A guide to using Graduate Connections

Graduate Connections is a great way for Newcastle University students and recent graduates to find out more about career sectors that interest you, directly from graduates working in those areas.

They can help you find out:

- what it's really like to work in a particular job or organisation
- what skills, experience and tactics are needed to get into their career
- how to find relevant work experience
- what others have done with their degree

Our graduates can sometimes help students arrange work experience or shadowing and can often refer you to other industry contacts for additional insights.

How to use Graduate Connections

You can search the database for profiles of graduates who may be able to help you with your job search or career plans.

For example, you can search for graduates who:

- studied your degree subject
- have experience of working in specific industry sectors, eg accountancy, journalism or engineering
- work for companies or organisations you’re interested in applying to
- have lived and worked overseas
Contacting graduates

You can get in touch directly with the graduates using the online contact form on their profile.

Before you do:

- think carefully about what you want to know and how best to make use of their valuable time. Your initial email approach is very important as the graduates are generally busy professionals
- do some background research on their role and organisation and tell them what you already know to help them tailor their advice to your needs
- personalise your request and keep it concise and polite. Remember the importance of making a good first impression: you never know, you could find yourself working together in the future!

Example email to a graduate

Dear...

I found your details on Newcastle University’s Graduate Connections and hope you don’t mind me contacting you. I am currently undertaking a BA in Marketing at Newcastle University and am really interested in a career in digital marketing. I’ve completed a summer internship with X and am currently volunteering at Y charity, managing their social media.

I read on your profile that you have worked in a variety of marketing roles and I’d be really keen to get your advice on the following:

- Question 1
- Question 2

I really appreciate your help with this. If you would prefer to phone rather than email, you can contact me at 07xxxxxxxx.

Many thanks for your help.
Your name
What should I ask?

Graduate Connections is about getting information and advice about a role or industry to help you in your career planning and job search. **Don’t ask directly for a job or work experience.**

Try to avoid asking general questions which you could easily find the answer to from their profile or the company website. Use this opportunity to ask specific questions - perhaps two or three initially.

To help you get started, here are some examples:

- What’s the typical career path to get into X career?
- What skills and experience are employers looking for in this field?
- What skills do you have that make you good at this job/do you use a lot of in this job?
- What did you learn in your course that has really helped you to do your job?
- What was the recruitment process for your job?
- What advice would you give me for an effective job search in this sector? What techniques worked for you?
- Where are vacancies advertised? Are there particular recruitment agencies I could sign up with?
- Are there things I could do to strengthen my chances? (mention any relevant activities you already do)
- Does your organisation offer any work shadowing or project opportunities that would allow me to broaden my experience?
- Are there other career areas that my strengths and attributes make me suitable for that I might not have thought of?
- How is your performance at work assessed?
- What is the typical career progression in this field?
- Which parts of the field are expanding and likely to offer opportunities in the future?
- What are the most important current issues in your sector that are likely to affect your job/organisation?
- Are there any specialist publications I should read? (mention any that you read regularly)
Are there any professional associations I should join?

Would you be willing to give some brief feedback on my CV/application?

Could you recommend anyone else for me to talk to?

**Top tips**

Our graduates are busy people and may not be able to respond immediately. If you don’t receive a reply, review your email message to make sure it was appropriate and followed the advice in this guide. You could then send a follow-up email after a week or so to check that they received your original message. If there is still no response, please contact the Careers Service - it may be that the graduate’s contact details have changed or that they want to withdraw from the database.

Our graduates give up their time voluntarily, so please acknowledge and thank them for taking the time to respond. Keep in touch with them and update them with your progress. You never know when they may hear of a relevant opportunity they could recommend you for.

It can be useful to talk to others in the field and the graduate may be able to suggest other people who can help you. Get specific names and titles and ask if you can use the graduate’s name when setting up any future contact.

**Need more help?**

If you’d like more advice on how to use Graduate Connections or if you have any problems contacting our graduates, please contact the Careers Service.