



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The
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Graduating in a Recession 3: Information Sheet Autumn 2009

Information and advice for all students

At the start of the new academic year there is continued concern about the impact the recession is having and will continue to have on student and graduate employment. September's economic reports in the media are moving away from the doom and gloom of the last year toward a more optimistic position where 'green shoot' spotting seems to be the motif. September saw confident assertions in the media that UK manufacturing output is increasing, the FTSE 100 index is rising steadily, consumer spending is rising and company mergers and takeovers are in evidence, all supporting the view that the UK is on its way out of recession. This is the news we all want but the buoyant graduate recruitment market we knew in the mid 2000's will take time to re-establish so don't expect an easy ride this year. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research cautioned against expectations of a return to business as usual; *"There may well be a period of stagnation now, with output rising in some months and falling in others; the end of the recession should not be confused with a return to normal economic conditions,"* its analysts said.

What's happening in graduate recruitment?

Right at the beginning of the recruitment year it is difficult to make any accurate forecasts about what awaits students due to graduate in 2010. But even though some sources tell us the country is beginning to emerge out of the recession you should not be seduced into thinking that this will improve the job situation for new graduates in 2010. Experience of previous recessions has shown that it often takes a couple of years for the employment market to recover and return to pre-recession levels.

The information below sets out what we expect to be some of the features of the graduate recruitment scene during 2009/2010. The picture it paints isn't as rosy as we would like but we think it's important to be aware of the facts. The main message is that the jobs are definitely out there, but not in the numbers that we were used to seeing prior to 2008 (in 2008/9 we saw a 28% drop in the number of employers advertising vacancies on the Careers Vacancy Service). So to be certain of getting a job you'll have to be quick off the mark. At the University of Sheffield we are fortunate because many employers regard us as a key recruiting university and actively seek to employ University of Sheffield graduates. But this is not a reason to be complacent.

We expect almost all regular graduate recruiters to be filling vacancies this year. Experience gained in earlier recessions has convinced most employers that to put a complete stop to the recruitment of new graduates is a risky business strategy; two or three years into economic recovery employers who do this find that they have no new managers making their way up the organisation at the very time when it is important to have trained and talented personnel to take advantage of an upturn in business. There may be a very small number of employers who have to take this drastic step in 2009/10 but the vast majority will continue to advertise for new graduates. Companies such as IBM and Deloitte have already announced major graduate intakes for 2010 and Tesco and Marks and Spencer have both announced their intention to appoint 200 graduates next year.

Why it's a good idea to apply for jobs in the Autumn

In buoyant economic conditions many finalists chose to leave job-hunting until the second semester or even after graduation. You will need to think more carefully this year if you are planning to delay your job search. There will undoubtedly be vacancies around in the Spring and Summer of 2010 but leaving your search until later in the year will mean you have less choice and that the competition for any remaining vacancies will be much fiercer. This is particularly likely to be the case if you:

- are applying for one of the more popular graduate occupations eg marketing, finance, general management, management consultancy,
- want to work in an area in which there aren't huge numbers of opportunities eg advertising,

The Careers Service
388 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2JA
Tel: 0114 222 0910
www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers
(Email Enquiry Service available)

Open: During semesters 9-5 Monday to Friday
(except Tuesday 11-5) Vacation times may vary slightly
(please ring for details)

Student Jobs and Work Experience
Student Jobshop, University of Sheffield Students' Union
Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TG
Tel: 0114 222 0941
www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs

Open: During semesters 10-3 Monday to Friday
(except Tuesday 11-3) Vacation times may vary slightly
(please ring for details)

- are aiming to work with a high profile, popular organisation,
- need to find work in a specific geographical location.

We'd also recommend a pro-active approach. If there's an employer that you are particularly interested in don't wait to apply until you see them advertising vacancies. Check their website or contact them to find out their recruitment plans.

To maximise your chances of getting a graduate level job in 2010 you need to be getting out there NOW! The Careers Service has a packed Autumn events programme to help you.

On **3 and 4 November** you will have an early opportunity to meet around 180 recruiters at the **Yorkshire Autumn Graduate Recruitment Fair** taking place in the Octagon Centre. These employers have real jobs and a real interest in appointing Sheffield graduates. Many well-known names will be present but you will also find a wide range of less famous but equally interesting employers keen to talk to you. This year's Fair isn't just for those who want to work in major organisations – day two also includes a special focus on the public, community, voluntary, environmental and energy sectors (further details at www.sheffieldcareersfairs.ac.uk). Our extensive programme of employer presentations and One-to-One Sessions also provide excellent opportunities to make contact with employers – look at the Careers Service What's On Diary for information about the employers who will be taking part this year (details at www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events/index.html). And don't forget to log on to the **Careers Vacancy Service** to get the latest information on employers with vacancies for finalists (www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs).

An aspect of the 2008/9 recruitment season which will almost certainly feature again this year is the 'flexible closing date'. The best advice we can give is that if you see a job that interests you, submit your application as soon as possible - even if the employer mentions a closing date that is weeks or months into the future. We expect that a significant number of employers will not set a closing date this year. This does not necessarily mean that they will be accepting applications throughout the year. It is just as likely that an employer will monitor the number of applications received and close the competition as soon as they have sufficient forms of high enough quality. Other employers will give a closing date but again, once they have received enough applications, will announce that no more will be accepted. **So don't hang around** – lots of students got caught out last year because they hadn't expected employers to alter closing dates. This year you have the benefit of hindsight!

So the message is don't put off your job search. Start researching your options now and begin perfecting your application technique. Be prepared to complete more application forms but make sure that they are of a consistently high quality. The Careers Service can advise on all aspects of the applications and interview process. Be proactive in seeking out potential jobs and employers and be prepared to compromise; broaden the range of jobs you are prepared to consider and, if your circumstances allow it, try to be geographically mobile. And use the Careers Service if things don't go to plan, if your applications aren't successful, or if you need information, reassurance or advice.

Graduate Internships

A number of graduate internship schemes are being introduced aimed at recent graduates who are currently seeking ways of getting a graduate job. An internship can be an excellent way of adding to your skills while at the same time acquiring some real experience in the workplace and testing out whether an occupation is likely to suit you. There is even the possibility that you could be offered a position at the end of a successful internship placement, although there is no guarantee.

Internship schemes differ in what they offer. You will find placements that vary in length from days through to 12 months. Many posts will pay you a salary, but some are unwaged, so think carefully about what skills and experience they will allow you to develop to ensure you are getting 'value' for your efforts. Some schemes are national in their scope while others concentrate on a specific region. Job opportunities will usually cover all occupational areas varying from posts open to graduates of all disciplines to highly specialised work requiring specific degree subjects.

Some current major schemes are listed below. The situation is constantly evolving and additional programmes may be introduced or others close as their opportunities fill up. Please note that you will find these websites in various stages of production, due to the 'newness' of some schemes.

Internships - Graduates Yorkshire: www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk

Paid placements of between three and twelve months with employers in the Yorkshire and Humber region. In addition to work experience, the scheme provides courses such as presentation skills and commercial awareness.

Graduate Talent Pool: www.graduatetalentpool.bis.gov.uk

This a national scheme funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. Employers offer both waged and unwaged employment over a period of time as defined by the employer.

Shell STEP: www.shellstep.org.uk

Project-based placements lasting eight weeks with small and medium-sized employers. Graduates are paid a weekly training allowance. Positions will be available across the UK this Autumn/Winter.

Internship schemes managed by individual universities in the Yorkshire region

All Yorkshire universities are running, or plan to run, graduate internship programmes. The scheme operated by the University of Sheffield has now closed but other universities in the region may still have opportunities. Internships last for three months and interns will be paid £3,600. Posts will be predominantly in the Yorkshire region but may also include placements elsewhere in the country. For further information look at the Careers Service website for the relevant institution.

What can you do to improve your chances?

Things are still tough in the labour market, but stay positive - some sectors aren't doing as badly as headlines might make you think. There are opportunities for graduates out there, but you need to put in extra effort to find them and stay one step ahead of the competition. See the hints and tips, below, for ideas about how you can improve your chances of success in a more competitive job market. And, if you are still a student, don't let the economic situation detract from your studies - getting the best degree you can is as important as ever and Sheffield is well regarded by employers.

Be more flexible

- Think broadly and consider a wider range of job options. Use 'Choosing your career' www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes or the Careers Service publication 'Making a Start' to help you identify work which might suit you. Discuss your ideas with a Careers Adviser.
- How geographically mobile can you be? What is the minimum starting salary and benefits package you could accept? A larger search area means more opportunities.
- Be more flexible in the short-term— your long-term career plans can remain but you could underpin them by getting work to gain valuable experience of a workplace, client group or skills. The Careers Service can help you research employers and vacancy sources.
- Have a Plan A, B, C and even D. Plan D might be 'take anything I can get because I need an income' but this may not be a long term activity so keep it in perspective. Some new graduates have always gone into 'basic' jobs for their own reasons and it is better to be employed than not. It shows you are prepared to get stuck in and don't quit when times are hard. If paid work eludes you then try voluntary work.
- Don't pigeonhole employers, you may find ideal opportunities in unexpected places. Don't overlook small and medium organisations. Start your search with local chambers of commerce (www.britishchambers.org.uk) and the Trade Association directory (www.taforum.org). Yellow Pages can also be a source of local organisations (www.yell.com).
- Consider starting your own business: www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/enterprise.

Job search strategies: www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob

- Don't delay your job search and application – people are applying earlier than ever.
- Use the Careers Service's vacancy listing (www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs) but don't confine yourself to just that one. You need to use a wide range of vacancy sources; databases, agencies, company and trade or professional association websites, newspapers, directories, journals and any others you can think of.
- Investigate Graduate Internships such as those listed earlier in this handout. Others may come on stream, so check with the Careers Service.
- Make speculative applications to organisations and ask for your details to be put on file if there aren't any current vacancies: www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/creativejob.html
- Network – use existing contacts and your on-line social networks; let people know you are looking for work and check what they know about potential vacancies. Make new contacts at Careers Service fairs (which are also open to graduates), employer events and careers talks - listed in the What's On diary: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events. Join business or professional associations and attend local branch networking or trade events.
- Use the Briefing Sheets 'Job Search Strategies' and 'Meeting employers'. Also see: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/tips.html
- Talk to a Careers Adviser about your situation and strategy.

Work experience, extra-curricular activities and skills development:

www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/advice

- Discover ways to improve your skills: if you are still a University of Sheffield student investigate the Skills for Work Certificate, The Sheffield Graduate Award, career mentoring, enterprise activities and Skills For Success sessions. Early years students can consider a Degree with Employment Experience.

- Enquire about work shadowing or a short period of paid/unpaid experience – a good way to get a foot in the door and add to your CV: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/tips.html
- Show commitment and enthusiasm, build networks and keep in touch when you leave.
- Reflect on skills you have from your studies, work experience, extra-curricular activities and life experience.

Effective self marketing: applications and interviews:

www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob

- Before applying, find out as much as you can about the post; analyse the job description and person specification. If you have any questions, contact the organisation for clarification. Prepare to convince employers about why you want this job and why you want to work for them.
- If possible, arrange an informal visit to them. Find out as much as you can about the job and workplace, get your face known and make a positive first impression.
- Put together a well structured application illustrated with specific examples showing you have the skills, knowledge and attributes required. Get your application looked over by a friend, or an Adviser at the Careers Service.
- Prepare well for interviews. Find out about the format of the interview. Refresh your memory about what you wrote in your application and how you might expand on what you said. Think about predictable topics or questions and a few key points you could include when answering. The Careers Service has books of example questions as well as other help with interview technique.
- If you are concerned about the way you perform at interview, book an appointment at the Careers Service to use the 'Interviewer' programme or get tips on how to improve your techniques from a Careers Adviser.
- If you are unsuccessful, persevere. Request feedback from employers. It may be that competition from more experienced candidates was strong or feedback may help you to identify areas you need to work on. Getting to an interview means you are doing well even if you don't get the job offer so remain positive and this will come across to employers.
- If you are a current student, check out talks and workshops in our What's on diary: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events

Further study / research: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/study

- Find out if further study, such as a Masters degree PhD, or vocational training would help you get the job you ultimately want. Many courses are unfunded so think carefully about whether further study is right for you.
- Could you combine part-time further study with paid employment or work experience? Employers may prefer work experience to further qualifications.
- Talk through your options with a Careers Adviser and discuss further academic opportunities with your tutor or supervisor.

Taking time out: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/timeout.html

Some graduates take time out after graduation, particularly to travel. This can be even more tempting if the jobs situation is uncertain. Use time-out wisely so you can show prospective employers how it helped you develop. Keep an eye on the jobs market back home and don't leave it until the last minute to start thinking about what to do when you return - there may be a fresh batch of graduates competing for jobs.

Get help from the Careers Service: www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/help.pdf

The Careers Service can help with all aspects of making career choices, practical advice and looking for work or courses. We understand how you might be feeling and can provide some moral support in a tough market; we know this will be a hard time for many students and graduates. We provide help for current students and graduates of the University of Sheffield, up to 3 years after graduation.

- Normal term time opening is Mon – Fri 9am to 5pm (11am to 5pm on Tuesdays); this may vary slightly in vacations – please check. Find us on Level 1, 388 Glossop Road. To book an appointment with a Careers Adviser, call in or telephone 0114 2220910. If you can't call in person, use our email enquiry service: www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/emailenquiry.html
- Use our on-line talks for important careers advice: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/talks.html
- Check forthcoming careers events in our What's On diary: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events