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Graduate vacancies at five-year high, suggests research

By Judith Burns BBC News education reporter

Graduate recruitment is recovering but is still below pre-recession levels

Graduate vacancies at Britain's "top" employers are at their highest since 2008, new research suggests.

Britain's 100 "leading employers" have 4.6% more jobs for new graduates than in 2012, High Fliers Research said.

But its study of the 2013 graduate market said there were still an average 46 applicants for each position.

Last month the Higher Education Statistics Agency said it believed 10% of UK students remained unemployed six months after graduating in 2012.

The latest study suggests that the rise in vacancies for graduates is higher than expected.

Earlier this year, the same group of employers predicted that graduate vacancies would increase by 2.7%.

Career opportunities

The data is based on responses from the 100 organisations which a poll of 18,000 final year students at 30 selected universities identified as offering the best career opportunities.

Despite this year's increase in recruitment, "vacancies for university leavers at the UK's best known and most popular employers remain below the pre-recession intake seen in 2007," says the report, *The Graduate Market in 2013*.

Vacancies for new graduates dropped by 17.8% between 2008 and 2009, sprang back in 2010 but dipped again last year.

Changes in graduate job vacancies

- 2007-8 Down 6.7%
- 2008-9 Down 17.8%
- 2009-10 Up 12.6%
- 2010-11 Up 2.8%
- 2011-12 Down 0.9%
- 2012-13 Up 4.6%

"It's great news for the Class of 2013," said Martin Birchall of High Fliers.

Mr Birchall predicted more good news next year: "Many of the country's best-known organisations are set to expand their graduate vacancies even further in 2014."

Just under half (48) of the 100 employers said they expected to hire similar numbers of graduates next year, 18 thought their intake was likely to increase, 13 warned it would probably fall while 21 said they did not yet know.

One in six of the firms said it was planning to set social mobility targets for graduate recruitment.

The survey warns that many organisations have already filled all their graduate posts for 2013 through work experience programmes.

Internships

Earlier this month, a separate report suggested that internships and work experience were vital to successful job-hunting, with graduates who had done internships three times more likely to land jobs.

The median starting salary for graduate recruits remains unchanged at £29,000 for the fourth year running. The highest pay at entry level was at investment banks, averaging £45,000, suggests the study.

Public sector graduate recruits averaged a £22,000 starting salary and this sector saw one of the biggest expansions in recruitment, up by 18.6% in 2013. This was partly fuelled by the expansion of the Teach First scheme, add the authors.

Pam Tatlow of the Million+ university think tank said: "This is a very good news story for graduates. It is still tough to get a job but studying for a degree remains one of the best ways of securing employment and a career.

"There are many university courses which allow people to study subjects that interest them and prepare them to get a great job. There is still time to apply to start a course this year."

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