



As an International Student you will have to cope with a lot of new experiences and process a great deal of information during your time at the University of Sheffield. The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand the graduate labour market in the UK and how to make the most of your time at university in order to maximise your chances of employment upon graduation. It also explains how the Careers Service can help and support you during and after your studies. What happens here may be similar to practice in your country but some aspects may differ and surprise you. Understanding the UK student and graduate employment market will significantly improve your chances of success.

International students tell us that they like the Careers Service because it offers a helpful, friendly and supportive service. However it is important that your expectations of what we can offer match the reality of what we deliver. For example, some students may think that the Careers Service will act on their behalf with an employer but we are NOT an employment agency and do not offer this type of service. What we do offer you is high quality information, advice and support to help you work out what you want to do, find it and apply for it.

Your career plans for when you complete your studies could be to seek graduate employment in your home country, to work overseas in a different country, or to work in the UK. This leaflet will concentrate mainly on work in the UK, however much of the information about skills is relevant to wherever you may work. Some students will intend to go on to further study and this topic is dealt with in other Briefing Sheets in the series.

UK EMPLOYERS EXPECTATIONS OF GRADUATES

In some countries employers are only interested in graduates' academic qualifications and courses/modules taken. This is not the case in the UK. Whilst academic performance is probably their main concern, they also want more! They expect candidates to be able to demonstrate a range of skills and ideally have experience of employment (paid or voluntary) and involvement in activities and societies. Examples of the sort of transferable skills they look for are teamwork, leadership, problem solving, verbal and written communication skills, adaptability, organisational skills, commitment, motivational and interpersonal skills.

On application forms and at interview they may ask what are called competency-based questions such "Tell me about a time when you have been part of a team. What was your role? How did you promote collaboration?" or "Describe a situation where you have met resistance to a decision you have made. How did you persuade others to see your point of view?" These questions will require you to use examples from a variety of different situations.

How can you improve your employability skills?

Probably the single most important thing you can do is to have high quality English language skills, both written and verbal. If this is an area you need to work on then take every opportunity to practise your English. The English Language Teaching Centre can help you a great deal. See www.shef.ac.uk/eltc for further information.

Work experience is greatly valued by graduate employers. If the experience is related to your chosen future career, then even better. However all work experience allows you to demonstrate those important transferable skills in a practical context. Consider all possibilities such as part-time jobs whilst you are studying, vacation jobs, summer placements/internships, one year placements, voluntary work etc. The Careers Service can help you look for work experience through our website www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs and our Jobshop in the Students' Union building.

However it is vitally important that you check out your entitlement to work in the UK during your studies. The majority of students will be allowed to work during term time, as long as it isn't more than 20 hours a week. However, the University recommends that all students work for **no more than 16 hours a week**. You are likely to be able to work for unlimited hours during the vacation, the dates of which are different for undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research postgraduates. See www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/international/sheet2.html for more details. Note that regulations about working hours can change and you must check out your own individual situation. See www.shef.ac.uk/union/advice/international for further information.

If you are finding it hard to get paid work experience then doing voluntary work can be a way around this problem. The Careers Service has an information sheet on the benefits of, and how to access, voluntary work.

Another way to help develop your transferable skills is to get involved in some of the many Clubs and Societies at the University of Sheffield. Taking on a position of responsibility such as Secretary, Treasurer, etc can be particularly beneficial. See the *More* website for details www.shef.ac.uk/more.

The Careers Service offers a range of activities such as The *Sheffield Graduate Award* and The *Skills for Work Certificate* that can help you develop and reflect on your skills and experiences and market them to employers. For details, see 'Improve your Prospects' at www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/advice.

One result of taking on additional activities is that you have to learn to balance your time to combine study, work and a social life. This can be hard if you are not used to it, but most students succeed and get a lot from it. The key message is that if you want graduate employment with a major employer in the UK or

A large print version of this publication can be obtained from the Careers Service on request. Contact details overleaf.

a large international organisation they will often expect you to offer good academic qualifications, some experience of work, and have made a contribution to University life.

GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

International Students - Marketing what you offer

International students have a set of skills, qualities and experiences that not all UK students are able to offer, so it is vitally important that you 'sell' these to employers, alongside your individual qualifications and strengths. These include:

- Cultural awareness and a global focus gained from mixing with a wide range of people from all over the world
- Knowledge of your home country's economy and markets. You may have already worked there in professional/management positions before coming to the UK
- Maturity, independence and adaptability. Choosing to study overseas, in another culture and environment, demonstrates your ability to take on new challenges
- Language skills. You have your own language as well as English, and possibly other languages – highly valued in a global market

The Graduate Employment Market and Recruitment Practices in the UK

There are two main types of vacancies for graduates:

- Graduate schemes. These tend to be offered by large national and international companies, with multiple vacancies, advertised from autumn and mostly directed at finalists. The recruitment process usually involves most of the following: On-line application form, Telephone interview, Psychometric tests, Assessment centre and Interviews. Successful applicants usually enter training programmes that offer the chance to take professional qualifications and gain experience in different parts of the company.
- Direct entry positions. These tend to be with smaller/ medium sized companies and individual vacancies are advertised when they occur. The application process is likely to consist of an application form or CV/ Covering letter and an interview.

Employers place great value on quality applications. This also applies to applications for part-time jobs and internships, so it is important that your applications are of a very high standard.

The Careers Service can help you with all aspects of the application process such as reviewing your CV/Applications and discussing interview preparation.

Permission to Work in the UK

This is a complicated area and depends upon frequently changing immigration legislation and your own circumstances. You must check out your own situation by using websites such as www.shef.ac.uk/union/advice/international and www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

There are currently several categories under which you can work in the UK:

- Tier 1 - Post Study Work Scheme (PSW) – which allows you to remain in the UK for 2 years post graduation
- Tier 1 – General (Highly Skilled) – this gives you permission to live and work in the UK for a maximum of 5 years (3+2) after which time you can apply for permanent residence. To qualify a person must be able to meet a points requirement for 'attributes' including Age, Qualifications, Previous earnings, English language ability and Funds

- Tier 2 – Skilled workers. This is for people who have a job offer and an employer who is willing to sponsor them. The employer has to be licensed as a sponsor. The individual also has to meet points requirements. Usually the 'Resident Labour Market Test' (RLMT) applies, which means that the employer has to show that they have been unable to recruit a suitable UK/EU citizen for the post. However if the person has been working in the same post under the PSW scheme for 6 months and will continue in this post, then the RLMT is waived. NB: There is a list of companies and organisations that have already become licensed as sponsors on the UK Border Agency website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/employers/points/sponsoringmigrants/registerofsponsors/. This can help you find out which companies are interested in recruiting international students
- Other – a person may be entitled to work in the UK for reasons that relate to ancestry, relationship, or length of time already in the UK

This is a very brief overview of the schemes and liable to change, so use the above websites to check out the details and current situation. The Student Union Advice Centre offers individual advice about your own situation. For opening times and how to see an adviser see www.shef.ac.uk/union/advice/international

Which UK/global employers recruit International Students?

This is not a simple question to answer as organisations frequently change their recruitment policies and/or may only consider international applicants for some roles, (e.g. science / engineering). Some companies include this information in the publicity for their graduate schemes. We have resources to help you research opportunities and employers, so ask if you need help with this. One example is that we ask exhibitors at our main recruitment fairs if they recruit international students, and publicise their responses in a handout.

Our recommended approach is to decide the type of work you want, find employers who take people on in that role, and then check if they accept applications from international students.

HOW CAN THE CAREERS SERVICE HELP?

We can help with every stage of job hunting for student and graduate jobs and other opportunities. In addition to all the activities we have mentioned so far we offer:

- Career planning- everything from working out what you want to do through to help with preparing for a final assessment centre
- Career resources on-line and in the Careers Service - some of them are particularly targeted at international students
- Opportunities to meet employers
- Careers and Recruitment Fairs including a 'Virtual International Careers Fair' for work in countries outside the UK
- Talks / workshops aimed at international students
- Sessions to apply for a National Insurance Number
- Individual discussions with a Careers Adviser

In addition the Careers Service has recently appointed a Careers Adviser to develop the services to international students and employers.

Our website provides comprehensive information and resources www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students and there are specific pages for international students www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/inter.