



A GRADUATE'S GUIDE TO KICK-STARTING YOUR CAREER



You might think that taking on a full course load will prevent you from gaining invaluable work experience in your chosen industry, but there are plenty of opportunities out there to boost your résumé and help put you on the fast-track to landing your ideal entry-level job after you graduate.

You might consider formal or informal work experience options such as internships, vacation programs or cadetships. These options enable you to acquire new skills and add a point of difference to your résumé.

You can also consider opportunities like volunteer work, casual or part-time roles in hospitality, retail or other small businesses, which can help to set you apart from other candidates who graduate without any practical experience at all.

Here are some of the most common options available for students in Australia.

Graduate Programs

Graduate programs provide students with exposure to a range of different functions within an organisation by rotating their time around the organisation over a period of two years, enabling them to identify their preferences, strengths, weaknesses and areas of interest within their chosen field.



Here are some of the companies offering graduate programs each year in Australia:

Applications open around March/April and recruitment takes place in August/September for placement in the new year (unless otherwise noted):

1. State and Federal Governments: applications due by September for a new year start, recruiting between March and August
2. Woolworths
3. Deloitte
4. Australia Post
5. Commonwealth Bank
6. Ernst and Young
7. KPMG

To be eligible to apply for a Graduate Program, it is required that you are (a) an Australian or New Zealand citizen or permanent resident at the time of application, (b) be completing your university degree in the current calendar year, or have completed one in the 12 months prior. Your grade point average will also be taken into consideration.

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Careers Fairs

Careers fairs are a great way to meet people in the industry and gain insights and tips for graduate applications. Most Universities also have their own careers fair dates. Keep an eye out in the lead up to March and April which is a common time of year for careers fairs.



Summer Internships

Summer internships are another great way to gain experience over the university semester break, also providing you with valuable exposure to your industry before graduating.

To be eligible to apply for a Summer Intern Program, it is required that you are (a) an Australian or New Zealand permanent resident or citizen at the time of application, (b) be in your penultimate year of study. Your grade point average will also be taken into consideration.

Having had paid work experience listed on a CV, as well as strong interpersonal and communication skills, can also have a positive impact on your application.

Grad Facts

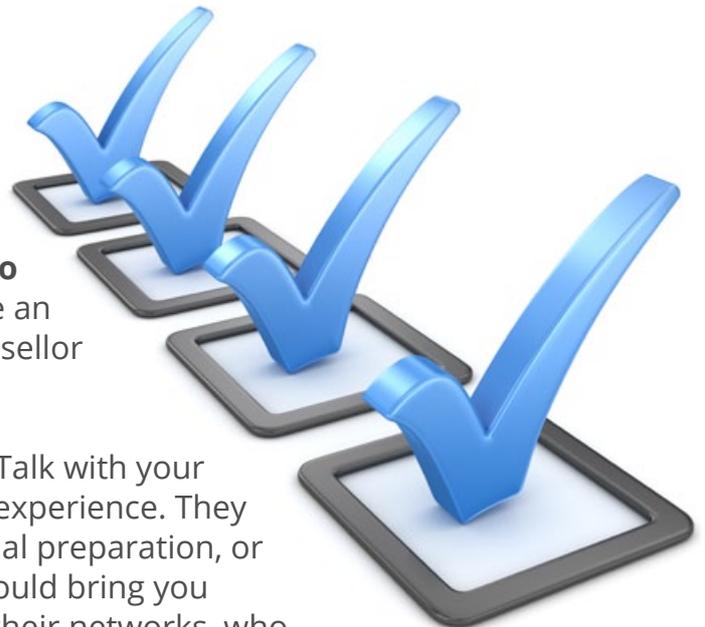
Employers generally consider a graduate's interpersonal and communication skills to be their most important selection criterion when evaluating prospective employees. (Graduate Outlook 2012, GCA.)

Work experience counts: 80% of bachelor degree graduates who undertook any paid work in their final year of study had secured full-time jobs within four months of course completion. The figure for graduates who undertook no work was 62%. (Graduate Destinations 2011, GCA; Australian citizens and permanent residents only.)

So Now WHAT?

Here's a handy checklist for keeping ahead of the game while you are studying:

1. **Make sure to use the resources available to you at your university or institution** - make an appointment to see your student career counsellor and attend the graduate career fairs.
2. **Take advantage of course opportunities** - Talk with your university lecturers and tutors about gaining experience. They may need assistance with course work material preparation, or assistance on research projects, which they could bring you onboard for. They may also have contacts in their networks, who are looking for a student to assist them on a casual basis.
3. **Approach organisations and businesses directly to ask about work experience** - whether this is an unpaid period of 2 weeks over the semester break, or some paid casual work to assist the team.
4. **Ask the professionals** - Approach a recruitment agency, who can assist you with structuring your resume, provide advice on the job search, and introduce you to companies who are looking for graduates to take on entry level positions.
5. **Use your existing network** - Do you know anyone already working in your industry? Ask to meet them for coffee or lunch to hear about how they got into their current role. You will find that most people are more than happy to provide advice and talk about their career.



Prepare a Top Resume

Remember; most graduates do not have direct experience in their field of study, so you need to consider what skills and experience you have gained throughout university, school, work and extra-curricular activities, that might apply to what employers in your preferred field are looking for. For example, representing your school in debating indicates strong communication skills. Being the captain of your school swimming team demonstrates teamwork, as well as leadership. A strong academic record indicates a strong drive to achieve results.



Try to identify personal attributes that are important to you, and that you believe describe you, and include them in your mission statement, which helps to explain why an employer should choose you over another candidate.

Being passionate about your field and organisations you would like to work for is also a strong selling point.

Do Your Research

Researching your preferred industry and organisations you would like to work for is vital to understanding what attributes and experience will be most relevant to include in your cover letter or resume.

It's important to be realistic about what to expect after you graduate, in terms of job availability and salary expectations. There are plenty of resources available on line to guide you. Check out <http://www.graduateopportunities.com/graduate-salaries/> and select your preferred industry.

Conclusion

It's not uncommon to wonder what life will look like after you graduate from any type of academic program, and this applies to graduates from high school, undergraduate degrees, diplomas, and post-graduates just to name a few. Finding yourself free from the structured and task focused nature of academic life, and faced with a plethora of opportunities and the competitive environment of the corporate world can be overwhelming to say the least. The most important thing to remember is that you are not alone, but this also means that taking advantage of every opportunity available to make your résumé stand out from the crowd is critical. The good news is that there are plenty of resources available to you, and that with a bit of research, planning, and some good old common sense, you can get your new career off to a flying start!



Resources

<http://www.graduatecareers.com.au>

http://www.graduates.qld.gov.au/graduate-employment/key_dates.aspx

<http://au.gradconnection.com/graduate-jobs/human-resources/>

<http://www.kpmg.com/au/en/careers/graduates-students/graduates/pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.graduateopportunities.com/dates-info/graduate-calendar/>

<http://www.thebigmeet.com.au>

<http://www.graduateopportunities.com/your-career/career-advice/facts-figures/>

<http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/CareerPlanningandResources/StartingYourSearch/GraduateSkillsWhatEmployersWant/index.htm>

<http://www.graduateopportunities.com/your-career/getting-that-job/what-employers-want/>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2014/11/12/the-10-skills-employers-most-want-in-2015-graduates/#5ee047e419f6>

<https://www.aacu.org/leap/presidentstrust/compact/2013SurveySummary>