

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2017

The twenty-third annual survey of graduate recruitment at the UK's leading universities

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2017 is based on face-to-face interviews with **20,102** final year students from the 'Class of 2017' studying at thirty leading universities in the UK, carried out by **High Fliers Research** in February 2017. It is the **largest** independent survey of the country's top finalists ever conducted, and the sample includes a fifth of students graduating from these universities in the summer of 2017:

The Class of 2017

- One in five final year students from the 'Class of 2017' began university with at least **four grade As** at A-level and a record **94%** of finalists were optimistic about getting a **1st or 2.1** in their final exams.
- More than a quarter of students opted to study at a university **close to home**, **23%** were from overseas and **29%** lived in **London** or the **south east of England** before university.
- Almost **half** of finalists had done **course placements, internships or vacation work** with graduate employers whilst at university – completing an average of seven months experience during their studies – but the number of students who did **casual vacation work** or had a **part-time job** in term-time fell to an all-time low.
- A quarter of finalists had subsequently been **offered a graduate job** with the employer they had done work experience with, but one in eight students warned they had been **put off working for that employer in future** or had been deterred from an entire industry or sector.
- Half of final year students had held at least one **position of responsibility** through taking part in extra-curricular activities at university.
- Most finalists were **very positive** about their time at university, their choice of institution and the degree subject they had studied, but fewer students were certain they had developed the right skills for employment.
- The majority of students graduating in 2017 have paid the new **£9,000 per year** tuition fees and, as a result, the average expected graduation debt has risen dramatically to **£36,100**.

Finalists' Plans for After University

- **28%** of students from the 'Class of 2017' expect to begin a graduate job **straight after graduation**, the highest level for sixteen years. But the proportion of finalists who think they'll be looking for a graduate job **after** leaving university has **fallen to 14%**, its lowest level since 2002.
- The number of finalists intending to remain at university to do a **postgraduate course** has risen to **26%**, the first time in seven years that applications for further study have increased.
- Fewer students expect to take **temporary** or other non-graduate work after completing their degrees, but more finalists had **'no definite plans'** for life beyond university. One in eight are hoping to **take time off or go travelling** after graduation and **3%** plan to work for themselves.

- Following last summer's vote for the UK to leave the European Union, **confidence in the graduate job market** has **worsened** for the first time in five years and more final year students fear that opportunities for new graduates will be 'limited' as a result in 2017.
- A total of **61%** of students made applications to graduate employers by the **end of February** in their final year, two per cent fewer than last year. Finalists made an average of **8.0 applications** each and together completed an estimated **502,000 applications** to graduate employers, over double the volume during the equivalent recruitment period a decade ago.
- For the third year running, **consulting** is the top destination for new graduates, ahead of opportunities in **marketing, the media** and **research & development**. But the number of finalists hoping to work in **accountancy, finance** and **investment banking** has dropped by up to a fifth and the volume of applicants for **teaching** fell for the fifth consecutive year.

Career Aspirations & Expectations

- The most important factors that finalists from the 'Class of 2017' considered when deciding which employers to apply to were **'the content of work'**, **'the training & development on offer'**, **'an employer's overall reputation'** and **'the location of the graduate jobs'**.
- **London** is again the **preferred employment destination** for new graduates – almost half of all job hunters hope to work in the capital – and it is now the first choice for finalists at **26** out of the **30** universities included in the survey.
- The **average starting salary** that final year students expect to earn as new graduates has **risen to £24,300**, a modest increase of £200 from 2016 and the smallest annual rise for four years. Salaries that finalists expect to be paid five years after leaving university have also increased, to an average of **£43,200**, and a sixth of finalists believe they will be earning **£100,000 or more** by the age of 30.

Views on Graduate Employers

- **PwC** has been voted number one in *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* by final year students for the fourteenth consecutive year. **The Civil Service** has moved up to number two, ahead of **Aldi** and **Teach First**, whilst **Google** remains in 5th place. **GSK** is ranked in the top ten for the first time and **Rolls-Royce** has climbed to 15th place, its highest-ever position.
- **Dyson, Think Ahead, CharityWorks** and **White & Case** are among seven new or re-entries in this year's *Top 100*, whilst **Cancer Research UK, Siemens, the BMW Group** and **Herbert Smith Freehills** have climbed the furthest in the new list.
- Within individual career sectors the **'graduate employers of choice'** for 2017 are: **Aldi** (general management), **Allen & Overy** (law), the **BBC** (media), the **Civil Service Fast Stream** (public sector), **Google** (technology), **GSK** (research & development), **HSBC** (finance), **J.P. Morgan** (investment banking), the **John Lewis Partnership** (retailing), **Network Rail** (transport & logistics), **Oxfam** (charity & voluntary work), **PwC** (accountancy and consulting), **Rolls-Royce** (engineering), **Savills** (property), and **Unilever** (marketing, sales and human resources).