



University of  
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MANCHESTER

# Preparing for Careers Fairs

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**ask**



**CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE**

Careers Fairs are a great chance for you to start to talk to employers in order to find out more about them, ask how they recruit to their business, build up your contacts, and possibly be invited to complete an application form in order to be considered to work for them after your studies. Careers Fairs are also the time to make a good first impression to potential employers or lead you to a future employment/work experience opportunity.

It can be daunting if you have not attended a Careers Fair before therefore it is important to put some thought into how you are going to spend your time at the fair before you attend it. **Preparation is key** to getting the most out of a careers fair. Working through the below will help you to do that.

## Step 1

### **Who is attending the fair?**

Find out which employers will be attending the fair so that you can start to plan who you would like to speak to.

A list of employers that are attending the fair will be available for you to view before the fair – find them listed using the link here: <http://bit.ly/careersfair-meetemployers>

You will also receive a handout on the day of the fair, listing the employers who will attend. Now, look through the list and consider who you would like to talk to. Note the employers/companies below:

Employer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Employer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Employer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Employer 4 \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not recognise any employers or do not know what they do, research them on the internet. **Don't just visit employers that you know about and have heard of.** You don't want to miss out on any potential leads or information through not understanding who the other employers are.

## Step 2

### **Research your employer short list**

You have now identified who you would like to speak to. Research the companies thoroughly using their website, LinkedIn and other social media platforms. The more you know about the company beforehand, the easier it will be for you to speak to the actual employer on the day and make a good impression.

Research some basic information about the company. If they have had any recent success stories or news, this is good to know. Try to find out about their culture and profile and if they are offering any positions at the moment for employment.

## Step 3

### **Prepare questions you would like to ask the employers**

If you have researched the company thoroughly, this will help you to avoid questions that may create a bad impression to the employer, for example: What does your company do? What sort of roles does your company advertise for? Do you have graduate level roles?

Useful questions are those that will assist you to make a good application to the company one day, for example: What experience would you like applicants to have had before applying to you? What does a typical day look like to an employee of yours? What is your recruitment process? What skills and qualities do you look for in an applicant?

Now think about your questions you would like to ask the employers. Your conversation with the employer may trigger extra questions for you to ask on the day but pre-prepared questions are useful to have so you know what to say on your approach:

Write your questions below:

**Question 1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 2** \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3** \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 4** \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 4

### **Update your CV**

It is a good idea to have an up to date CV ready to hand out to an employer or be prepared to send one to an employer after the careers fair. The list of employers attending the fair may also show if they are advertising roles at the time of the fair. If this is the case, and there is a job you wish to apply for, tailor your CV to mirror that job role.

**The Careers and Enterprise team hold CV drop-in sessions on a daily basis for you to gain feedback on your CV.** You can find the days and times of when the CV Drop-Ins run on **Advantage** – look in the appointments section. There is also an online guide to help you prepare a CV from scratch. Follow this link:

<http://bit.ly/uoscvguide>

Once you have an up to date CV, and you have had this checked by the Careers and Enterprise team, print off several copies that you can take along with you to the fair. Print these out on quality paper and try to keep them in a folder so they stay in a neat.

## Step 5

### **Attend the fair**

A careers fair is your time to start to make a good impression to employers. We advise that you dress in smart/casual clothing to help make that good first impression.

You have already prepared questions to ask the employers however if you are feeling nervous, why not visit some desks of employers that you have not prepared to visit, just to practise asking questions and approaching the desk. You will then feel more prepared to approach those on your short list and be confident to ask your questions.

Try to go along to the fair on your own. If you attend with a group of friends, this may impact how you spend your time. If your friends wish to look at different stands or do not want to ask questions, you miss out on potential opportunities or information. It also gives the employer you speak to enough time to dedicate to just you.

Don't rely on your memory to remember the information the employers provide. Take a phone or notebook along to the fair to make notes. Other useful information may come out of your interactions such as email addresses for future contacts, work experience suggestions, or information about how to apply. If an application is recommended to you to fill out, complete this away from the fair when you have enough time to dedicate to it. It isn't a good idea to rush any application.

Still visit other employers that you have perhaps not prepared to see - pick up business cards so you have these for any potential follow ups.

If there are employer talks taking place at the fair alongside the employer stands, don't disregard these. There may just be an interesting topic they talk about or a contact you can make from the presenter.

## **Step 6**

### **What to do after the fair**

Complete any application forms you have the links for, taking your time to provide correct and quality information. If you require help to complete these or need some advice on writing a personal statement, make an appointment with the Careers and Enterprise team through Advantage.

Follow up on any leads you have from the fair. Send an email, addressing the person you spoke to in order to ask further questions or find out more about an upcoming opportunity you learned about at the fair. Look through the business cards you picked up to see if there are any employers you would like to explore further.

If it has been advised for you to gain work experience or work shadowing experience, start to plan for this during your studies. Graduation arrives quickly. If you can build the experience during your studies, you will be closer to the graduate labour market as soon as you finish university and have quality experiences to add to your CV!

## Careers Fair To-do list

1. **Check which employers are attending the fair**.....
2. **Decide which employers you would like to speak to**.....
3. **Research the companies – gain some details about the company**.....
4. **Prepare some questions to ask the employers**.....
5. **Update your CV**.....
6. **Gain feedback on your CV by attending a CV Drop in with the Careers and Enterprise service**  
.....
7. **Choose a smart outfit to attend the fair in**.....
8. **Print copies of your CV onto quality paper**.....