



This Briefing Sheet describes different strategies you can use when looking for work. It provides information on how to find vacancies for graduate jobs, and how to use a more 'creative' approach to find jobs that are not widely advertised.

### WHERE TO START

When looking for a graduate level job, you will need to have thought about the type of work you are looking for. You are more likely to succeed if you have identified what you offer in terms of your skills and abilities; and what you want from a job, for example the types of duties you want, how suited you are to the career, the level of pay and the employment package you are seeking, etc.

Use occupational and industry information to get behind the image of the job and find out what it is really like. Also, try not to be swayed by what others may think – remember this is your job and you are looking at its potential for you.

Understanding your own needs is a vital starting point. If you want help with this read:

- **Briefing Sheet no.4 'Where Do I Start?'**
- Our 'Making a Start' booklet and the guidance programme Prospects Planner at [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

To research different occupations, see:

- **Briefing Sheet 6 'Researching Types of Work'**
- The 'Explore Types of Jobs' and 'Explore Job Sectors' sections on [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) under 'Jobs and work'.

### FINDING JOBS

Methods of locating vacancies fall broadly into two categories – advertised vacancies and creative job search. Each has its merits; you will need to decide on the best approach for the type(s) of work you are seeking. It could be that you will use both.

### ADVERTISED VACANCIES

The main vacancy sources available are

- The online Careers Vacancy Service [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs) carries around 2500 graduate vacancy entries and 1800 adverts for student jobs and work experience each year. Once registered you can search for vacancies, browse the employer directory and receive email notification of new opportunities
- Graduate Employer listings, such as the Prospects Directory, and other careers publications contain details of recruiters and features on the jobs market. Copies of these are in the Careers Service
- My Prospects is an online job-hunting facility at [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk). A similar site is <http://targetjobs.co.uk> Prospects also produce 'Prospects Finalist' (a magazine listing vacancies for final-year students issued five times per year) and 'Prospects Graduate' (an electronic vacancy listing aimed at graduates)

- Newspapers are an important source of job vacancies. A small number are available for reference in the Careers Service and many are on the internet
- [www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk) advertises graduate vacancies in the Yorkshire and Humber area. It also provides a job matching service. As all the vacancies are for immediate employment, they are aimed at those who are about to, or have already graduated
- Regional graduate websites for different parts of the country can be found at [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/infotree/EmployersandVacancies.php](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/infotree/EmployersandVacancies.php)
- Specialist sources of vacancies exist for many types of work, including listings on the internet, and in specialist journals. The Careers Service can help with finding these, while Sheffield Public Library on Surrey Street has a wide range of professional publications
- Recruitment fairs bring employers and jobseekers together. Some are aimed specifically at students and graduates, and others are for the general public. See the section on Recruitment fairs overleaf
- Recruitment agencies handle vacancies on behalf of employers. Some agencies specialise in particular kinds of work while others handle a wider range of jobs. [www.rec.uk.com/home](http://www.rec.uk.com/home) has details of agencies, plus advice on using them

There is a wide range of vacancy information available and sometimes the sheer volume can seem overwhelming. If you need help on where to focus your search please ask at the Careers Service.

**See also Briefing Sheet 11 'Meeting Employers'.**

### 'CREATIVE JOB SEARCH'

In the face of all this information it can come as a surprise to find that not all jobs are advertised. Some employers do not need to advertise because they receive enough speculative applications. Others prefer to use recruitment agencies or fill their vacancies internally. Creative job search is a way of finding out about these jobs, as well as identifying other opportunities which might lead to employment such as 'work shadowing'. Sometimes an organisation may not have realised that they could benefit from creating a job for you. Therefore it is well worth using different strategies to access the 'hidden' jobs market, but you must be well-researched and be able to demonstrate that you have the right skills, interests and motivations.

You will need to take the initiative and approach individuals who might be able to help you. If you do this, you must come across as someone who is clued up, so read as much as you can about the occupation and the organisation in which you are interested. Use 'Exploring Types of Work' via [www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations) and see **Briefing Sheet 6 'Researching Types of Work'**

## Making And Using Contacts

Start with the Careers Service for information on companies and organisations. The Human Resources department of any organisation is a good contact point – see 'The Personnel Managers' Yearbook' (published by AP Information Services) for contact details. Seek assistance from people you know (friends and their families, neighbours, previous employers, etc) – the likelihood is someone will be able to help by talking to you themselves or providing details of someone who will.

When you first make contact you will usually be trying to find out more about what an occupation involves rather than immediately asking about job vacancies. If your request (by letter, e-mail, telephone) is for a brief amount of their time to give you advice and information about their work, you will find that most people (but not all) will be pleased by your interest and make time to help. From your contacts you will build up knowledge about the job, the organisation and possible openings. This way you become well-prepared and confident and more likely to succeed in getting jobs when vacancies arise.

Use existing contacts and your online social networks to let people know you are looking for work and check what they know about potential vacancies. Make new contacts at recruitment fairs and employer events such as those run by the Careers Service. Another idea is to join relevant professional associations and use these to develop your knowledge and contacts, e.g. by attending any events they run.

## Making Speculative Applications

Once you have done your research and used contacts to build up your knowledge, you will be in a stronger position to make an effective speculative application, i.e. sending a CV together with a covering letter. Speculative applications have to be well informed and persuasive – not all such approaches succeed but many people do get jobs this way. It is a method well worth trying, especially for areas of work where employers do not tend to advertise their vacancies widely; eg media, arts administration, publishing. Market yourself positively and try not to be put off by rejections. Consider requesting a period of work shadowing or work experience - a good way to get your foot in the door and add to your CV.

The **Briefing Sheets no.13 'Applications'** provides more detailed advice. Talk over your strategy with a Careers Adviser.

## More Information On Creative Job Searching

See the following publications available at the Careers Service

- The Art of Building Windmills – career tactics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century - P Hawkins
- Graduates Yorkshire VirtualCareerCoach [www.graduatesyorkshire-vcc.info](http://www.graduatesyorkshire-vcc.info)
- Job seeking strategies - AGCAS
- What color is your parachute? - R N Bolles

## RECRUITMENT FAIRS

Fairs can provide an invaluable means of job-hunting, particularly if you are seeking a position in a 'mainstream' occupational area eg engineering, finance, IT, sales and marketing. You have an opportunity to meet employers and ask questions and, if you want to apply, hand in your CV or application form.

Before the Fair, find out which employers are attending. Research those of interest to you and prepare questions to

ask them in advance – you seriously weaken your chances if you turn up without knowing anything about their organisation and ask basic questions. Take copies of your CV to the fair. A listing of recruitment fairs can be found in the 'Careers advice' section on [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk), and details of our fairs are at [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events)

## On the day of the Fair

- Arrive early. Fairs get very crowded particularly over the lunch time period but they are often less busy at the start of the day
- Wear smart but comfortable clothes
- Take a pen and paper to record notes and names of employers you speak to
- Do not rush straight to your preferred employers – practise on another organisation first
- Be open-minded about who to approach. Well-known names will always be popular but lesser known names will often have good opportunities with less competition

## INFORMATION FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

In addition to the resources given elsewhere in this Briefing Sheet, further help is available for disabled jobseekers.

- **Our Briefing Sheets 21 'Dyslexia and Employment' and 22 'Support for Disabled Students'** provide additional advice on approaching employers and making successful applications
- The information booklet 'Disclosing Your Disability' can be downloaded from the SKILL website [www.skill.org.uk/uploads/disclosure.doc](http://www.skill.org.uk/uploads/disclosure.doc)
- The disability toolkit has information on graduate schemes for disabled applicants. See [www.disabilitytoolkits.ac.uk/students/links.asp](http://www.disabilitytoolkits.ac.uk/students/links.asp)
- Jobcentre Plus provides details of its services on [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/index.html](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/index.html)

If you have concerns relating to disability or health-related issues, you are encouraged to talk to a Careers Adviser.

## DEALING WITH JOB OFFERS

If you are offered a job be sure it is what you want before you accept. A formal offer of employment will be in writing and will outline the terms and conditions. If anything is unclear refer back to the employer. Ensure you have all the information you need to make a decision. Do not commit yourself too hastily. It is often possible to ask for more time to consider an offer. As long as you keep employers informed they are usually prepared to be reasonable.

Problems most commonly arise when you have received an offer and you have other applications 'in the pipeline'. Do not accept an offer on the basis that you can change your mind and turn it down later. Both verbal and written acceptances are legally and morally binding. Ask for more time to make your decision, but offer them a date by which you expect to be able to respond.

For more details, please see 'Best practice in graduate recruitment' (as agreed between University Careers Services, employers and the National Union of Students) at [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) (in the 'About Us' section).