

ASK us about...

## Job Prospects



## Resources

### Directories:

We hold a selection of reference books and directories of companies, as well as vacancy directories and a selection of journals. There is a useful leaflet called **Researching Employers**, available in Student Services, or on our website (see 'Need More Help' section for Student Services details).

#### Birmingham City University Libraries

There are links to a wide range of databases and websites providing quality business information. Look through the Business Subject Pages via Birmingham City University Library Home page: [library.bcu.ac.uk](http://library.bcu.ac.uk)

#### Birmingham Central Library Business Insight

This specialist business library houses a wide selection of national and international business directories, databases and journals. Contact 0121 303 4531 or [www.birmingham.gov.uk](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk)

#### Company Listings

#### Yellow Pages and Business Pages:

Identify companies by product or service and location. Look online at [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com) for a quick search.

#### Directories:

**Chamber Online** [www.chamberonline.co.uk](http://www.chamberonline.co.uk) for local chamber of commerce and local companies

**Your First Move** ([www.yourfirstmove.co.uk](http://www.yourfirstmove.co.uk)) : Lists companies by Sector and Region

**Kompass** ([www.kompass.co.uk](http://www.kompass.co.uk)): A searchable database of international companies, select by country and industry sector.

### Books:

All books are available at Student Services Help Zone in City North campus and on request at other campuses. Useful books include:

"Cold Calling for Chickens" Bob Etherington

**Brilliant Networking: What the Best Networkers Know, Say and Do"** Steven D'Souza

**Brilliant Pitch: What to Know, Do and Say to Make the Perfect Pitch** Shaun Varga

**Brilliant Cover Letters: What You Need to Know to Write a Truly Brilliant Cover Letter** James Innes

**Job Hunting: The New Rules"** Rob Yeung

**You're Hired! CV: How to write a brilliant CV"** Corinne Mills

**How to Write an Impressive CV and Cover Letter: A Comprehensive Guide for the UK Job Seeker"** Tracey Whitmore

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T: 0121 331 5588  
[www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-services)

# Accessing the Hidden Job Market

Many Birmingham City University graduates work for small and medium sized employers. With smaller recruitment budgets, these employers don't always advertise vacancies in the traditional graduate websites or journals. In fact, research suggests that up to 60% of graduate jobs are never advertised. This is often referred to as the "Hidden Job Market". Accessing these "hidden" jobs requires a proactive approach, so a little planning and research before you start can really increase your chances of success.

## Need more help? Just ASK!

Call in for initial advice at a Help Zone "Drop In" in Student Services, who will refer you to a career specialist if required:-

- City North Campus, First Floor Baker Building
- City Centre Campus, Gosta Green, Room G27
- City South Campus, Second Floor Seacole Building
- Millennium Point: Ask at Reception

Telephone 0121 3315588 or visit our web pages for dates and times of Drop Ins and services at other sites.

#### Careers and Job Prospects websites:

- <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers>
- [www.bcu.ac.uk/alumni/careers](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/alumni/careers)

#### Online e-guidance service:

- [www.bcu.ac.uk/askus](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/askus)

#### Social Media:

- Facebook: [BCUemploymentzone](https://www.facebook.com/BCUemploymentzone)
- Twitter: [@employmentzone](https://twitter.com/employmentzone)

View our full range of leaflets online:  
<https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/careers> >> Quick Links >> Handouts

### Where do I start?

Jobs that are never advertised tend to be filled by one of three methods:

- **Direct Approach** - Sending a speculative CV or phone call to the employer
- **Word of Mouth** - Finding out who is recruiting through friends, families and colleagues.
- **Previous applicants** - This includes people who may have done work placements for an employer.



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## The Speculative Approach

A “speculative approach” means contacting an employer to find out about any opportunities they might have now or in the future, without waiting for an advertisement. You should prioritise which employers to contact according to your preferences and speak to the appropriate person in each organisation.

But who is the appropriate person? Think about who has the power to recruit you and who has the specialist knowledge about your chosen area of employment. You may find that the head of the relevant department or team has more information about opportunities in a specific career area than a personnel or recruitment Officer. Try to find out the name of the person in charge of the department you’re interested in (receptionists can be very helpful for information like this) and contact them.

After a couple of weeks, whether you’ve heard from them or not, phone your named contact. Rather than asking for a job (which makes it easy to say “no”) ask what advice they can offer you. Use this opportunity to find out as much as you can about the job, the company and also their selection criteria (see some suggested questions listed below and overleaf).

This kind of research will help you to understand fully what you’re likely to go into and that knowledge will help you at interviews:

- Do you need to refine your CV further to reflect their requirements?
- Might a visit, a meeting, work shadowing or a voluntary placement be possible?
- Are there any opportunities for which you could be considered either at present or in the near future?
- Is there anyone else they think you should talk to?

### Making use of this information

Remember to keep notes on what you find out about different employers, so that you can compare and contrast them. Knowing what is involved in the industry or sector will help you to decide where you really want to be and give you a strong focus for discussions at interviews.

Whenever you get good feedback and suggestions during your job hunt, try to act on them. Thank your contacts for their help and let them know how you are getting on. Employers who are impressed may not be able to give you a job right now, but they might have the perfect opportunity for you when you’re looking for the next step up in your career development and it will help if they remember you.

### Be proactive

If you feel you are capable of doing the job, why not let the employer know it? All it takes is a phone call; it can be daunting to do this, but is a great way to prove initiative and commitment and give you the edge over other applicants.

## Speculative Strategies: What to ask for?

**Employment:** if you want to ask someone for a job you need to be prepared, since even speculative applications should be as targeted as a response to an advert. A professional, well-prepared approach will help you to make a strong first impression, so do your research on the company and have a relevant CV ready, in case your contact asks for it.

**Work experience** might be useful. Can you spend a couple of weeks or even just a couple of days in the workplace? Even if you do not want a job in that particular office, extra experience can be useful in your future applications and decision-making processes. Be ready to propose how you will be able to make yourself useful, too. See our **Making Yourself Employable** leaflet to figure out what skills you have.

**Work shadowing** is a useful alternative to work experience and allows you to see a typical day at work for someone doing your target job. You have more chance of doing this if you can be flexible about dates and times, but in some jobs (for example, where confidentiality is very important) it may not be practical.

**Informational interviewing** is when you discuss prepared questions about the work or company, maybe over coffee or lunch. It’s great if your contact can only give you a short time, because you can still gain a lot! It’s a good way to boost your knowledge quickly.

## Word of Mouth and Networking

Another great way of tapping into the Hidden Job Market is by speaking to people to find out what companies may be looking for staff. This includes:

**People you Know:** Speak to your friends, family, colleagues, University staff - let as many people know as possible what kind of job you are looking for. Ask them to ask others on your behalf to widen your network— do they have contacts who could help you?

**Industry People:** Get in touch with industry bodies to find out about wider networking opportunities. Attend conferences and trade fairs, Sign up to trade publications to find out about events and training opportunities.

**Online:** Social Media offers some great opportunities for networking. LinkedIn is an excellent platform for making contacts and researching companies. Twitter can also be very helpful in keeping up to date with industry news and events.

For more information, see our handout on **Networking and Social Networking**

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