

# Your Guide to...

## Making the Most of Careers Fairs

Careers fairs are a fantastic way to meet employers face to face, learn about organisations, their opportunities, when they are recruiting and what they are looking for from students and graduates. If you are still unsure about your career plans then fairs are a great place to go to see what sort of employers and opportunities are available.



### **Top Tip - Careers fairs are an opportunity to talk to employers**

Careers fairs are your chance to meet employers, gain an insight into the organisation and make a good impression – not just a chance to collect a lifetime supply of free pens!

**Make sure you know which employers you want to meet at the event and be prepared to talk to them.**

### Preparing for the Fair

#### **Be clear about why you are attending the fair**

- To gather information, to find out about jobs or placements you can apply for, to impress particular employers etc.

#### **Do your research**

- Know which employers will be there, what they do, what opportunities they have available.
- Use the Careers Fair programme, event website and employer websites.
- Draw up a target list of the employers you want to meet.

#### **Be open minded**

- Don't make assumptions about the opportunities employers have just because of the kind of organisation they are.
- Employers often recruit graduates from a variety of different subject areas e.g. lots of big organisations have legal departments, marketing departments, finance departments etc
- Over 60% of graduate jobs are open to any subject discipline – so there may be lots more employers for you to talk to at a fair than you realised!

#### **Prepare your introduction**

(30 second "Elevator Pitch")

- Name
- Course & Qualifications
- Why you're interested in the role / organisation
- Any specific skills, strengths, interests, abilities, achievements or awards that are relevant
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### Decide what questions to ask

Think of insightful questions to ask employers and avoid common ones like "what does your company do?" or "can I have a free pen please?" as this suggests a lack of interest.

#### **Here are a few examples:**

*How does your graduate scheme work?*

*What day to day activities might I be involved in?*

*What is expected of a new graduate?*

*What happens once the scheme finishes?*

*Where is the position located?*

*What experience would you like graduates to have?*

*What kind of projects would I work on during a placement?*

*Do you offer graduate jobs at the end of a successful placement?*

*What particular skills do you value most?*

*What specific skills would I need to demonstrate at interview?*

*How do you train and develop graduates?*

*How much are graduates expected to know about the business / industry / sector?*

*Where are the best places to look for industry information?*

*What would you advise me to do to make me a stronger candidate?*

## During the Fair

### What to wear

- Employers aren't expecting you to be dressed in a power suit but you do still need to appear smart and professional.

### Get there early

- Careers fairs can be very busy, so get there early to have enough time to talk to all of the employers you want to meet.

### Prioritise

- Concentrate on the employers you are most interested in and know what you want to talk to them about.

### Behave professionally

- Make sure to finish your coffee and put your phone on silent before entering the event.
- This isn't a job interview but you do want to try to create a good impression. Be remembered for the right reasons.
- Don't forget - open body language, give good eye contact, smile and be yourself!
- Take a notepad and pen and make notes of things you need to remember to follow up on e.g. contacts you have met, application deadlines etc. This looks professional and will help you compare and remember who said what!
- Consider having your own simple business cards printed so that you can exchange cards with recruiters.
- Thank employers and get their contact details.

### Make good use of your time at the fair

- Make best use of the time you have at a fair by talking to the employers, getting an insight into their organisation and making a good impression on them – they may keep a look out for your application if you impress them!
- Don't be shy, employers want you to come and talk to them. Be prepared to practise your elevator pitch - build your confidence by practising on a few employers you are not targeting.
- If you visit a fair with friends don't hide behind them and hope that they'll do all the talking, get stuck in!

### Gain an insight into the employer and what they look for

- Take the opportunity to talk to the employer about

what they look for in students / graduates and ask them what things you could do to make your CV more attractive.

- Employers will often bring along recent graduates or students currently on placement, giving you an excellent opportunity to pick their brains about the projects they are currently working on and of course get some top tips on the application process they went through.

### Before you leave

- Before leaving the fair double check the programme to be sure that you have spoken to all the employers that you are interested in.

## After the Fair

### Follow up

- Email employers to thank them and include your CV. Ask them about the potential for visiting, getting a work taster and any open days or other events.
- Send a personalised LinkedIn request to connect with them.

### Apply

- Decide where you will apply, find out the deadlines, do any additional research and APPLY!
- Remember that Careers can help with applications.

### Personal Development

- Pinpoint areas for personal development, attend the relevant sessions, workshops, get more experience etc.

## Additional help and information

### Get your CV sorted out before the fair

- View example CVs on the careers website to give you a few ideas  
[www.southwales.ac.uk/careers](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/careers)
- Our Employability Tools in Unilife Connect contain a CV Builder to help you draft your CV.
- You can get your CV checked out by a Careers Adviser either in an appointment or using the "Ask a Question" online service. Details on our website [www.southwales.ac.uk/careers](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/careers)

If you require this leaflet in an alternative format please contact the Student Services Department.

Careers & Employability Service • [www.southwales.ac.uk/careers](http://www.southwales.ac.uk/careers)

Newport campuses tel: 01633 435290, Pontypridd and Cardiff campuses tel: 01443 482 080.

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