Oxford University Recruiters’ Survey 2012 – Summary of results

The Careers Service conducted its biennial survey of recruiters in June 2012, contacting over 5,000 people who were registered on CareerConnect, the Oxford University vacancy system, who had been active recruiting in the prior two years. We were delighted that more than 750, or 15%, responded.

The survey set out to understand why employers recruit at Oxford, how the Oxford students were viewed relative to other UK students, and whether there were different views of undergraduates, postgraduates, DPhils and alumni. We also asked the respondents to tell us which industry sector they are in, average starting salaries, and other features of their compensation packages. On average we engage 65% of all 20,000 undergraduates and postgraduates we support (including 90% of undergraduate finalists); from our consultation, we know that this information will be extremely useful to all of them. We are pleased to be able to share a summary of the findings with employers.

Representative set of responses from a wide range of organisation and sectors

- Respondents were split 60% Small Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), 10% Large Nationals (LN) and 30% Multi National Corporations (MNCs)
- We received between 11 and 100 responses from each of 22 industry sectors

On the 8 measures of employability

- In terms of employability, there is no difference between what SMEs, LN and MNCs think of Oxford University students
- As we found in our survey two years ago, more than half the respondents rated Oxford students as ‘above average’ or ‘much better than average’ on six employability measures
  - Initiative: 75% of respondents rating OU students above/much above average
  - Self-management: 68%
  - Communication: 66%
  - Planning: 61%
  - Leadership: 59%
  - Entrepreneurship/innovation: 51%

- Team work and Business awareness scored lowest for our students (only 35% of respondents thought Oxford students to be above average in both these measures)
Salaries
- Average starting salaries seem to be in line with data in other surveys (e.g. HighFliers 2012)
- There can be a wide variation between SMEs and MNCs

Who are employers interested in recruiting?
- As expected, 80% of MNCs are interested in hiring undergraduates, 75% interested in postgraduates on 1 year taught courses (PGTs), 57% in postgraduates on 3-4 year research programmes (PGRs), just 47% in postdoctoral students and 56% in alumni.
- SMEs are slightly more interested than MNCs in postdoctoral students (52% vs 47%) and in alumni (63% vs 56%)
- When we look at interest in hiring PGTs by sector, there is a range of 58% interest from Consumer Retailers to 82% interest from Accountancy and Financial Services
Are postgraduates paid more than undergraduates?
- This is the $64,000 question for many undergraduates considering further study – will they get paid more if they have a postgraduate qualification?
- Overall, 48% of respondents definitely do not pay those with a higher degree more
  - This varies from 90% of law firms saying no
  - to 50% of Banking & Investment firms
  - to just 20% of Scientific R&D and Health and Social care organisations (not surprising since they tend to expect a higher degree to be qualified to do the job)
- The average pay increment for PGTs and PGRs is about £4K; post docs get about £8K more than undergraduates
- MNCs pay about £3K more to postgraduates than SMCs or LNs

Other compensation
Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of MNCs than SMEs provide other compensation including private health care, graduate training programmes and professional qualification support. The chart below shows the % of respondents in each category providing the listed features in their packages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>SME</th>
<th>LN</th>
<th>MNC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private health care</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate training programme</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activities</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional qualifications support</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Salary pension</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR / pro bono programme</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation package</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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Commentary
We asked for comments on why recruiters continue to come to Oxford; from the over 200 responses we learned common themes of:

- Excellent reputation, high quality, consistent performance, and ease of finding good candidates

And we select three of the many comments we received:

- ‘Self-starters in a profession which requires initiative, intelligence and independence of mind plus an understanding of the local sensitivities and priorities’
- ‘In time I have found that the level of written English is much higher than average ... and that recent graduates were capable and willing to work, responsible about their duties, and open to learning. Pleasant to deal with, socially adaptable and relatively independent.’
- ‘Our experience of hiring graduates from Oxford is consistently positive. They are not only academically smart but also well rounded, motivated and personable individuals. At interview, they are well researched and ask intelligent (and challenging!) questions.’

Suggestions for the Careers Service
We asked for suggestions on how we could improve recruiters’ experiences and 15% made comments. A comment made by several recruiters was the lack of response sometimes to job ads despite the hard work that they put into posting vacancies.
It’s worth pointing out here that Oxford has seen a 38% increase in vacancies posted in the last 12 months compared with the prior year, and this comes on top of three years of 25%+ annual growth. Recruiters posted over 6,000 opportunities on CareerConnect in 2011/12. This should be compared with a pool of candidates of about 3,000 leaving Oxford each year comprising:

- About 2,000 undergraduates: of the 3,500 undergraduates who leave each year, about 55% go into work or ‘work and study’ (the rest head for further study, law, medicine, PGCE etc) – that equates to
- Add about 1,000 – 1,500 postgraduates who go to work on leaving Oxford

So the reason that recruiters may not be receiving the level of applications they would like is that they are in a crowded market place.

We are always pleased to work with recruiters to help them raise their profile and find innovative and productive ways to engage students – particularly on our learning and development programmes.

If you’d like to follow up anything in this report, please contact us.

How to contact us and keep in touch

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With best wishes,

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