



Tips for interacting with employers

By attending careers fairs, information sessions, industry nights and other recruitment activities in which employers participate, you will have numerous opportunities to interact with potential employers whilst exploring your options.

Careers & Employment (C&E) often receives feedback from employers about the calibre of students they liaise with at these events. Typical comments concern students' need to 'have a neat and tidy appearance', 'prepare questions for their targeted organisations', 'improve their knowledge of the organisation', 'value the organisation as a whole rather than placing emphasis on *getting a job*' and 'avoid asking questions for which the answers can be easily obtained via websites or flyers'.

It's natural to feel nervous or not know what to say to employers, but if you're trying to make a positive impression and show you are seriously considering your career prospects, then it pays to do some background research so you can ask well-timed, pertinent questions.

Background research – what to find out before the event

- The core business of the organisation (products and services)
- The number of positions being recruited for and the areas of the organisation in which they are located
- Details of the graduate employment program
- The work competencies being sought in graduates
- The type of experience considered valuable
- The selection criteria/requirements for the position (usually includes work competencies)
- What the selection process involves and when offers will be made
- How and when to apply
- Opportunities for international students
- If there are other entry-level positions for graduates

What to tell employers about yourself (keep it brief and relevant) – how to make a good impression

- Your current situation and availability to commence work
- Relevant qualification/s and experience
- Work competencies and personal qualities
- Interest in the position, the organisation and industry

What employers may ask you as a potential candidate *

- Your reason for attending the event and what you have found of interest
- Your availability to commence work
- Your expectations of your initial employment

- What you think it would be like to work for the company
- How you will assess each employer
- What is important to you in a job/career

Below are some sample questions - only ask those for which the answers can't be found elsewhere. Through your research you should also discover further questions to ask.

Questions about graduate employment opportunities

- How would my area of study apply to the work I would be doing?
- What skills have I gained through study/outside of study would I be utilising in the work?
- What are the job tasks associated with the role? Can you give me some examples of these?
- Is the work project-based or continuous?
- What are the specific projects I could work on?
- At what stage would I be working with clients directly, and in what capacity?
- What are the constraints and challenges of the role?
- Is the job role changing due to advances in technology, productivity, the industry etc.?
- Is a graduate rotated through different areas of the organisation? If so, what are the areas?
- Is a graduate given specialised training for a particular role?
- What would be expected of me as a Graduate Trainee?
- Are there any issues that affect the transition from university to work?
- How would my performance be appraised?
- What options are there for graduates in your organisation? What are the possible career paths?
- What benefits do you offer a graduate who commences with your organisation – ie. professional development, study leave, opportunities to work overseas, salary range?
- When would I be expected to commence with the organisation? Is there any flexibility about when I could start?
- What hours of work would I be expected to do?
- Who would I be reporting to?
- What support is available for graduates?
- Where is the location of the work I would be doing?

Questions about the organisation and the industry

- Could you tell me a bit about the culture of the organisation?
- How many females are there in senior positions?
- Do you have work/life balance policies?
- Is the organisation growing, diversifying, specialising or restructuring?
- How well is the organisation performing financially?
- Who are your competitors in the industry?
- Are there any changes happening at industry level?
- What types of clients does your organisation deal with?

* These points were made by Denise Cooner, Director Exhibitions Plus P/L, The Graduate Grapevine, March 2005