Expectations for work | Views of final year undergraduates and recent graduates

November 2017
Methodology

An online survey was distributed to final year undergraduates and as well as those who had recently graduated to understand their views about their job prospects and their expectations of their future workplaces and prospective employers. The survey was sent out via NUS’ database of Extra cardholders.

403 responses from recent graduates and 731 from final year students were received. Responses have been weighted according to gender, matching data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Significant differences according to demographic characteristics are highlighted throughout the report, including those who may be defined as being part of ‘Generation Z’ – those aged 26 years and under.
Aspirations for future employment
Having a job offering a good salary/financial benefits and a good work-life balance were mentioned by 3 in 4 recent graduates and final year students as being most important to them when applying for a job. Also important (mentioned by 7 in 10 of both groups of respondents) was having a sense of meaning and satisfaction from their work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Recent graduates (n=403)</th>
<th>Final year students (n=731)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A good salary / financial benefits</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good work – life balance</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of meaning / satisfaction from my work</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for further training and development</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a positive impact on the world</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to progress / to take on a leadership role</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values that match my own</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of the organisation</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible working arrangements (e.g. remote working, flexible hours)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation’s ethos</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of contributions / achievements from colleagues</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significantly more important to respondents aged 26 and under

Significantly more important to students aged under 26 years and women

Significantly more important to respondents aged 26 and under
When asked what the top 3 factors were that would have most influence when applying for a job, the same 3 factors dominated, although in a different order. Of most influence was having a sense of meaning/satisfaction from their job (mentioned by 7 in 10), followed by a good salary and financial benefits (mentioned by 6 in 10) and a good work-life balance (mentioned by half).

B2. And what do you think will be the top three factors that will influence you the most when considering which jobs to apply for?
Base: In brackets
B3. What other factors will you take into consideration when considering which jobs to apply for?
Base: 302 analysed responses

Job location is the most important ‘other’ reason mentioned when considering which jobs to apply for, spontaneously mentioned by over half of comments analysed.

From analysis of 302 open ended responses the main ‘other’ factors mentioned included:

- Location of job (53%)
- Having a job I would enjoy (12%)
- Good team culture (12%)
- Rewards/benefits (10%)
- Having the right skills for the job (8%)

"Ultimately the job has to be something which interests me. Offering opportunities to further develop and progress; a constant challenging environment must be presented. Pay and benefits another desirable aspect."

"Location, a job where you’re working as a team to achieve a common goal, jobs where community is involved (whether that be in the workplace or the wider public community)."

"I would only consider a job as a career if it’s really something I want to do, I wouldn’t settle for anything."

"I will take into account the location of the job when deciding to apply."

"The proximity to where I live and the people I will be working with on a regular basis."

"The description of the job role needs to be enticing and the location is also very important."

"Whether it matches my interests/will utilise my degree knowledge and skills."
When asked to describe their understanding of an organisation’s ethos, the most commonly reported definitions included associations with ‘what they stand for’ and ‘their core values’.

"What they stand for and believe in, like a set of morals and actions they promise to undertake."

"The principles they stand for and the things they strive for."

"What they stand for and the atmosphere which they wish to convey."

"The core values they ascribe to and how they demonstrate them in daily life."

"It’s core values on how it operates."

"Usually centred around core values and beliefs the company stands for."

"Their core values and views about how to operate/treat their staff and clients/customers."

"Positive and inclusive with a good set of core values that are relatable."
Describing the ‘ethos’ they are looking for from their future employers, a ‘positive’ and ‘fair’ culture where employees are supported is most sought after.

“Sense of organisation, including everyone and fairness.”

“Good solid foundations, good company reputation for being transparent in actions, fairness, integrity in everything.”

“To promote a fair and tolerant workplace, engage with workforce on decisions in future.”

“Commitment to justice and fairness.”

“Wanting to make a positive impact, but also looking at things realistically.”

“Something that positively impacts the local community/ young people.”

“One that cares for its workforce and understands and acknowledges the demands placed upon them and welcomes feedback for positive change.”

B4. What kind of ‘ethos’ would you be looking for from your future employers?
Base: 825 respondents
Organisations and ways of working
3 in 4 recent graduates and final year students say that feeling valued for the contributions they made would empower them to carry out their role when starting a new job. Gaining feedback on performance, feeling trusted by their manager and feeling their ideas would be listened to would empower 2 in 3 respondents to carry out their role.
6 in 10 say that a flexible working style is most preferred. Around 1 in 5 would prefer to be office based and 1 in 10 would like to travel around in their job.

Flexible – time in the office but also in other locations where you can be productive including at home
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 59%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 61%

Office-based
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 18%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 16%

Travelling – permanently working in different places and locations
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 9%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 10%

Home-based
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 3%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 4%

Other
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 5%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 5%

None of these
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 2%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 3%

Don’t know
- Recent Graduates (n=401): 4%
- Final Yrs (n=728): 2%
When it comes to the method of communications preferred when working, half say a mixture of methods works best for them – this is significantly more important to recent graduates (54%) than to final year students (46%).

**Bar Chart:**
- **A mixture of methods**
  - Recent Graduates (n=403): 54%
  - Final Yrs (n=729): 46%
- **Face-to-face / in person**
  - Recent Graduates (n=403): 33%
  - Final Yrs (n=729): 38%
- **Electronically**
  - Recent Graduates (n=403): 12%
  - Final Yrs (n=729): 14%
- **Telephone**
  - Recent Graduates (n=403): 1%
  - Final Yrs (n=729): 1%
- **Don’t know**
  - Recent Graduates (n=403): 1%
  - Final Yrs (n=729): 1%

**Notes:**
- Recent graduates significantly more likely to select this option.
- Men respondents significantly more likely to select this option.
Over 90% of final year students and recent graduates are in agreement with the statement ‘I’m comfortable working with people from different generations’. Attitudes towards the statement ‘I’m concerned my style of working will be different to my colleagues from older generations’ were more mixed with around a quarter agreeing and 40% disagreeing.

C4. We’re also interested in your thoughts on your future colleagues. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
3 in 10 would prefer to work for a public body or an education organisation. Around a quarter would prefer to work for a large or multinational business.
C6. Imagine you’ve started work in a new job, but unfortunately the job isn’t meeting your expectations. How far below your expectations would the job need to fall in order for you to hand in your resignation?

For the majority a job would have to be close to not meeting expectations at all to make them consider handing in their resignation.

![Graph showing survey results](image-url)

Don’t know

- **Recent Graduates (n=402)**
  - 5% (5%)

- **Final Yrs (n=731)**
  - 7% (5%)

1 – Mostly meeting expectations

- **Recent Graduates (n=402)**
  - 2% (2%)

- **Final Yrs (n=731)**
  - 2% (2%)

2

- **Recent Graduates (n=402)**
  - 4% (5%)

- **Final Yrs (n=731)**
  - 2% (5%)

3

- **Recent Graduates (n=402)**
  - 15% (23%)

- **Final Yrs (n=731)**
  - 23% (30%)

4

- **Recent Graduates (n=402)**
  - 42% (35%)

- **Final Yrs (n=731)**
  - 35% (42%)

5 – Not meeting expectations at all

- **Recent Graduates (n=402)**
  - 30% (29%)

- **Final Yrs (n=731)**
  - 29% (29%)

**Significantly more likely to be selected by final year students**

**Significantly more likely to be selected by women**

Base: In brackets
Around half of respondents would consider handing in their resignation if their working arrangements or work-life balance in a new job wasn’t meeting their expectation. 4 in 10 said they would resign if values didn’t match their own.

C7. Imagine you’ve started work in a new job, but unfortunately the job isn’t meeting your expectations. Which of the following factors would prompt you to hand in your resignation if they didn’t meet your expectations?  
Base: In brackets
When asked for their views on leadership, respondents associated the concept with responsibility, exemplification, support and empowerment.

“Someone who respects the people they are leading, encourages them and helps them to improve.”

“Being in charge in a positive way. Creating opportunity for others, leading people and showing them how to things in a correct manner. Supporting the team.”

“A leader will help others to work to their advantages.”

“Strong and leading by example. Someone who motivates and steps in to deal with issues effectively.”

“Building a positive team and empowering individuals.”

“Taking control of a situation and leading it to success.”

“Being in charge but also part of a team and helping the others while maintain control as well.”

C8. We’re interested in your views on leadership within organisations. Please describe what ‘leadership’ means to you in the box below?
Base: 857 respondents
The main advice that respondents would give a leader or chief executive of a future employer is to around empowering their staff and valuing their contributions.

“Make them feel like they belong, listen to their ideas and concerns.”

“To value and listen your employees, give them an opportunity to give you feedback as well.”

“Be a team with your staff members and listen to their ideas.”

“To listen to your employees- undergraduates have a wealth of knowledge and opinion.”

“A lot of great leaders can talk well, but know when to listen too.”

“To take time to listen and offer the guidance they need, valuing their contribution and making them feel empowered.”

“Listen and value the voice of your employees, praise and feedback can go a long way.”

C9. If you could offer the leader / chief executive of your future employer one piece of advice on how to lead and empower recent graduates with their workplace, what would it be?

Base: 837 respondents
The respondents
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