

Fall in graduate vacancies sees 85 apply for each job

By Sean Coughlan BBC News education correspondent

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University leavers face an uncertain jobs market

This summer's university leavers face a tougher jobs market, with a forecast of a 4% fall in graduate vacancies.

The Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) annual summer survey shows that leading UK employers are receiving an average of 85 applications per job.

The survey shows a sharp downturn in jobs in banking and finance.

"The current graduate market is the story of the economy, stagnant in places with growth in some areas," says the AGR's Stephen Isherwood.

The president of the National Union of Students, Toni Pearce, said: "While some areas are performing better than others it's clear that those leaving education face ever greater competition for jobs."

This latest view of the graduate jobs market, based on 200 employers, suggests a mixed picture, with some recruitment areas getting tougher, while others are improving.

'Pockets of growth'

Engineering, energy and telecommunications are all identified as areas of the jobs market with increasing numbers of vacancies.

There were also "pockets of growth" outside London, says the report, including in the south-east of England, the West Midlands and Scotland.

Salary levels continue to stagnate - and the highest median starting pay level remains in London at £28,500.

"It's incredibly frustrating" Laura Smith Graduate job hunter

Laura Thomas, who recently graduated from Glasgow University, is currently working in a bar.

She told the BBC many university leavers are finding it difficult to get a place on graduate recruitment schemes.

"It's incredibly frustrating and I know from experience that many of my peers have decided to stay in education rather than face the bleak situation that is the jobs market."

Ms Thomas, who studied history and politics, said that the vacancies available might not match the qualifications held by graduates.

"Not everyone wants to be an engineer or in telecommunications. What are we supposed to do with our degrees?"

'The right industry'

But employer David Priestman from Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire said there might be high numbers of applicants, but too many of them had unrealistic expectations and lacked the right skills.

"The problem is that today's graduates want the dream jobs. However, unless you have good contacts or an exceptional degree, it isn't going to happen," he said.

“The problem is that today's graduates want the dream jobs” David Priestman Employer

Ben Smith from Basingstoke, Hampshire, said university leavers needed to think more about "choosing the right industry".

"I graduated this year with a degree in computer security. I managed to secure two job interviews and was offered both positions. I chose the right position for me and my prospects."

Stephen Isherwood, the new AGR chief executive, said: "Overall vacancies are slightly down on last year and there is no salary growth. However we can take comfort in the fact that the graduate recruitment industry is still investing heavily in their graduate intakes.

"On the positive side of things, retailers, consulting and engineering firms, utilities and IT and telecoms companies are all recruiting more graduates.

"With these results in mind, my message to students is do not despair; graduate employers are broadly hiring the same number of graduates as they did before the credit crunch hit. Be competitive and strategic in your approach to applications - and keep persevering."

This mid-year survey, with its picture of a graduate jobs market still struggling to recover, is less optimistic than another recent survey of 100 employers from High Fliers, which found that vacancies were bouncing back to their highest levels since the recession.

That survey, on a smaller sample of employers, had found there were 4.6% more vacancies than last year.