Jenny Bimrose, Sally-Anne Barnes and Jamie Brown (Warwick Institute of Employment Research), provides an analysis of research evidence relating to curricular and extracurricular interventions that influence the career-related decision making, learning and progression of students and graduates.

PDF versions of the reports are available at www.hecsu.ac.uk.

Employability guides for employers and academic staff

A series of Student Employability Profiles has recently been published by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE). The series is designed to help employers, academic staff and students to better understand the skills developed through the study of a particular subject.

Two complementary guides will also be launched, one intended for academic and support staff, and the other for employers' use. For employers, the guide may help them to develop a more informed selection process that matches applicants to role requirements more efficiently, to recruit from a wider range of academic backgrounds, and to show the value that a graduate can bring to an organisation straight away.

The guide for academic and support staff explains how higher education staff can make use of the Profiles, for example, to support career development learning or subject-specific Personal Development Planning; and to enhance prospective students' (and their parents') understanding of the value of degree-level study.

For more information, see www.heacademy.ac.uk/profiles.htm

Editor's notes

One of the major changes in workplace legislation in recent years has been the introduction of age discrimination laws which came into force on 1 October 2006. For many employers, however, it remains unclear as to what the law means and how it impacts on graduate recruitment. In this issue of *Graduate Market Trends*, Freda Line from the Employers Forum on Age, looks at what is or is not acceptable under the new law, and provides valuable advice to graduate job seekers and employers.

Universities UK has recently commissioned three studies on part-time students and part-time study in higher education. The research has shown that 'there is no such thing as a typical part-time student', as the market is highly segmented and that there is a great diversity of students and study types. In this issue, we look at one particular aspect of the research: employer support for part-time study.

Part-time study is currently of particular interest to us here at HECSU, and we are looking into the feasibility of conducting a research study into the career development of part-time students. This would complement the HECSU's longitudinal research, Futuretrack, which focuses on full-time students.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and I wish you all a happy 2007.



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What Do Graduates Do? 2007

Summary

Each year, Graduate Prospects/The Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) produce *What Do Graduates Do?*, an annual review of graduate first destinations. The publication is designed as a guide for careers advisers, teachers with responsibility for careers guidance, young people considering higher education as an option, and parents to give an overview of the first career steps taken by graduates from a range of degrees. The data comes from the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, conducted by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

In this article, we present an overview of the main findings from the 2007 edition of *What Do Graduates Do?* This edition looks at those students from the UK who graduated from UK universities with a first degree, foundation degree or HND in 2005.

First degree all subjects

There were 256,460 UK-domiciled graduates with first degrees from UK universities in 2005, the first time that over a quarter of a million graduates have been produced. This represents a rise of 3.7% on 2004. A total of 206,965 qualifiers responded to the DLHE survey. The proportion of women graduates increased again this year: 57.7% of graduate respondents were women.

Nearly three quarters, 71.7%, of graduates were either working, or combining work and study, six months after graduation (see Figure 1). There was no change in the proportion of graduates who chose to go overseas to start their careers, holding steady at 1.7%. 13.9% of graduates went on to further study or training (as a sole activity), with 2.6% going on to teacher training and 6.2% on to studying another higher degree in the UK, a minor fall of 0.1 percentage points on last year.

Unemployment was marginally up by 0.1 percentage points on last year, to 6.2%, but still much lower than the figure of 6.9% for 2002 graduates. If all those who were unemployed but due to start work within a month are excluded, unemployment drops to 6.0%.

Types of work

144,515 UK-domiciled first degree graduates from 2005 were known to be working in the UK at the start of 2006, six months after their graduation.

The most popular area for new graduates remains the health sector, which increased in relative popularity this year (see Table 1). 13.2% went into a health or health associate profession, up 0.4 percentage points from last year's figure. Much of this is attributed to graduates from highly vocational medical or nursing degrees.¹

Commercial, industrial and public sector management is still very popular, with nearly one in ten graduates, 9.5%, entering managerial posts six months after graduating. This represents a modest decrease of 0.3 percentage points, but one that is unlikely to represent a significant change in the recruitment market.

The fastest rising occupations for graduates were amongst business and finance professionals and associates, up 0.6 percentage points on last year, and accounting for 7.8% of the working graduate population, and in the area of arts, design, culture and sports, which also rose 0.6 percentage points to 5.8% of the graduate population.

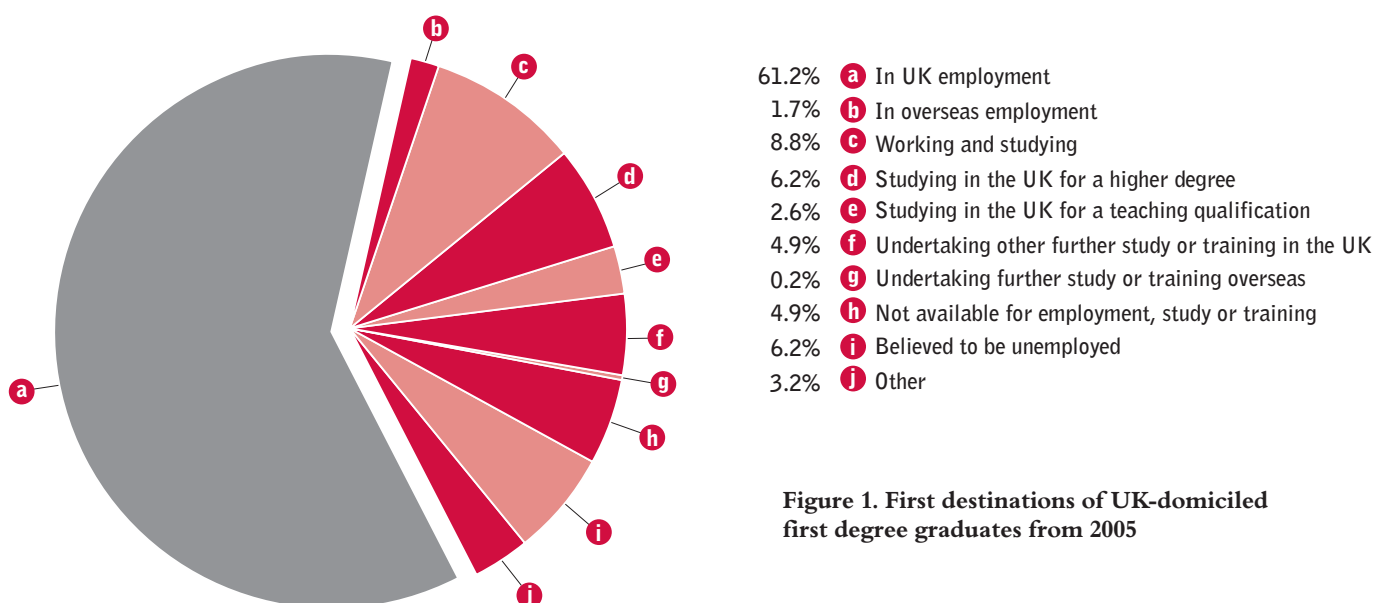


Figure 1. First destinations of UK-domiciled first degree graduates from 2005

¹Medicine and nursing are not covered by the paper publication of *What Do Graduates Do?*, but are covered online for the first time this year at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/wdgd. Destinations for anatomy, physiology and pathology, and pharmacology, toxicology and pharmacy graduates can also be found online.

Articles

Education positions were also popular - 6.6% of new graduates started their career in a teaching or educational role.

The impression of a recent upturn in graduate recruitment is reinforced by the news that the largest decrease in graduate occupations was in areas not traditionally considered graduate level. Clerical and secretarial positions remained an important starting option for many graduates at 11.7% of the working cohort, but this represents a fall of 0.7 percentage points on 2005. These positions are usually seen as entry level jobs that allow inexperienced graduates to gain and demonstrate the skills they need to progress in employment, and as a result, graduates pass quickly out of them into jobs that more commonly require graduate level skills.

Subjects

Science

With a debate about the supply of science skills still ongoing, it is perhaps surprising to see that the number of UK-domiciled physics graduates went up in 2005 by 85 from last year to 2,035. Sports science was the largest climber at 5,350, up 615, whilst biology saw a marginal rise in numbers. The number of environmental sciences graduates, on the other hand, has fallen, whilst the number for chemistry has stayed virtually the same.

Although the number of graduates in the subject rose, there was little evidence of a large demand for physics degrees in the economy, as some have suggested.

The unemployment rate for physics graduates six months after receiving their degree went down 0.4 percentage points, but physicists were still the most likely graduates from all the major science disciplines to be unemployed, with 8.7%, or over one in twelve, out of work six months after graduating. Physics graduates were more likely to go into the finance and business industry or enter management than to find work in the sciences. 27% of physics graduates went on to higher degrees, up 2.5 percentage points from last year, and this raises questions about the level at which the demand for physics skills by employers truly lies.

There was an increase in the unemployment rate of chemistry graduates of 0.5 percentage points. 6.3% of first degree chemists were out of work six months after graduation. But the most popular area of employment for chemistry graduates remains scientific research and development, taking 22.2% of working graduates, down 0.8 percentage points from last year. Nearly a quarter of all chemistry graduates, 24.8%, went on to a higher degree in the UK, rising 1.1 percentage points from last year. With unemployment rising, and work at first degree level in the sciences falling, this again prompts questions about the real issues of shortage of chemistry graduates.

Although sports science continues to gain in popularity, unemployment fell by 0.4 percentage points this year, and now stands well below the graduate average at

4.7%. Sport and fitness occupations, and education are the most popular working destinations for sports scientists, but management remains a popular option, with 8.4% of working sports science graduates starting their careers as a manager.

Maths and IT

After making gains in 2004, both subjects saw a drop in graduate numbers. Maths fell by 180 graduates to 4,030 and IT by 290 to a still-healthy 15,930 in 2005. But this masked differences in the relative outcomes for each degree.

Maths graduates experienced a sharp rise in unemployment, up 0.8 percentage points to 6.6%, meaning mathematicians were more likely than graduates as a whole to be unemployed six months after graduating. But more than a third of those who did get work, 33.9%, entered the lucrative business and finance occupational area, up over 5 percentage points on last year. In addition, 7.1% of maths graduates were in teacher training six months after graduating. Despite concerns about the number of trainee maths teachers in the UK, the number of graduates entering teaching courses fell by 0.8 percentage points from 2005.

Unemployment for IT graduates fell 0.4 percentage points, but remains at 10.3% six months after graduating, giving IT the highest unemployment rate of all the subjects covered in *What Do Graduates Do?* - a legacy of the recession that hit the industry in the early part of the decade.

Type of work	Percentage of working population
Marketing, Sales and Advertising Professionals	4.5%
Commercial, Industrial and Public Sector Managers	9.5%
Scientific Research, Analysis & Development Professionals	1.1%
Engineering Professionals	3.0%
Health Professionals and Associate Professionals	13.2%
Education Professionals	6.6%
Business and Financial Professionals and Associate Professionals	7.8%
Information Technology Professionals	4.0%
Arts, Design, Culture and Sports Professionals	5.8%
Legal Professionals	0.7%
Social & Welfare Professionals	3.2%
Other Professionals, Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	5.3%
Numerical Clerks and Cashiers	2.8%
Other Clerical and Secretarial Occupations	11.7%
Retail, Catering, Waiting and Bar Staff	9.3%
Other Occupations	11.5%
Unknown Occupations	0.1%

Table 1. Types of work of UK-domiciled graduates from 2005 who were employed in the UK six months after graduation

Engineering

There is plenty of evidence of considerable employer demand for some engineering disciplines, amidst concern that supply is insufficient to meet the needs of industry.

The number of civil engineering graduates increased again this year, up 175 to 1,700. Over two-thirds (67.4%) of working civil engineers went into an engineering career, and unemployment rates dropped sharply by 0.6 percentage points to 3.3%, to give civil engineers the lowest unemployment rate of all subjects in *What Do Graduates Do?* Architects and building graduates also had over two-thirds (67.1%) of working graduates going into a directly relevant job and a low unemployment rate, 3.9%. However, graduate numbers fell slightly this year to 4,710 - the first fall for five years.

Mechanical engineering numbers rose for the first time since the mid-90s, by a marginal amount, and this was accompanied by an increase in the number of graduates going into engineering jobs, up 1.8 percentage points to 54.9% of working graduates. There are still mixed messages about demand for the qualification, though - unemployment rose slightly by 0.2 percentage points and remains well above the average graduate unemployment rate, at 7.3%.

The recession in IT also hit electrical and electronic engineering hard, and the slow recovery process continues. Employment for electrical and electronic engineering graduates went up by 0.8 percentage points in engineering, and 2.8 percentage points in IT professions, whilst unemployment fell by 1.5 percentage points - but still remains high, at 9.2%.

Social sciences

The number of graduates went up in all disciplines, with the numbers of both law and psychology graduates going up by over 1,000 this year. There were 10,570 psychology graduates in 2005, giving it over 10,000 graduates for the first time, and also overtaking English as the fifth most popular subject covered in *What Do Graduates Do?* Law takes fourth place, with 11,675 graduates - 1 in 22 degrees awarded in 2005 was in law.

Management, business and finance careers remain popular with social scientists - one in six (16.1%) politics graduates translated their skills into management jobs, whilst over 40% of economics graduates started their careers in business or finance. Social and welfare professions were also important for psychologists and sociologists, whilst surveying and planning roles were a key niche for geography graduates.

Only sociology and politics, which saw rates hold steady, did not record a rise in unemployment for these popular degrees - only law and psychology had unemployment rates below the graduate average, despite the large rise in graduate numbers for both disciplines.

Arts and humanities

Modern languages were the only subjects to fall in numbers, all other subjects seeing more graduates than in 2004. The number of language graduates fell by 260 from last year, and is now down 14% since 1996. But most other subjects saw a strong rise in graduate numbers, with 920 more performing arts graduates leaving university than last year.

The employability of media studies graduates remained high, with 72.1% of graduates working six months after graduation - putting it third, behind marketing and civil engineering in the rankings, and unemployment down significantly by 0.6 percentage points. Media studies graduates were the most likely of all graduates to enter the extremely competitive media industry. However, only one in seven, 14.5%, of media studies graduates managed to get work in the media, which remains one of the most difficult areas of the economy to break into.

A rise in the number of English graduates, to 10,345, was not enough to prevent it being overtaken in popularity by psychology. Education remained the most popular professional area for new English graduates, with 14% starting their careers in the sector. Graduates in the subject were also the most likely to enter initial teacher training six months after graduating, with 7.6% going on to a PGCE.

One in nine, 11.6%, of working history graduates started their career in management, whilst performing arts and art and design students were most likely to start work in cultural professions.

Business and administrative studies

Business and management remained the most popular degree with UK-domiciled 2005 graduates, although numbers fell a little. 20,085 graduates received degrees in this field. That corresponds to 7.8% of all graduates, or just over one in thirteen. Over one in five, 21.1%, of business and management students went into management positions. This was a slight fall on last year, but despite the large numbers of business studies students graduating, there is no sign that they are becoming less employable as more of their skills enter the labour market.

After a fall last year, the number of accountancy graduates rose again as industry demand increased, to 3,475 in 2005. At the same time, the proportion of working accountancy graduates entering business and finance positions rose 4.7 percentage points to 46%.

The number of marketing students fell this year, down to 2,770 graduates. But 2.7 percentage points more working marketing graduates went into marketing jobs six months after graduating, with over a quarter, 28.4%, entering the industry. Management was also a very popular option for these business-orientated graduates, with 17.7% starting their careers as commercial, industrial, or public sector managers.

Foundation degrees and HNDs

12,645 graduates completed HNDs or foundation degrees in 2005, and 10,370 of them replied to the DLHE survey.

For the first time, substantial numbers of foundation degree graduates were recorded, with 5,090 graduates polled and 4,165 being included in this survey.

Overall, the most popular outcome for these graduates was to continue onwards to an honours degree - 36.2% followed this route, and with 30.8% working in the UK and 20.9% combining work and study, foundation and HND graduates had an unemployment rate of 3.7%, far lower than the average for first degree graduates and comparable with those first degree subjects which have the lowest unemployment rates.

Further information

To order *What Do Graduates Do? 2007*, price: £14.95, please contact UCAS Distribution, tel: 01242 544610, fax: 01242 544960, email: distribution@ucas.ac.uk. *What Do Graduates Do?* is also available online at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/wdgd



Summary

This article summarises research examining graduate recruitment into the City of London. Among the key points are:

- Recruiters tended not to place emphasis on degree subject, looking instead for skills such as intelligence and analytical aptitude.
- Employers increasingly favoured recruiting overseas graduates as they saw them as having stronger language skills, cultural awareness, greater maturity and business awareness than their British peers.
- There was a dichotomy in the skills language used by higher education and employers and, therefore, a need for a common skills language.
- Few instances of collaboration between higher education and employers existed, despite the view that such partnerships would be mutually beneficial.

Introduction

In September 2006, the City of London published *Graduate Skills and Recruitment in the City* (referred to as the City of London report hereafter), which examined the relationship between UK higher education institutions (HEIs) and Financial and Related Business Services (FRBS) employers in the City of London.¹ It analysed perceptions of skills required of graduate recruits, discussed existing recruitment practices and assessed views on the performance of UK HEIs as providers of suitably qualified labour. The study was based on a sample of 25 international FRBS companies (19 of which were large firms and 6 were small to medium-sized firms) and 10 UK HEIs. This article summarises the report's key findings and draws on other evidence where appropriate.

Labour market characteristics

Research examining graduate career choices has pointed to the popularity of investment banking as a career destination for graduates. The latest UK Graduate Careers Survey, published in April 2006 and based on 16,452 finalists, noted that 11.1% of finalists from 2006

Graduate Recruitment in the City of London

wanted to go into investment banking.² In October 2006, Zurich Financial Services launched a global graduate scheme in a bid to develop senior financial experts for the future.³ Various courses have also been developed to equip graduates with skills appropriate for work in financial and business services. In January 2006, Reading University and NASD, the private regulator of securities firms and brokers, launched a Masters degree in Capital Markets, Compliance and Regulation, while in April City University's Cass Business School introduced a Masters degree in pensions.⁴

Evidence has demonstrated a rather complex picture of the job market in the City of London. On the one hand, recent business forecasts from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) showed an anticipated rise of 18% in bonuses for 4,200 City workers.⁵ On the other hand, stories of leading City of London-based employers outsourcing jobs to India and China, potentially resulting in job cuts in the City of London, have also made the headlines.⁶

The City of London report argued that it was difficult to define accurately the City's graduate recruitment market given the scarcity of timely, appropriate and publicly available data. It reviewed three potential models that looked at the size of the graduate recruitment market, and indicated tentatively that graduate intake lay in the range of 7,950 to 10,750 per annum. However, the study recommended that further research was needed in order to produce a reliable and meaningful measure.

Recruitment and selection objectives

The majority of graduate posts in firms surveyed for the City of London report were client facing and non-specialist. Over 70% of recruiters surveyed placed no emphasis on degree subject, looking first to attributes such as intelligence, confidence, analytical and critical skills and aptitude for learning. A minority of specialist posts in investment banking and fund management, such as financial

engineering, quantitative research and risk management, demanded more specialised technical skills.

The following three factors (in order of importance) were identified as criteria used when selecting graduates:

- A good firm 'fit' - background and character, social maturity, cultural understanding and language skills.
- Soft or transferable skills - communication, teamworking, problem-solving and analytical skills, drive, tenacity and motivation.
- Hard or technical skills - knowledge or familiarity with specific subjects or business processes.

Recruitment practices

The City of London report noted that recruiters operated along traditional routes, with 75% of recruiters saying that they concentrated their recruitment activities on a relatively short target list of HEIs. This approach was founded, the report argued, on historical precedent, and on the proven record of these universities in providing employers with recruits they needed. The Milk Round was the most common method of identifying graduate recruits; however, the report warned of this method of recruitment becoming outdated, given the rising number of students deferring applications until after university.

Larger firms employed various recruitment methods, including sending recruitment representatives to universities, sponsorship of degrees, skills sessions, advertising in university journals and other publications, and the internet. Larger firms also operated carefully timed autumn campaigns.

Smaller employers, in contrast, used more informal methods. They attended universities to a far lesser extent than larger companies. Recruitment among small employers was more passive, in that these firms relied on candidates finding them rather than vice versa. Small firms maintained contacts with universities but these tended to be with individual advisors and academics, and their online presence was also less significant. Although some followed an annual recruitment pattern, they were on the

whole more inclined to recruit on an ad-hoc basis.

Skills requirements and the need for a common skills language

Employers surveyed in the City of London report felt that a key role of higher education was to prepare graduates for work. As a result, they looked for graduates who could apply their education practically, although there was a general observation among employers that graduates struggled to do this. Recruiters perceived graduates to be poorly prepared to undertake key tasks such as synthesising and summarising information, both verbally and in writing, skills that employers wanted HEIs to integrate into curricula. There was also evidence of graduates struggling to plan their time and prioritise workloads.

The study also revealed a discrepancy in the skills language used by employers, which was obscuring the message employers were sending to HEIs. There was strong evidence of employers using skills terms regarding recruitment and selection, but there was disparity about what those terms meant, and as a result employers favoured their own interpretations based on their own organisations. This lack of clarity meant that HEIs were unable to identify employer requirements exactly.

HEIs had a broader interpretation of skills, but divergence was also evident here as institutions pursued their own educational objectives and sought to differentiate themselves from competitors. The fundamental problem, therefore, was that employers and HEIs talked at cross-purposes. The study recommended that employers and HEIs develop stronger relationships and clarify skills language.

Recruitment of international graduates and comparison with UK higher education

Given the international nature of the sector, employer respondents in the City of London report were looking increasingly towards overseas graduates and students to fulfil recruitment needs. European graduates were perceived to be more mature, business aware, to have relevant gap-year or intra-course

experience, and to be better prepared for the competitive recruitment process than their British counterparts. Employers also prized the cultural awareness gained from studying outside one's home country.

Employers highlighted various reasons for employing international graduates. As degree courses took longer to complete in other countries, overseas graduates were seen to have greater opportunities to undertake voluntary and other types of work. UK students at UK HEIs were deemed to lack mobility, for example by not participating in international exchanges.

Other research has suggested that hiring foreign graduates offers business benefits to UK firms. A study based on 104 personnel and HR professionals published in 2002, for example, found that 66% of recruiters hired graduates from European countries other than the UK.⁷ The most popular reasons for doing so were graduates' strong language skills and adding diversity to the workforce. European graduates were also seen to be more work oriented. A study published in May 2006 by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE), meanwhile, stated that international students in the UK 'have already displayed the qualities of drive, determination, ambition and command of languages that make them a self-identifying cadre of potential leaders'.⁸

Strengths of UK higher education

The City of London report concluded that higher education in the UK produces flexible thinkers who can use their initiative. Employers thought that UK students had the opportunity to develop their soft employability skills such as teamwork, problem-solving and communication. The report noted that UK higher education had developed an employability agenda to a greater extent than other countries.

The CIHE's report also highlighted strengths of higher education in the UK, noting that it 'develops some of the best graduates and research in the world'. It also argued that higher education in the UK 'encourages the spirit of enquiry and curiosity, of problem-solving, constructive questioning and lateral thinking that they [employers] seek in their high fliers'.⁸

Collaboration and partnership between HEIs and employers

There were very few instances of collaboration between UK HEIs and recruiters surveyed in the City of London report. Recruiters perceived HEIs to be unresponsive and uncoordinated to business dealings. Yet, coherent collaboration was seen to be mutually beneficial. The CIHE's report also raised the wider issue of business and higher education collaborating, noting the benefits for both business and the wider competitive advantage of the UK.

Recruiters surveyed in the City of London report wanted to cooperate with universities in order to provide a greater range of meaningful work-experience schemes, but they regarded university curricula as inflexible. A number of the employers surveyed wanted to develop relationships with teaching staff, and expected careers services to be more active in brokering relationships with HEIs.

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Summary

Mary McCarthy and Jane Simm, careers advisers at the University of Sheffield, report the findings of a study undertaken by the Careers Service, on employers' attitudes to the recruitment of PhD researchers in non-academic environments. The study helps to underline many of the issues found from earlier similar research, but there are some exciting developments too. It is hoped that the research will inform work already underway in many academic departments and careers services.

Background

This research was designed to inform the training and career development provision for PhDs within the University of Sheffield. A great deal of work was already underway; in the Careers Service, the Graduate Research Centre and a number of academic departments, so one aim of this research was to offer possible applications for future funding.

The focus of the research was to address two main questions:

- Why do employers recruit PhDs and contract researchers? and,
- Why might certain employers not recruit from these cohorts?

A questionnaire was designed, piloted and eventually sent out to over 1,000 employers with links to the University of Sheffield Careers Service. Follow-up telephone calls were made to a number of key employers. The contract researcher element was added to the questionnaire between the pilot phase and the actual mail shot. This was as a direct result of the appointment of a second careers adviser and the enhancement of the roles to include work with contract research staff.

Both quantitative and qualitative results were drawn together in a report that was launched at the UK Grad national conference in September 2006.¹

The on-line and postal questionnaires elicited a response rate of 5.7% (104 responses), making it one of the largest surveys of its kind undertaken by a single university. Employer selection took account of size of industry and range of business areas. The responses, demonstrated in Figures 1a and 1b,

Employer Attitudes to Postgraduate Researchers

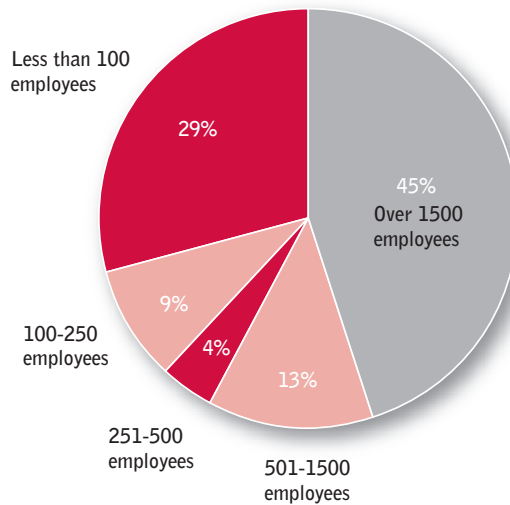


Figure 1a. Respondents by size of organisation

represent a good spread across both size and type of industry.

Our findings help to underline many of the issues found from earlier research into employer attitudes to researchers.²⁻⁵ However, there were some exciting developments too.

Recruitment issues

The majority of recruiters who expressed interest in applications from PhDs expected these candidates to apply for research and development or consultancy functions within the organisation. Many of these responses came from large organisations in engineering, IT and pharmaceutical areas. Difficulties arose when asked about other functions within

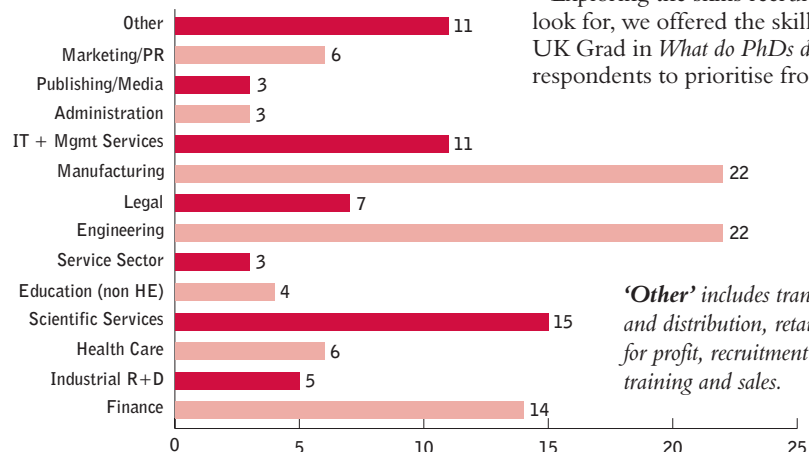


Figure 1b. Respondents by areas of business

(Please note that some employers have reported more than one area of business)

the organisation. Typically, the larger firms would consider research applicants for these roles, provided candidates were able to: a) express their understanding of the skills involved, b) demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their own skill base and effective matching to the role, and c) be convincing about why they wanted to be considered for a post which was not directly related to their research skills or area of academic expertise.

Evidence from UK Grad (*What to PhDs Do?*) and the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education statistics, for example, show that significant numbers of PhDs are able to make a successful transition from their research into a variety of roles within commerce and industry.⁶ However, the question "Why the change?" is still likely to be asked by recruiters and PhDs need to be ready with answers.

Another recruitment issue, which was highlighted by this research, concerns the employment process. For a number of recruiters, the employment process was deemed to be the same for PhDs as for other candidates. However, almost 20% of respondents to this question stated that the recruitment process would differ. In telephone discussions with some of these recruiters, they emphasised the need for PhDs and junior contract researchers to use their networking skills when looking for posts that reflected their skills and experience. Going via the traditional graduate recruitment route may not be appropriate for some posts. The difficulty, for both candidates and careers advisers, is to know when this caveat will apply.

Exploring the skills recruiters typically look for, we offered the skills set used by UK Grad in *What do PhDs do?* and asked respondents to prioritise from this list.

'Other' includes transport and distribution, retail, not for profit, recruitment and training and sales.

“It (the value of their qualifications and research experience) would depend on what function they were applying for and whether the applicant had the right skills set”
(large telecommunications firm)

The resultant rankings can be found in Table 1.

Perceived benefits and barriers to PhDs recruitment

As we might expect, when asked about the perceived benefits of recruiting postgraduates, the responses mirrored Table 1 in many respects. 50% of respondents considered specialist knowledge and research skills to be beneficial. 30% considered the future potential and maturity of PhDs to be beneficial whilst only 11% thought PhD level IT skills would be of particular benefit. These results mirror the findings of the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA) research carried out a few years earlier.⁵

The *perceived barriers* to recruitment of PhDs centred on lack of commercial awareness, difficulty in adapting to non-academic work cultures and over-specialisation (48% of respondents). This again reflects findings in earlier research but these barriers extended to the recruitment of junior contract researchers too.

New developments

So far, our findings mirror what has gone before and, to that extent, should form part of the body of research termed ‘pre-Roberts’.⁷ We are in a transition period at the moment. The majority of research-led institutions are only a few years into the implementation of the Roberts Agenda and just beginning to see the results of more focused training and professional development provision for researchers. However, this piece of research does provide something of a bridge between the pre-Roberts findings and research which will need to be done in the future.

The most exciting development came from responses of employers who recruit small numbers of higher education

candidates or who only recruit sporadically. It was extremely heartening to see that, where these employers have recruited PhDs, they are very pleased with both the work and the progression of these employees.

These responses help to prove the value of our researchers to a wide range of industries and to the SME market as well as to large national and multinational employers. The difficulties seem to lie in bringing researchers together with a wide variety of recruiters at times and in ways to suit both parties. Charles Jackson, a National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC) Fellow, is doing research into this area at the moment and his results should be a useful addition to the debate.⁸

Recommendations

For those of us working with PhDs and junior contract researchers in the University of Sheffield, we are trying to take these recommendations forward in a variety of ways. We hope that the recommendations will be of value to recruiters in industry, commerce and to colleagues in other higher education institutions.

- Work with employers. Raise awareness of the nature of the PhD and postdoctoral experience. For example, stressing the extent to which multidisciplinary in research is promoted in the University of Sheffield.
- Work with PhD and postdoctoral researchers on **identifying** the skills and experiences they have acquired and **translating** these into commercially understood skills and experiences.
- Continue to develop PhD and postdoctoral researchers’ career management skills so that they **market their skills and experience effectively** - on CVs, application forms, at interview and in assessment centre situations.
- Encourage researchers to **explore commercial awareness** through industrial placements, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, employer-led skill workshops and research-specific seminars in areas such as grant writing, intellectual property and budgeting.
- Use **support from employers** who have volunteered to run skills sessions or other activities on campus and

“Recent PhD recruits have shown a good deal of maturity and have been able to move through their early career faster than undergraduate recruits”
(small financial consultancy firm)

network with those who have already employed PhD and postdoctoral researchers to provide case studies for dissemination.

- Develop **awareness of job seeking strategies** which, for researchers, can be more diverse than the traditional graduate training scheme opportunities offered by many employers.

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Table 1. Employers’ rankings of skills

Skill	Ranked First	Ranked Second	Ranked Third	Ranked Fourth	Other ranking
Personal skills	23	7	9	2	5
Communication	21	10	10	7	2
Research skills	20	2	4	3	3
Project management skills	18	8	8	4	7
Teamwork	17	9	10	8	6
Job related	15	9	3	3	7
Career management	7	3	2	2	15



Prospects Directory Salary & Vacancy Survey

This survey analyses job vacancies from Graduate Prospects' annual graduate vacancy publication *Prospects Directory*. *Prospects Directory* is an A to Z of graduate recruiters, indexed by company, type of work and subject of study, and contains comprehensive careers information. Recruiters who appear in the publication can also be found at www.prospects.ac.uk/profiles.

Unlike job postings in the 'search job vacancies' section on prospects.ac.uk (last analysed for the Spring 06 issue of *Graduate Market Trends*), which feature vacancies for both immediate and long-term start, the vacancies in *Prospects Directory* are primarily for finalists looking for jobs commencing after graduation.

Scope of the survey

This survey analyses vacancies advertised in the 'company profiles' and 'A-Z recruiter listings' sections of the 2006/7 issue of *Prospects Directory*, published in September 2006 and aimed at finalists graduating in 2007. The study examines just over 19,500 vacancies from over 300 recruiters, of which 23% have salary information.¹

Table 1 shows the salary distribution for these vacancies, and Figure 1 shows the distribution of salaries within broad salary bands.

Key findings

- The average salary offered by advertisers in the 2006/7 issue of *Prospects Directory* is £23,024, with a median of £22,000. These represent a 0.8% and 4.8% increase from last year's figures (£22,851 and £21,000

respectively). The high salaries are a reflection of the types of recruiters featured, which are almost exclusively large organisations which offer high remuneration (see caveats).

- Salaries offered range from £8,400 to £38,000 (see breakdown by job category for more information).
- The relatively small year-on-year increase in average salaries is attributed, at least partly, to this year's inclusion of the recruitment of 900 police officers by the Police Service in Scotland, with a starting salary at £19,227.
- Many vacancies (44% of total) have not specified the location of work in the UK. Of those with specific location information, just under one in ten (9.4% of all vacancies) are in London, where the average salary is £25,727 (median £25,000).
- Of vacancies in the capital, one in five (21.7%) are finance type of work. This is followed by vacancies in sales, retail and buying (15.9% of all vacancies in London), IT (13%) and management consultancy (12.3%). Together, these account for three in five (62.9%) jobs in the capital.

Caveats

The following facts **must** be taken into account when making inferences from this survey about the overall population of new graduates.

- Vacancies advertised in *Prospects Directory* are posted mainly by large companies and organisations and are aimed specifically at graduates. A substantial number of graduates, however, obtain posts which are not

specifically targeted at degree holders.

As a result, **the average salary offered in Prospects Directory is likely to be higher than the average graduate starting salary (reported by students in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey, for example²), as there is a bias towards larger firms and specific graduate jobs.**

- Vacancy sizes do not necessarily reflect the number of companies recruiting. For example, in some cases, a **large number of vacancies arise as a result of the recruitment activities of just one or two companies.**
- Although this survey is large, it still only includes a small sample of the total number of posts on offer to graduates, and trends identified from such small samples may not necessarily be representative of the overall graduate recruitment market. In addition, only around 27% of recruiters have provided salary information.
- Occupations which require additional qualifications, such as law, medicine and education, are not covered in this survey.
- Many smaller graduate employers recruit locally and do not require the scope offered by advertising in *Prospects Directory*.
- Salaries are recorded at the lowest base level reported in the advertisements, so do not include commission or other bonuses, and other increments based on, for example, experience and postgraduate qualifications, unless these are incorporated into the salaries given without having specified that this is the case.

Figure 1. Distribution of salaries from vacancies advertised in 2006/7 Prospects Directory (www.prospects.ac.uk/profiles)

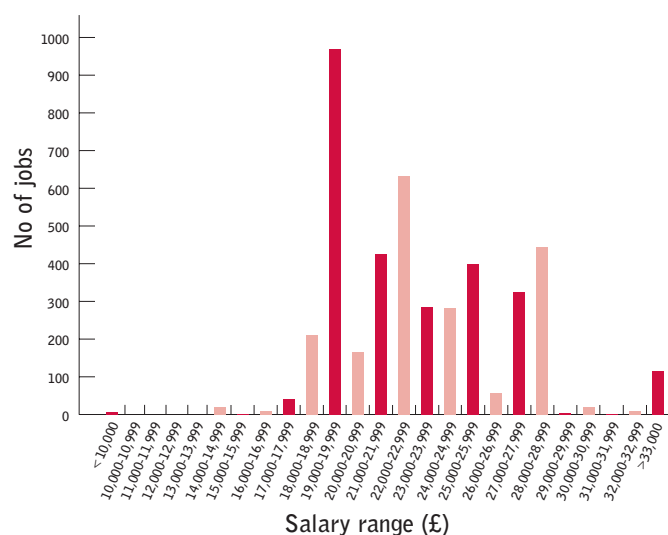


Table 1. Vacancies advertised in Prospects Directory 2006/07

Sample Size (Vacancies)	19,509
Sample Size (Salaries)	4,424
Lowest Salary	£8,400
Highest Salary	£38,000
Mean Salary (UK only)	£22,974
Mean Salary (UK and overseas)	£23,024
Lower decile (bottom 10%)	£19,227
Lower quartile (bottom 25%)	£19,227
Median Salary	£22,000
Upper quartile	£25,000
Upper decile	£28,500

Note: With the exception of mean salary (UK) only, all other categories include data from UK and overseas.

¹ Information from both the paper version of *Prospects Directory* and from www.prospects.ac.uk/Profiles is used for this survey as the two sources are complementary.

² See 'Graduate employment and salaries review', *What Do Graduates Do? 2007*, HECSU/AGCAS. www.prospects.ac.uk/links/WGDG

Salaries and vacancies by: job category

Prospects Directory 2006/7							
	Vacancies		Salaries				
	Sample	% of Total	Sample	Range		Median (£)	Mean (£)
				Lower (£)	Upper (£)		
Administration	3143	16.1	695	8400	26000	21588	21216
Advertising, marketing & PR	201	1.0	64	18500	27500	22000	23078
Animal & plant resources	0	0.0	0				
Arts, design & crafts	10	0.1	1	17000	17000	17000	17000
Construction & property management	354	1.8	30	21000	25000	21000	21567
Counselling, social & guidance services	15	0.1	0				
Economists, statisticians etc	257	1.3	125	25000	27500	25000	25100
Education, teaching & lecturing	358	1.8	0				
Engineering	2062	10.6	530	20500	32000	22000	22686
Finance, insurance and pensions & actuarial work	5258	27.0	535	14000	30000	24000	23292
Health care	4	0.0	2	17000	17000	17000	17000
Hospitality	60	0.3	0				
Human resources & employment	409	2.1	143	16000	30000	22000	22888
Information services	216	1.1	19	22750	25000	25000	24526
Information technology	1746	8.9	413	17000	35000	25000	25816
Law enforcement & public protection	980	5.0	944	17774	27068	19227	19290
Legal services	188	1.0	14	18500	31000	29000	24036
Leisure, sport & tourism	65	0.3	0				
Logistics & transport	242	1.2	37	19500	27500	22000	23547
Management consultancy	1187	6.1	384	21000	28500	28500	27328
Manufacturing & processing	184	0.9	33	20500	27000	25000	25038
Natural resources & the environment	69	0.4	13	22000	23000	23000	22538
Publishing, media & performing arts	28	0.1	16	17500	22750	22750	20453
Sales, retail & buying	2086	10.7	370	17000	38000	25000	27395
Scientific services	383	2.0	56	21500	32000	25000	25366
Others	4	0.0	0				
Total all types of work	19509	100	4424	8400	38000	22000	23024

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those job categories where there are 30 or more vacancies offered. Discussion of salaries is limited to those job categories where there are 30 or more vacancies with salary information.

Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work.

Key findings by job category

- Over a quarter (27%) of vacancies advertised in the 2006/7 issue of Prospects Directory are positions in finance, insurance, pensions and actuarial work, and another one in six

(16.1%) in administration which includes vacancies in general graduate management trainee schemes. In addition, sales, retail and buying, engineering and IT account for 10.7%, 10.6% and 8.9% respectively of all vacancies.

- The vast majority of the vacancies under law enforcement and public protection are with the Police Service in Scotland, who have advertised for 900 officers on www.prospects.ac.uk/Profiles.
- Salaries offered range from £8,400 to £38,000. The highest salaries are offered to graduate area manager

trainees with a retailer (£38,000) and graduate recruits with a software and consulting services firm (£35,000).

The lowest salary (£8,400) is for management trainees working abroad as personal assistants to company directors, with accommodation and meals provided.

- Of job categories where there are 30 or more vacancies with salary information, sales, retail and buying offers the highest mean salary at £27,395, followed by management consultancy (£27,328), whilst the highest median (£28,500) was for management consultancy positions.

Salaries and vacancies by: type of employer

Prospects Directory 2006/7							
	Vacancies		Salaries				
	Sample	% of Total	Sample	Range		Median (£)	Mean (£)
				Lower (£)	Upper (£)		
Civil service & local government	715	3.7	235	19336	25000	25000	23875
Armed forces	80	0.4	80	22400	27068	22400	22877
Education	350	1.8	0				
Other public & voluntary bodies	1291	6.6	994	17774	25000	19227	19415
TOTAL PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT SECTOR	2436	12.5	1309	17774	27068	19227	20427
Agriculture	2	0.0	0				
Construction industries	624	3.2	188	15750	26000	21500	22272
Oil, mining & extractive industries	208	1.1	41	27500	32000	27500	27867
Chemical manufacturers	521	2.7	83	24000	32000	27000	26794
Engineering products	910	4.7	275	20000	28000	22000	22263
Food, drink & tobacco	325	1.7	53	27000	27000	27000	27000
Other products	236	1.2	50	15750	27000	24000	23066
Energy & natural resources	354	1.8	276	20800	29000	23000	23301
Industrial services	1753	9.0	133	15750	26000	22000	21883
TOTAL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES & INDUSTRIAL SERVICES	4931	25.3	1099	15750	32000	22000	23296
Finance	1450	7.4	222	14000	30000	23000	23056
Accountants	913	4.7	0				
Banks & building societies	1565	8.0	277	17000	27250	24000	24171
Insurance	175	0.9	100	17000	27250	22000	22861
Legal	179	0.9	2	31000	31000	31000	31000
TOTAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	4282	21.9	602	14000	31000	24000	23563
PR Consultants	0		0				
Computer consultants	1290	6.6	297	17000	35000	28500	27369
Management consultants	1778	9.1	276	28500	30000	28500	28552
Recruitment consultants	358	1.8	158	16000	25000	21588	20615
Advertising & marketing	171	0.9	7	20500	20500	20500	20500
Private training provider	41	0.2	30	19000	19000	19000	19000
TOTAL CONSULTANCIES AND AGENCIES	3638	18.6	769	16000	35000	28500	26016

Salaries and vacancies by: type of employer

Prospects Directory 2006/7							
	Vacancies		Salaries				
	Sample	% of Total	Sample	Range		Median (£)	Mean (£)
				Lower (£)	Upper (£)		
Retail	1134	5.8	266	15750	38000	22000	27159
Wholesale & warehousing	241	1.2	29	15750	27500	27500	25975
Hotels & catering	288	1.5	150	15750	18500	18500	18497
Publishers	591	3.0	3	15750	24000	24000	23554
Transport & communications	356	1.8	167	17000	32000	23000	23692
Entertainment & leisure	135	0.7	12	15750	22000	22000	21924
Other commercial services	1330	6.8	19	8400	24000	17500	15993
TOTAL SERVICE INDUSTRIES	4075	20.9	646	8400	38000	22000	23763
Other industries NEC	148	0.8	0				
TOTAL ALL INDUSTRIES	19509	100	4424	8400	38000	22000	23024

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those types of employer where there are 30 or more vacancies offered. Discussion of salaries is limited to those types of employer where there are 30 or more vacancies with salary information.

Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work.

Key findings by type of employer

- The highest number of vacancies by type of employer advertised in the 2006/7 issue of Prospects Directory are

in management consultancies (9.1%), industrial services firms (9%) and banks and building societies (8%).*

- Of the five main types of industries, consultancies and agencies offer the highest mean and median salaries, at £26,016 and £28,500 respectively.
- Looking at a more detailed industry breakdown, management consultants offer the highest mean salary at £28,552. The oil industries, food and drink manufacturers, computer consultants and retail employers also

offer mean salaries of £27,000 or over, well above the average for all employers. For retail employers, however, salaries range from £15,750 to £38,000, and the median salary, at £22,000, is much lower than the average. This is due to the large number of vacancies (90) from one retail employer, with starting salaries at £38,000.

- The highest median salaries, at £28,500, are for positions with management and computer consultants.

* Industrial services firms include engineering consultancies and research organisations.

Salaries and vacancies by: subject of study

Prospects Directory 2006/7							
	Vacancies		Salaries				
	Sample	% of Total	Sample	Range		Median (£)	Mean (£)
				Lower (£)	Upper (£)		
Medical & related subjects	54	0.3	2	17000	17000	17000	17000
Biological sciences	15	0.1	4	20500	22500	22000	21845
Agriculture & related subjects	58	0.3	18	22000	22000	22000	22000
Any life science	76	0.4	0				
TOTAL LIFE SCIENCES	202	1.0	24	17000	22500	22000	21561
Chemistry	33	0.2	13	22000	27500	27500	25524
Materials science	19	0.1	6	26000	26000	26000	26000
Physics	46	0.2	20	21500	22400	22000	21930
Astronomy	0	0.0	0				
Geology	216	1.1	34	20500	32000	22400	25027
Environmental science	0	0.0	0				
Any physical science	0	0.0	0				
TOTAL PHYSICAL SCIENCES	314	1.6	72	20500	32000	22400	24337
Mathematics & statistics	79	0.4	9	20500	22400	21500	21529
Any computer related subject	370	1.9	166	17000	28500	28500	26260
Computer studies	143	0.7	14	21000	24200	22400	22615
TOTAL MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES & INFORMATICS	592	3.0	189	17000	28500	28500	25766
General engineering	32	0.2	15	20500	22500	22400	21667
Civil engineering	420	2.2	37	20500	26000	22400	23353
Mechanical engineering	309	1.6	84	20500	32000	21500	22288
Aeronautical engineering	24	0.1	10	21500	22400	21500	21860
Electrical engineering	192	1.0	37	20500	32000	21500	22600
Electronic engineering	112	0.6	30	21500	32000	22400	23301
Production engineering	69	0.4	14	20500	32000	27500	24722
Chemical engineering	107	0.5	33	22000	32000	27000	25803
Electrical and electronic	7	0.0	7	22400	23200	22400	22600
Any engineering	429	2.2	268	21000	27500	22000	22706
Technology	46	0.2	6	22400	32000	22400	24000
Architecture, building & planning	442	2.3	10	22000	22500	22400	22360
TOTAL ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY	2188	11.2	550	20500	32000	22000	22909

Salaries and vacancies by: subject of study

Prospects Directory 2006/7							
	Vacancies		Salaries				
	Sample	% of Total	Sample	Range		Median (£)	Mean (£)
				Lower (£)	Upper (£)		
Economics	130	0.7	124	20500	25000	25000	24915
Law	0	0.0	0			0	
Other social studies	29	0.2	13	20500	29000	25000	25458
TOTAL SOCIAL STUDIES	159	0.8	137	20500	29000	25000	24967
Business/ management studies	226	1.2	72	17000	26000	21000	21667
Financial management	159	0.8	56	21000	24200	22000	22117
Accountancy	8	0.0	8	23000	25000	25000	24875
Marketing/ market research	33	0.2	0				
Other business/administration studies	79	0.4	52	22000	24200	22000	22146
TOTAL BUSINESS & ADMINISTRATION STUDIES	503	2.6	187	17000	26000	22000	22069
Mass communication	0	0.0	0				
Education	0	0.0	0				
Creative arts	100	0.5	2	17000	17000	17000	17000
Other arts/ humanities	0	0.0	0				
TOTAL ARTS & HUMANITIES	100	0.5	2	17000	17000	17000	17000
LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS	16	0.1	16	17500	22750	22750	20453
LANGUAGES AND RELATED STUDIES	7	0.0	0				
ANY SOCIAL ECONOMICS/BUSINESS	401	2.1	37	17000	25000	23000	23101
ANY SCIENCE	48	0.2	1	22000	22000	22000	22000
ANY SCIENCE/ ENGINEERING	541	2.8	66	20000	27000	20000	21402
ANY NUMERATE DISCIPLINE	773	4.0	69	17000	30000	27500	27283
ANY SUBJECT	13665	70.0	3074	8400	38000	21588	22784
TOTAL ALL SUBJECTS	19509	100	4424	8400	38000	22000	23024

Discussion of vacancies is limited to those disciplines where there are 30 or more vacancies. Smaller sample sizes are too open to variation to identify any significant trends or factors at work. Due to the limited number of subjects with 30 or more vacancies with salary information, no comments about salaries by subject of study are drawn.

Key findings by subject of study

- Over two-thirds (70%) of the vacancies on offer in the 2006/7 issue of Prospects Directory are open to graduates from any discipline, indicating that many employers are looking for the 'soft' skills that graduates acquired during their study rather than their knowledge in a specific subject.
- Of vacancies which have not specified the degree subject required, over one in three (36.8%) are attributed to positions in finance, insurance, pensions and actuarial work, followed by administration (16.7%, which includes some management trainees), sales, retail and buying (12.8%), IT (7.5%) and management consultancy (7.4%).
- Of vacancies which require specific degree disciplines, engineering & technology (11.2% of total vacancies) are the most in demand.



Summary

Employer support for part-time study in higher education is found to vary widely with qualification aim and subject areas. Men are more likely than women to be beneficiaries of employer financial support, because they are more likely to be working full-time. However, there are currently large discrepancies in the data regarding employer support of tuition fees for part-time study, and more research in this area is being called for.

Employers generally have a very positive view about part-time study. However, it is revealed that many employers do not *fully* recognise the benefits that part-time study can bring to their organisation, eg in plugging skills gaps. As part-time study is seen as pivotal in upskilling the workforce, there needs to be more effective collaboration between the higher education sector and employers.

The importance of part-time delivery

Part-time higher education (HE) has played a significant role in the expansion of HE in recent years, and in meeting government objectives such as the extension of higher-level skills, widening participation and lifelong learning, says new research from Universities UK.¹ There were just over 837,000 part-time HE students in the UK in 2003/04, representing approximately 40% of all HE students. In addition, between 1997/98 and 2003/04, the growth in part-time students was more than three times greater than that for full-time.¹

It is anticipated that part-time study will become more important in years to come. The final report of the Leitch Review of Skills, published in December 2006, recommends raising the proportion of adults qualified to Level 4 (ie degree-level) or above, from 29% in 2005, to over 40% in 2020, along 'with a commitment to continue progression'.² This, however, is unlikely to be achieved by simply expanding the traditional mode of HE.

Employer Support for Part-Time Study in Higher Education

According to the Review, the current 50% HE participation target for 18-30 year olds, which has stalled at around 42% in recent years, tends to prioritise full-time first degrees and traditional undergraduate study, ahead of part-time opportunities for employees. In order to achieve the 40% target, Leitch calls for the expansion of 'flexible and responsive provision', increased employer engagement and investment in HE, particularly in the form of workforce development (eg foundation degrees). In other words, part-time study is going to play a crucial part in upskilling the current and future workforce, including continuing professional development.

UUK research

Universities UK has recently commissioned three studies on part-time students and part-time study in HE in the UK:^{1,3,4,5}

- Strand 1 - quantitative analysis of data, mainly from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), to set out, as far as possible, factual information about students studying part-time.³
- Strand 2 - a survey of a sample of 26 HE institutions across England, Wales and Scotland, including the Open University, to examine the issues regarding part-time provision.⁴
- Strand 3 - a survey of students' attitudes and experiences of part-time study and its costs, based on responses from 2,654 undergraduate students from 25 HE institutions.⁵

Parts of the remit of the research were to look at part-time student fees issues and current level of employer support. Owing to the importance of the employers' role in the future of HE, this article will take a look at findings from the research about employer support.

Employer support for tuition fees

According to the UUK studies, there are several sources of data regarding the level of employer support for part-time students in HE, but there are wide discrepancies between these sources and they are 'difficult to reconcile'. We shall, therefore, look at these separately in turn.

Analysis of the 2002/03 Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE)

survey data for the Strand 1 research indicated that, as expected, the vast majority of part-time students were employed during their course, and that, generally, employment increased up to middle age and declined over the age of 50. For example, 95% of part-time qualifiers in 2002/03 aged 30-39 were employed during their course, compared with 46% of those aged 60 and over.

Part-time students, who followed *certain qualification aims*, were asked of their *perception* of employer support for their study in the DLHE survey.³ The results are shown in Table 1. HNC and postgraduate diplomas/certificates students were particularly likely to have their fees paid by their employer.

Table 1. Qualifiers' perception of employer support for fees

Qualification obtained	% of qualifiers with employer support for fees
Research doctorates	46%
Taught masters	56%
PG Dip/Cert	68%
First degree	38%
Foundation degree	60%
CertHE	54%
HNC	72%
Total	53%

Source: HESA 2002/03 DLHE survey reported in Strand 1 of UUK study

There is, however, a second source of data: the HESA student records. Analysing the 2003/04 set of student record, Strand 1 of the research reported that 60% of the total of all part-time students in HE received no financial support towards fees for their studies, and another 6% either paid no fees or had their fees waived. Of those students who did receive support, the largest category was those who received support from their employer - 15% of all part-time students. A further 7% received support from the Department of Health/NHS

⁴ Qualifiers from undergraduate professional courses, undergraduate diplomas and certificates and institutional credits were not surveyed.

Table 2. Employer as major source of fees for part-time study by selected qualification aim

Qualification aim	% of students with employer support for fees
Research doctorate	7%
Taught masters	18%
Postgraduate diploma or certificate	24%
Professional qualification at postgraduate level	23%
Post registration health and social care courses	21%
First degree	13%
Foundation degree	24%
Certificate of HE	4%
Other undergraduate diplomas and certificates	11%
HNC	33%
Institutional undergraduate credit	8%

Source: 2003/04 HESA student record reported in Strand 1 of UUK study

‘which may be assumed to be the employer in many or most instances’. The record also indicates that there were major contributions towards tuition fees from other government departments and UK industry and commerce, and if these sources were included, some 25% of all part-time students received employer support for fees.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of employer support for fees by qualification aim, reported in the HESA student records. Again, the data reveals that students on HNC courses were the most likely to receive employer support for fees. This was followed by those studying for a postgraduate diploma or certificate, foundation degree, and postgraduate professional qualification. On the other hand, few students studying for a certificate of HE, research doctorate or institutional undergraduate credit received fees support from their employer.

Comparison of the figures in Table 1 and 2 reveals that there are considerable discrepancies between the two sources. According to the Strand 1 report, this is due to the fact that the student record data is supplied by the institution for all students and is based upon *its own knowledge* of the student fee arrangements. On the other hand, the DLHE destinations data is provided by the students at the end of their study, who may not have told the institution about their financial arrangements.

These discrepancies are also noted in Strands 2 and 3 of the UUK research. For those institutions in the Strand 2 study that were able to supply data on this issue, the proportion of students having their fees paid directly by employers ranged from under 5% to over 35%. This, in turn, was very different from the figures reported in the survey of students carried out for the Strand 3 part of the study, which found that some 35%

of part-time students reported having some or all of their tuition fees paid by their employer.^b

These discrepancies parallel those reported in the Strand 1 research. It was reported that a significant proportion of students supported by their employer would pay the fee themselves and then claim it back from their employer.⁴ These students were recorded by institutions as self-payers, which helps to explain the lower figures from institutional records and the higher figures submitted by students themselves. Additionally, figures from the HESA student records (reported in the Strand 1 report) and survey of institutions (Strand 2) were measured as a proportion of *all* part-time students within a particular category. In contrast, figures from the DLHE and the Strand 3 surveys were restricted to those who were sampled for the study in the first place (as in the case of the Strand 3 study) and who have chosen to respond. This contributed to the discrepancies between the institutional figures and those declared by the students themselves.

According to the Strand 2 report, as the question of employer support for tuition fees is of great importance to developing policies for public support for part-time study, further detailed research should be carried out to reconcile the differences in different studies.

Who are more likely to receive fees support from employers?

Apart from those following HNC or postgraduate diploma/certificate programmes, Strand 1 of the research reported that students studying more vocationally oriented subjects, notably engineering and technology, architecture and business studies were more likely to have employers as their major source of fees. There are, however, wide variations with qualifications. For example, 46% of

part-time students studying ‘other undergraduate’ programmes in engineering and technology received employer support, compared with 19% of those in postgraduate taught courses and 9% of students in postgraduate research programmes. Among foundation degree students, 31% of engineering and technology students received employer support, followed by social studies (28%) and education (25%).

In addition, Strands 2 and 3 of the research reported that students were more likely to have their tuition fees paid by their employer if they were:

- in public sector employment (eg those who attended nursing, midwifery, or social care courses);⁴
- working full-time: 45% of full-time employees in the Strand 3 survey received support for fees from their employer compared with 17% of part-timers.⁵

As men were more likely than women to work full-time, they were more likely to be beneficiaries of employer financial support.⁵ Interestingly, however, when women worked full-time, they were more likely than their male peers to receive help with tuition fees support from their employer (48% compared with 42%) but less likely when they worked part-time (8% compared with 19%).⁵

The Strand 3 report also revealed that undergraduate students with personal annual incomes between £20,000 and £24,999 were the most likely to receive employer fees support. There was, however, a ‘linear relationship’ between receiving tuition fee help from an employer and household income: students with annual household incomes of between £35,000 and £49,000 were found to be three-and-half times more likely to be financed by their employer than students with household incomes of £15,499 or less (49% compared with 14%). The wealthiest students thus benefited the most from employer support.^b

Other forms of employer support

In addition to support for tuition fees, the DLHE data analysed for the Strand 1 research revealed that study leave was received by almost half of students following HNCs (44%), foundation degrees (42%), postgraduate certificates and diplomas (41%) and taught masters (39%) courses. On the other hand, the provision of grants was very low (0%–4%) across all qualifications.

Similarly, the survey of undergraduate students carried out for the Strand 3 study revealed that 35% of working students were given paid time off work in

^b It is important to note that students surveyed for the Strand 3 study were *not* representative of all part-time undergraduates in the UK. First degree students were also over-represented in the survey.

order to study. Full-time employees were more likely than their part-time counterparts to be given this type of support (40% compared with 16% respectively). In addition, 16% of working students were given unpaid time off work in order to study.

Employers' attitudes to part-time study

London Higher has recently commissioned a survey gauging the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of London employers to part-time study; a total of 385 non-government employers in the capital were interviewed.^{6,c} Although the study was restricted to the London region, much of the findings would also be of interest to employers in other regions.

The study found that employers generally have a very positive view about part-time study. Three-quarters (76.9%) of employers believe that both employers and employees are beneficiaries of an employee undertaking part-time study, although a significant minority (15.8%) reported that employees benefit the most.

The report, however, reveals that many employers do not *fully* recognise the benefits that part-time study can bring to their organisation, eg in plugging skills gaps. In addition, only 53% of the firms surveyed have a policy to support part-time study; in some cases, this is informal and support was judged on a case by case basis. Employers are also reported to be poorly informed about the availability of part-time courses and are largely unaware of the subsidies currently made available by the government for part-time training.

Unsurprisingly, the financial cost is a key factor influencing employer support for part-time study: nearly a third of employers surveyed (30.3%) suggested that increased government subsidies for part-time study would make them more likely to encourage part-time study amongst their employees. Over two-thirds (70%) of employers also believe that part-time study should lead to a recognised qualification.

The importance of employer support and engagement

According to Strand 2 of the UUK study, the increasing requirements of the

workplace, the level of fees and the lack of support from employers are all factors that could inhibit the demand for part-time study. Some of the institutions surveyed also reported that being dependent on a very small number of employers, particular part-time programmes might become unsustainable if the companies relocate or change their staff development requirement.

In a recent strategy paper on engaging employers with HE, the Higher Education Funding Council in England (HEFCE) identified three types of employers' provision:⁷

- employer-designed (eg in foundation degrees);
- employer-funded (usually through support for student fees);
- employer-delivered (in the workplace).

Employer engagement with HE is seen as crucial to the delivery of higher level skills required in the economy. However, one of the barriers in engaging employers, identified in the HEFCE report, is that the role of HE in improving productivity is not sufficiently promoted in policy discussions, and is poorly understood by employers and employees. Amongst other challenges, another barrier is that outside certain disciplines, the workplace is not yet widely valued as a place of HE-level learning.

In November 2006, HEFCE announced the funding of three higher level skills pathfinder projects, to be launched in the North East, North West and the South West.⁸ The pathfinders will seek to extend Train to Gain (www.train2gain.gov.uk), the skills brokerage service, to include high level skills from foundation degrees through to PhDs. Under the HEFCE skills packages for employers, there will also be:⁹

- Clearer presentation of the costs of HE programmes to help employers source courses.
- More undergraduate and postgraduate courses that are relevant to employers' current needs, and more student placements and consultancy.
- More universities and colleges offering opportunities for workforce developments, including work-based learning and flexible delivery at the workplace.

In conclusion, part-time study is seen as pivotal in meeting government objectives, particularly in upskilling the workforce, and there needs to be more effective collaboration between the HE sector and employers 'to maximise the benefits for learners, employers, employees, the economy and society'.⁹

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^c Government employers were excluded from the study because of 'their specialised and often highly developed attitude to part-time study'.



Summary

The age discrimination laws that came into force on 1 October 2006 are likely to have a significant impact on how employers recruit and behave towards graduates. In this article, **Freda Line, Head of Employer Relations at Employers Forum on Age (EFA)**, will explore:

- What the law does and does not require.
- Where employers are making changes.
- What this means for graduates.

The EFA is 'an independent network of leading employers who recognise the value of an age diverse workforce, and sets the agenda for age and employment issues in the UK. In addition to supporting employers, the EFA influences Government, business and trade unions, and has worked hard to ensure that the new age laws are workable. It works with over 250 of the UK's largest employers, many of whom recruit graduates on a regular basis.'

The legal requirements

Age discrimination laws now make it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their age - not only in employment, but also seeking employment. No matter how old or young, anyone and everyone is now protected for ageist attitudes and behaviour. Discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Direct discrimination is easy to understand - for instance, obvious age bars or parameters such as 'no more than 25', 'under 30' or 'between 22-28'. Direct discrimination also covers the concept of perceived or apparent age - 'you don't look old enough'.

Indirect discrimination is a bit more complex and is usually linked to time. So, seeking someone who 'has graduated within the last two years', or has 'no more than three years' postgraduate experience' would be potentially discriminatory.

The age laws differ from discrimination laws on race or gender in that they do allow employers to 'justify'

Age Laws: What They Mean for Graduate Recruitment

discrimination. The Government anticipated that this would occur only in very rare and exceptional circumstances. It may be that we will see employers trying to justify setting indirect age limits in graduate recruitment by trying to argue that they have a legitimate aim in seeking recent graduates, perhaps because they believe they need the latest skills. But this would still mean that mature graduates - who had graduated recently - could apply and would have to be treated fairly.

The age regulations do also allow some other laws to take precedence - for instance, in health and safety, vehicle licensing and the sale of alcohol. Some sectors and industries also have standards or requirements that employers may use to set upper or lower limits to the age or experience of applicants. However, at the moment it is not clear whether these standards comply with the age laws (form statutory authority) or not. We'll have to wait and see!

Age laws apply to all employers and recruiters, including recruitment and search and selection agents. Unlike other discrimination legislations, where smaller employers had more time to comply and some employers were initially exempt, there is no exemption for smaller employers and only the armed forces are exempt.

One thing that has confused people is that the law still allows employers and recruiting agencies to ask for date of birth and/or age and additionally allows them to ask for chronological information or dates relating to education, qualifications and previous employment.

There is no guidance in the legislation to what is or is not suitable language to use in recruitment adverts and literature. However, we can learn from what happened in Ireland, where there have been similar age laws for a while.

Case Law

Ryanair advertised for a 'young, dynamic professional', claiming in their defence that 'young' could refer to 'young at heart'. Ryanair lost the case.

Of course it will no longer be appropriate to use words like 'young', 'youthful', 'mature' or 'older'. It is very unclear what other words will be interpreted as ageist. Some have suggested that 'energetic', 'dynamic', 'bright', 'enthusiastic' should no longer be used, since they now have age-linked connotations. Others would argue that these words do not have direct age implications - and could be used. We may have to wait on case law to clarify this.

There is also likely to be confusion around 'positive action'. The law makes it clear that employers will be able to seek to support and encourage particular age groups - perhaps those who are under-represented in their workplace. This could take the form of targeted advertising aimed at a specific age group, or it could be pre-employment training or extra help for candidates unused to the application processes.

The changes employers are making

There is a great deal of difference between merely complying with the law and what is known as 'best practice'. Age-smart employers - for instance, the many graduate recruiters who work with the EFA - are clear that they want to fully comply with the law and go beyond that by visibly being open to candidates of all ages.

Good practice employers have, therefore, made a variety of changes in the way they attract and recruit graduates. For instance, they have:

- Removed indirectly discriminatory references such as 'recent graduate', 'graduated no earlier than 2004', 'no more than two years' postgraduate experience'.
- Amended the language they have used in adverts - removing words that could be seen as ageist.
- Made changes to their website - so that graduates of all ages have clearly signposted routes into the business.
- Changed their graduate schemes so that they are more suitable for mature or atypical graduates.

AGE AWARE

We are. Are you?

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- Altered application forms and web-based forms so that they do not ask for age or date of birth - except for monitoring purposes.
- Amended application forms so that they focus less on educational and career history (dates) and more on competency and skills - though employers may still ask for dates.
- Provided advice or templates for CVs so that candidates send information in a less age or date-based form.
- Revised graduate recruitment literature - changing either language or images.
- Expanded their list of milk round universities - including more institutions that offer part-time courses (which can be attractive to mature students).
- Introduced new recruitment events to attract a greater variety of candidates.

Many members of the EFA are now using the 'Age Aware' logo on their literature and websites as an indicator that they are working hard to combat age discrimination.

In selection, employers have also revised their sifting mechanisms and checked that assessment processes are age neutral. Most age-smart employers have trained their recruitment teams on age

issues and have particularly focused on interviews to ensure that interviewers and interview panels are fully aware of age laws. Employers have used some examples from Ireland to help get across the message that age-based remarks are now unlawful. Lawyers also think that overt references to 'inexperienced' may be seen as ageist.

Case Law

In Hughes v Aer Lingus, Ms Hughes was asked 'how she would cope with younger people being in charge and how, being older she would feel about starting at the bottom of the ladder.'

Case Law

In Mahony and others v Revenue Commissioners (Ireland) the complainants argued that there was a clear pattern of discrimination in favour of younger candidates and one complainant stated that they had been asked at interview 'why are you going for this job at this stage?'

What should graduates do?

Graduates of all ages should see a change in the attitude of employers and recruitment consultants as well as real changes in advertising language, website and literature imagery and the design of application forms.

But graduates need to play their part too - with the support of careers advisers and others. When applying for a job graduates should:

- Check to see that their prospective employers are a member of the EFA - that should mean they are fully up-to-speed on age laws.
- If application forms or websites ask for competency and skills-based information be sure to follow their instructions and focus on these - don't add in lots of age references or unwanted dates.
- If sending in a CV, then take some time to re-structure it. Ensure that skills and competencies are focused up-front and minimize the date-related information - if possible keeping it to the second page.
- At interview try to keep age references to a minimum.

What employers and recruitment consultants should not do

Although we may have to wait for case law to clarify some aspects of age laws, the law is fairly obvious. If a job candidate encounters ageism in making an application, or in going through the recruitment process, then he/she will be entitled to claim discrimination.

Job applicants should never be:

- Asked how old they are.
- Told that they look or seem younger/older than expected.
- Asked how they 'at their age/stage' will fit into a youthful team.
- Asked whether they are 'up to' a task whether this requires physical stamina or not.
- Offered a lower salary than others because of their age.
- Made to feel uncomfortable in any part of the recruitment process because they are of a different age to other candidates.
- Patronised because of their 'lack/excess of experience'.

Encountering age discrimination?

If anyone needs to seek advice because they think they have encountered age discrimination, then they should contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS, www.acas.org.uk) or their local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). If you come across poor practice or ageist behaviour from an employer - whether a member of the EFA or not - then do let the EFA know. The EFA can be contacted via www.efa.org.uk or on 0845 456 2495.

Case study 1

The Co-operative Group have won awards for their graduate recruitment programme 'Altogether Different'. They have developed a clear business case for recruiting a diverse age range of graduates. According to Rebecca Martin, their head of graduate recruitment:

'Experienced graduates have joined the Co-operative Group from all walks of life including an Olympic athlete who pursued a commercial career after his sporting career, a teacher looking for a different career path, a consultant who had worked with the Group and discovered a strong affinity for our values and way of doing business and an experienced member of our operations team who decided to study for his degree alongside working in store.'

Case study 2

Marks & Spencer are another leading member of the EFA who have amended their graduate programme. Sally Humpage, Employee Relations Manager, says:

'M & S have completely overhauled their Management Training offer and have launched a new Management Training Programme, which now has different points of entry and training which depend on your level of qualification and experience.

You can apply to join the Programme whether you are a:

- A-level or school leaver
- Degree level
- Manager with retail or relevant work experience

The business will then provide tailored training and support programmes dependent on qualifications and experience.'

Sally concludes: 'The great thing about the new M & S management training programme is that it allows entry for all people whatever their age - whether starting or changing career.'