



MAKING THE MOST OF CAREERS FAIRS

WHAT IS A CAREERS FAIR?

A careers fair is an event which brings final year students together with a range of employers from the private and public sector.

This is a unique opportunity for students to speak directly with recruitment and line managers as well as recent graduates to find out more about the graduate roles on offer and what it is like to work for particular organisations. You may also wish to seek out representatives from professional associations which often attend fairs.

Careers fairs are free of charge to students.

CAN I ATTEND THE CAREERS FAIR?

Careers fairs are primarily targeting final year students, although any student is welcome to attend any fair.

Students in the earlier years of their degree are welcome to look around so you get a feel for what happens at a fair and so that you are well-prepared for when you attend in your final year.

Some companies do offer vacation work and other opportunities to undergraduate students and these opportunities are mainly targeted at penultimate (pre-final year) students.

Postgraduate students are also welcome to attend; many employers are interested in your higher qualifications.

International students will find there are fewer organisations with opportunities available (in most situations Australian citizenship or permanent residency is essential).

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR A CAREERS FAIR?

Research the organisations registered to exhibit at the fair. A list of exhibitors will be available on the Careers Centre website prior to the event under the 'student events and workshops' tab.

Check which organisations are seeking students with your degree or discipline and make a list of

preferred employers. Visit the websites of these organisations and find out as much as you can about the organisation (size, location, products, services, structure, graduate program, career opportunities) and their recruitment process (closing dates, online application procedures, interview and assessment schedule).

By the time you visit the fair, you will have a specific list of organisations to locate and you can spend your time talking with their representatives. Bring along a list of questions so that you have some 'conversation starters' and you can impress them with your well-researched questions and your genuine interest in their organisation.

There is no need to wear a suit to the event but 'smart casual' attire is a good idea – leave the scruffy clothes and thongs at home. You do not need to bring your application documents (resume/CV) as most applications are submitted online.

WHAT WILL MAKE ME STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD?

- Make sure you do your homework and research as much as you can about the organisations that interest you.
- Understand the skills and qualities required by the organisation and be able to talk about how you match the requirements.
- Employers are looking for graduates who will 'fit' with the culture and values of the organisation. Your ability to communicate, initiate conversations, discuss relevant projects and research you've done, maintain appropriate eye contact and ask interesting questions will demonstrate these skills and let your personality shine. Remember you are on show at a fair.
- Be prepared to introduce yourself to employers and tell them briefly about your areas of study and your relevant skills and interests.
- Keep notes on the organisations that most interested you and make sure you keep track of closing dates.

WHAT DO I ASK THE EMPLOYERS?

Assuming you've some knowledge of the core business of the organisations you approach, at the fair you could ask the representatives about the following:

- The graduate program on offer
- The expectations placed on new graduates
- Learning and development support within the organisation
- The work culture
- The sort of projects they've worked on
- Their transition from university to work
- What they think helped them to be successful in the interview process
- The range of work available for graduates at the entry-level and on the graduate programs, and
- How many graduates they are recruiting in Sydney and nationally.

FINAL TIPS

Careers fairs can be overwhelming if it is your first visit. The main fair is a very large event with over 100 organisations represented. Smaller fairs are organised each year on a faculty or specialisation basis. Narrow down your list of targeted organisations so that you have a manageable number of stalls to visit. You will need to allow at least one hour to effectively find and talk with all the organisations on your list; at the main fair it is likely you will need more time.

WHAT ARE GRADUATE PROGRAMS?

Most of the organisations attending the fair are the larger organisations (private and public sector) which are recruiting a number of graduates for their graduate program. A graduate program means the recruits are placed on a special program for the first 12 – 24 months where the following opportunities may apply:

- Rotation through several business units
- Opportunity to develop strong project, business and leadership skills
- Specialised training and support, and
- Mentoring by senior staff within the organisation.

The recruitment process for these roles is highly competitive and occurs very early in the final year of studies (generally around March and April) as the organisations are competing for the 'cream of the crop'.

Most graduate program roles begin in January or February the following year. Remember that not all graduate roles are part of a graduate program and that many other organisations (some of the large organisations and particularly the small to medium organisations) recruit on an 'as needs' basis throughout the year.

Refer to the handout on graduate recruitment on the Careers Centre's website for more information.

Refer to the Careers Centre's website for a list of careers fairs each year. Information about the exhibiting organisations and which degrees/disciplines each organisation is seeking will be available. Also check your faculty and professional association website for other relevant events.