Advice on how to prepare for the Fair

Why come to the Fair?
Attending a careers fair is a great opportunity to speak to a wide range of organisations about their graduate job and work experience opportunities.

Being able to speak to so many exhibitors in person gives you the chance to go beyond the website and graduate brochure, dig deeper and ask the questions you want to ask. For example, you can find out about the work and level of responsibility you would be given, the support and training you can expect to receive, the application procedures, even the culture of the employer and whether you would fit in.

If you are well-prepared and use your time wisely, you can collect a wealth of information which you can then use to make better applications and impress at interview. You can find some more ideas on what to ask towards the end of this guide.

The fair can also be an excellent opportunity to find out more about different work sectors, particularly if you are undecided. The Careers Service will also be on hand to advise you on areas of work which are not represented, so please come and talk to us if you can’t find what you are looking for.
What should I do before the fair?

Find out who is coming in advance – This will help you to decide which exhibitors you definitely want to speak to. This is particularly important if you are short of time as the fair can get very busy. You can view a list of attending exhibitors at [www.abdn.ac.uk/nsucf](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/nsucf).

Do some research on the organisations you want to target.

Work out what questions you would like to ask – Avoid asking obvious or very general questions which you could easily answer through a quick scan of their website. You will find a selection of good questions towards the end of this guide.

Our top tips for Fair day

1. Plan your day and give yourself plenty of time to speak to exhibitors. Avoid waiting at busy stands but use the time to speak to other exhibitors of interest and come back later.

2. It is best to go around the fair on your own, rather than in large groups, so you can ask your own questions, and make an individual impression. Don’t be content with listening into other conversations. Ask your own questions.

3. Ask for the name of any representatives with whom you have a conversation. It is good practice to follow up with a thank you note for the time they spent with you.

4. Dress fairly smartly as this can help you to feel more confident and makes a good first impression.

5. If you are not sure where to start when you arrive, then come and speak to us at the Careers Service stand first to give you time to settle any nerves and form a plan.

Our tips on asking good questions

Asking good and insightful questions at a fair can help you to make a really good impression. Recruiters will often remember candidates from events such as this when they review applications or at the interview stage, so it pays to spend some time researching exhibitors and preparing questions in advance.

Avoid very broad and general questions, such as “What does your company do?”. If you ask something as general as this, you draw attention to the fact that you have not done your research.

What should you ask instead? We have put together a list of possible questions to ask both graduate recruiters/experienced staff and current graduate trainees, the most likely people you will meet at the fair. Please don’t ask them all of these questions unless you clearly see that the person you are speaking to is having a great time too! Be particularly considerate during busy times, so that you don’t prevent other students from speaking to their target employers.
HR/Recruiter questions:
- How many graduate jobs/placements will you offer this year?
- What makes an application stand out from the crowd?
- How would you recommend I prepare for an interview with your organisation?
- Your website says that you look for [insert skill/competency listed as important]. Do you have any recommendation for developing and demonstrating this skill?
- I read that you are currently working on/involved in [x] project/contract. Would there be any opportunity to work on this as a new graduate/on a placement?
- How many of your graduates usually stay on with your organisation?/How many students do you usually recruit from work experience with you?

Trainee questions:
- How did you find the selection process?
- What would you recommend I do to help me to prepare for the interview?
- Did you have a placement at this employer? What was it like?
- How did you decide which organisations to apply to, and what made you decide to accept this organisation?
- What have you worked on so far?
- What do you enjoy about your job? Any downsides?
- What has surprised you most about your job so far?
- If you were a student again, what (if anything) would you do differently having been through the process?

You can follow the build-up to the event on Twitter via #NSUCF2018

Good luck and enjoy the fair!