How to research an employer

All employers will expect you to show an understanding of, and interest in, their organisation and their business sector; they will ask questions to assess your commercial awareness.

Why should you do your research?

It will help you to target your answers on application forms and respond more knowledgeably to questions in interviews.

Use your research to:

- **Decide if a company suits you:** After researching an employer you can decide if the company is a good fit for you. Do you relate to their company values and future aims?

- **Help with a cover letter:** A cover letter should show your rationale for applying for a particular position with a specific company. Do you already use their products and services? Are you impressed by the training and support offered? Are you looking for a position that provides opportunities to travel?

- **Think about questions to ask at interview:** You can further demonstrate your interest by asking well-thought out questions about the business and the role itself. You could ask about: the training provided; the work environment; and aspects of the role.

What areas should you research?

Understand the recruitment process

- What roles are available for undergraduate students?
- What degree background and qualifications are required?
- What specific skills are needed and how can you demonstrate these?
- What are the various application stages of the recruitment process?
- When is the application closing date? Keep checking in case it changes.
- Can you find out the name of your interviewer?

Show your commercial awareness

- What does the company do e.g. products made/services provided?
- What is the history of the company?
- Who are its customers/clients?
- Where does the company operate and in which markets?
- Who are its main competitors? How are they currently performing?
- Has the company had any big news within the last two years e.g. new launches or mergers?

Look at the company culture and reputation

- What does the company state as its core values and aims?
- How is the company viewed externally? What are its rankings and reviews?
- Has it won any awards recently or done any charity fundraising?
- Ask yourself why working for the employer appeals to you?

Where to look:

Company website

- Look at the main corporate site, the careers pages and, if applicable, company blogs.
- Watch videos from recent students and graduates sharing their experiences.
- Most will have an 'about us' section which will tell you what they do, why they're good at it, what their values and aims are, as well as what their future plans are.
- As well as information on the job, read recent press releases and reports.

Social media

- Check company Facebook and Twitter feeds for regular updates and job opportunities.
- Use LinkedIn to find out more about the company, job opportunities and members of your interview panel.

Review sites

- Look the company up on Glassdoor to find reviews on salaries, working environments and other employee insights.

Industry news

- Read industry-related publications to keep up-to-date on news that will affect the company you are researching and their competitors.
- Run a Google search and view the 'news' results to see when the company has recently been mentioned in the press.

Campus events

- Large employers will often visit universities to deliver presentations and attend careers fairs so you can interact with some employers before even starting your application.
- Recent graduates usually attend these events so you can ask them about their personal experience, their role and what the company is like to work for.

Use your own words:

Try to summarise your research into your own words before completing your job application. Copying phrases from an employer's website into your application or learning them off by heart to recite at interview will appear lazy and will not demonstrate your own understanding of their business.