

Special summary for  
**The National Graduate  
Careers Conference 2016**

# The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2016

Survey Summary



Produced by High Fliers Research

In association with

**THE**  **TIMES**

# The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2016

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

*The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2016* is based on face-to-face interviews with **18,353** final year students from the 'Class of 2016' studying at thirty leading universities in the UK, carried out by **High Fliers Research** in February 2016. The survey is one of the **largest** independent studies of finalists ever conducted in the UK and the sample includes a fifth of students graduating from these universities in the summer of 2016.

## The Class of 2016

- One in five final year students from the 'Class of 2016' 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 **local university**, **23%** were from overseas and **29 per cent** 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.
- Many students were keen to do an internship or work placement in order to **improve their CV**, to **experience a particular industry or business sector**, or because they thought a **successful internship could lead to a graduate job**.
- 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 and **only 14%** of final year students described their **business knowledge & awareness** as 'excellent'.
- The majority of students graduating in 2016 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

- The proportion of final year students who expect to begin their first graduate job **straight after graduation** has increased to **28%** – its highest level for fifteen years – and a further **16%** of finalists are planning to look for a graduate position after completing their studies.
- A quarter of students are intending to do a **postgraduate course** but fewer than one in eight are hoping to **take time off or go travelling** after university, the second-lowest number ever recorded by the survey.

- **9%** of new graduates expected to be working for themselves after their degree or doing temporary or voluntary work. Only one in ten undergraduates had '**no definite plans**'.
- A total of **63%** of undergraduates had made applications to employers by **late February** in their final year, up very substantially from **47%** ten years ago. Finalists made an average of **7.3 applications** each to employers and together made an estimated **458,000 applications**, more than double the number during the equivalent recruitment period a decade ago.
- For the second year running, **consulting** is the top destination for new graduates, ahead of entry-level opportunities in **marketing**, the **media** and **research & development**. More finalists hoped to work in **investment banking** and **finance**, but the number of university-leavers wanting to work in **teaching** has dropped for the fourth consecutive year.

## Career Aspirations & Expectations

- Final year student job hunters' main priorities for their first jobs were '**being challenged and stretched on a day-to-day basis**', '**having a good social life around work**' and '**having genuine responsibility from day one**'.
- **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 **27** 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 £24,100**, an increase of **£400** from 2015. Salaries that finalists expect to be paid five years after leaving university have also increased, to an average of **£42,800**, and a sixth of finalists believe they will be earning **£100,000 or more** by the age of 30.
- The most important factors that finalists from the 'Class of 2016' 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**'.

## Views on Graduate Employers

- For the thirteenth consecutive year, **PwC** has been voted number one in the *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers*. **Teach First** has moved back up to 3rd place, **Google** falls to 5th place and professional services firm **KPMG** has overtaken rivals **Deloitte** and **EY**.
- **Santander**, **Virgin Media**, **Irwin Mitchell** and **BMW** are among seven new or re-entries in the new *Top 100* rankings, whilst the **Bank of England**, **AstraZeneca** and **Amazon** have climbed the furthest in the 2016 list.
- Within individual career sectors the '**graduate employers of choice**' for 2016 are: Aldi (general management), Allen & Overy (law), BBC (media), Civil Service Fast Stream (public sector), Google (IT), GSK (research & development), HSBC (finance), Goldman Sachs (investment banking), John Lewis Partnership (retailing), Oxfam (charity & voluntary work), PwC (accountancy and consulting), Rolls-Royce (engineering), Savills (property), Transport for London (transport & logistics), and Unilever (marketing, sales and human resources).

## Universities Included in the Survey

The *UK Graduate Careers Survey 2016* takes place at the thirty universities in the UK that are targeted most often by national and international employers during their annual graduate recruitment round. **High Fliers Research** employs a student research manager at each university to co-ordinate on-campus research groups and face-to-face interviews with final year students.

