**Helping smaller organisations hire from University of Westminster**

This guide aims to support smaller organisations to recruit students and graduates from our university. It is based on research which looked into student’s employer preferences, including answers to questions like what makes a successful job ad.

Larger organisations often employ members of staff whose sole focus is on recruiting graduates, so we want to provide you with some tips to help you stand out alongside large employers.

We are here to help, so please get in touch with us at employerliaision@westminster.ac.uk .

**What we offer**

* Advertise a vacancy on [Westminster Engage](https://engage-employability.westminster.ac.uk/unauth/employer/login)
* Placements, internships and work experience
* Student Projects, Collaborations and Case Studies
* Industry guest lectures
* Skills sessions
* Employer presentations
* Careers Fairs
* Insight Sessions and Company Visits

Please note that all opportunities and events promoted must be in line with our [Terms of Service.](https://www.westminster.ac.uk/business-services/student-and-graduate-talent/terms-of-service-for-recruiting-organisations)

**Why recruit a Westminster student or graduate?**

* Extra resource to help develop your organisation.
* Fresh ideas and a new perspective on existing business challenges.
* Additional skills and knowledge that you may not have within your organisation.
* A development opportunity for existing team members to line manage.
* Specialist skills and knowledge to help develop products and services.
* An opportunity to ‘trial’ future employees to see if they’ll fit in.
* Diversity of thought and support for your social aims
* The chance for you to help an individual launch their career.

**Understanding the competition**

A challenge for SMEs is that the majority of students, throughout their time at university, say that they would prefer to work for a large company. But this doesn’t mean smaller organisations can’t recruit brilliant students and graduates. Only a relatively small proportion of our graduates actually join a large employer graduate scheme, as most are limited in number.

When asked about their preferred size of small organisations, students ranked them from larger to smaller: 51 to 250 employees, 11 to 50 employee, 1 to 10 employees. So, the smaller you are the more you will need to consider your approach to attraction.

**Recruiting international students and graduates**

The University of Westminster is proud to welcome students from all over the world. Our dedicated international students can offer your organisation their resilience, commitment, language skills and a global perspective.

Many students on a visa in the UK can work up to 20 hours per week whilst studying. Most can also undertake a full-time work placement is this is an integral part of their course and officially approved by the University prior to commencement.

After graduation, graduates can now apply for a [Graduate Visa](https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa). This does not require employer sponsorship and allows the graduate to remain in the UK for two years after graduating, or three years for PhD graduates. The graduate applies for and pays for this visa, and employers do not need a Home Office sponsor licence to hire someone with a Graduate Visa. The ability to hire someone under this route is also not subject to any minimum skill level or salary threshold. This means it has never been easier to tap into our pool of international talent.

Employers are also exempt from paying immigration skills charges when switching from the Student Visa to Skilled Worker Visa in the UK. To gain a graduate **permanently**, a Sponsor Licence costs less than £550 for SMEs, with the Certificate of sponsorship fees costing £199. This means SMEs could hire graduates permanently for £750 and additional grads for £199 each – potentially cheaper than recruiter fees!

**10 Tips to Recruit Students and Recent Graduates**

1. **Take advantage of all year-round timings**

As SMEs are likely to have more flexibility in hiring timings than large organisations, this can be an advantage. Try and get involved in our events and promote your opportunities throughout the year. Be mindful however of the academic calendar and student vacation periods; we can of course advise you of these.

1. **Clearly show when a job is a graduate role and state the salary**

Whilst you may not offer a formal graduate scheme, students will be attracted by ‘graduate’ roles, as opposed to any roles. Graduate roles are those that need a degree for the experience and skills gained. Use the word ‘graduate’ in the role description (or even job title). Stating salary is important in most recruitment (for experienced roles as well as graduate roles) as opposed to using phrases like ‘competitive starting salary’.

1. **Be welcoming and show your values**

The phrase “we welcome applications” is 18.4 times more likely to occur in popular vacancies. It is typically followed by a description of the type of candidate you want to attract e.g. ‘We welcome applications from students or graduates of any degree discipline’. Explain your values but be careful not to try and describe your culture in too much detail as this may exclude candidates.

1. **Interesting work**

Interesting work is most important to students who would prefer to work in small organisations (rated very important to 70% of surveyed students who prefer small organisations). Demonstrate the variety of tasks involved in any job role and the breadth of work your organisation is involved with.

1. **Making a difference**

As an SME, you should explain how you make a difference in the world and, where you can, demonstrate the variety of what your organisation does or opportunities for variety in the role. [Cibyl](http://www.cibyl.com) research this year shows a jump in the importance to students of sustainability and ethics, flexible working and starting salary, regardless of organisational size.

1. **Demonstrate your commitment to inclusion**

Be as specific as possible about who you want to welcome and your commitment to inclusion, such as ‘Whatever a candidate's background, the firm assess each application on individual merit’. Showing role models and using welcoming and inclusive language in job adverts is very important.

1. **Show customer feedback or awards you have won**

Demonstrating recognition of your expertise or the prestige of your business is attractive as proof that you are a good place to build a career, particularly when you are competing for graduate talent against better-known brands that have inherent prestige. Where you can, show your credentials, customer feedback or the well-known brands that are your customers

1. **Be careful trying to be too cool for school!**

It is obviously a good move to show enthusiasm for what you do and the benefits to graduates in joining your organisation, but overemphasis on some terms perform badly in terms of engagement, especially those that emphasise a lack of diversity. An example of an unpopular phrase is ‘Great young culture in the office’. Jobs adverts that overemphasise a drinking or social culture also do not perform well.

1. **Consider work experience, projects, internships and placements**

You can engage with our university and students all year round - there are lots of ways to build your brand creatively with students at an earlier stage in their studies, beyond posting a role in their final term or after graduating. The most successful hiring organisations take this approach. For more information on offering work experience or projects, please see XX

1. **Candidate experience**

As students go through the application process, there is a chance they will drop out if they feel the process is too difficult or clunky. Asking candidates to apply via email is 21 times more likely to occur in an unpopular job advert than a popular one. Completing an application form and uploading a CV to your website offers a better candidate experience. Also consider include the speed of your follow up and the friendliness and professionalism of the people that candidates meet. Try to give personalised feedback to all rejected candidates if you can.

1. **And finally…we’re here to help**

Our careers service is here to help and we have great knowledge of our students and the graduate labour market. We can let you know about the ways you can connect with our students and graduates and we are happy to help review your job advert and company profile. Please get in touch with us at employerliaision@westminster.ac.uk

*The research referred to in this guide was carried out by AGCAS and GTI (whose brands include targetjobs and Cibyl). It used a combination of a large-scale student survey, click data and language analysis. If you are interested in the full research you can find it* [*here*](https://www.agcas.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/Resources/Research%20and%20knowledge/SME_appeal_-_How_to_help_SMEs_Stand_Out_.pdf)*.*