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Employers plan to take on more new graduates

By Angela Harrison Education correspondent, BBC News

Nine out of 10 new graduates are in work

A survey of 100 big employers suggests they are planning to increase the number of new graduates they take on this year.

The study, by High Fliers Research, says there will be a 9% rise in this recruitment - about 1,400 extra jobs.

Many of the jobs will go to people who have already worked for the organisations, either on work experience or placement, it suggests.

Previous forecasts have been less optimistic.

According to the study, the increase in what is known as entry-level graduate employment is the biggest in four years among this group of employers.

Average starting salaries are £29,000 a year, with higher amounts being paid by investment banks (£45,000) and law firms (£39,000).

Among the highest starting salaries for this year are at the European Commission and the supermarket chain Aldi, both offering rates of about £41,000.

'Significant increase'

The study says two-thirds of the employers are offering "paid work-experience programmes" for students and recent graduates, with more than 11,000 paid placements this year for first and second-year undergraduates.

In all, 37% of this year's entry-level positions are set to be taken by people who have already worked with the organisations in some capacity.

The largest recruiters of graduates in 2014 will be the charity Teach First, which takes on top graduates to be trained as teachers. It has 1,550 vacancies.

It is followed by financial services groups PwC (1,200 vacancies) and Deloitte (1,000 vacancies).

Martin Birchall, managing director of High Fliers Research, said: "This very significant increase in graduate vacancies at Britain's top employers means the job prospects for graduates leaving university this year are the best they've been since the start of the recession seven years ago."

A study last year from the Association of Graduate Recruiters was less optimistic, forecasting a 4% fall in graduate vacancies.

Nationally, about one person in 10 is believed to be out of work six months after leaving university, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (Hesa).

Among those who graduated in 2012, average wages were £21,000 a year for men and £19,000 for women.

About a third were working in sectors that did not require a degree, according to Hesa.