

CAREERS FAIRS – NOT JUST FOR THE FREEBIES!

Careers Fairs (and presentation, if your chosen employers organise these) are your opportunity to explore some of your career options in much greater depth than the internet allows. It can be tempting to turn up, walk around picking up some freebies and leave – but if you do, you're missing out on the full benefits of having a fair which is ultimately being organised for you! To make the most of it, read on...

Why come to the Fair?

1. **In such a competitive market**, getting work experience and/or a graduate job is harder than ever, but not impossible. Coming to and making the most of the fair may open some doors or open your mind to opportunities for you to consider.
2. **This is your chance** to find out all sorts about employers and postgraduate options which can be difficult to glean from the web. This includes – details about what kinds of work employers do, what kinds of clients they work for, how they value their trainees, what responsibilities they give to work experience students and trainees, what the social life is like, what the culture of the employer is like and what they are doing to safeguard their future in the current economic climate.
3. **It is a recruitment event**, so when someone asks your name and writes it down, they are doing this for a reason – typically to make a note of applications they would like to fast-track to interview, or definitely wouldn't want to interview. The impression you make counts.
4. Need to write a covering letter or an application form answer about why you want to join a particular organisation? What better way to give you some answers than **talking to recent recruits** about how they approached it and what they like about their employer!
5. **If you're not sure about your career plans**, then the Careers Service are there to answer your questions. We'll also be giving feedback on your CV at the fair. Don't worry about bringing along copies of your CV to give out to employers though. Most will have application forms, so won't accept them.

What should I do before the Fair?

1. **Find out who is coming in advance** – this will help you to decide which exhibitors you definitely want to speak to and approach it in an organised way, especially if you're short of time as the fair can get very busy.
2. **Do some research** on the organisations you wish to speak to in advance. Knowing a little goes a long way. If you were one of the world's largest employers, you wouldn't be impressed either with someone who asks you who you are and what you do! They will hear this a lot during the day, so they'll be pleasantly surprised if you show you have done your homework.

3. **Think about what you really want to ask the organizations.** Focus on what you haven't been able to find out from their websites and write down questions you'd like to ask.
4. **Look out something smart to wear** – suits aren't necessary, but wellies are not appropriate (yes, I've seen someone wearing wellies in the past!). Something smart/casual would be perfect.

What should I do at the Fair?

1. **Take your time** – Look at the floor plan at the entrance and decide who you would like to speak to first before you start walking around the hall.
2. **Ditch your friends** – This sounds harsh, but the questions your friends want to ask are likely to be very different to yours. It will be much easier for you all to make your individual impressions alone. Perhaps arrange to meet up at the front area to chat about how you've got on and who you've still got to see to get moral support.
3. **Make a note of the names of anyone you speak to** at the fair. It's good to mention the impression and information you gathered at the fair in your applications and being able to name drop in your covering letter will make a positive impact.
4. **If you're lost, come and chat to us at the Careers stand** which will be directly opposite you when you enter the fair. Careers Fairs can be pretty daunting, especially if it's the first you've been to. We promise a friendly face before you take a deep breath and speak to the exhibitors.

We look forward to seeing you at the Fair!

The Careers Service Team