

Debut

The Careers Conversation:

Have you had 'The Talk' yet?

Introduction

About the guide

Here at Debut we are constantly looking for ways to champion young people and fight for their rights as they enter the world of work. In recent months, it has come to our attention that young people today are not receiving the careers advice they need to succeed in the modern work environment - and we felt this wasn't right.

This guide has been created based on findings from our recent research* and insights from current students and recent grads. It will cover Careers Today, Career Timelines and Tackling the Government to provide an in depth insight into the UK's careers advice offering in 2017:

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Careers Today

Careers today are very different to what they were 30-odd years ago...



There are countless job roles and industry sectors that didn't even exist 10 years ago, and today's young people face the challenge of adapting to this increasingly fluid and evolving job market.

In comparison, their parents will have been far more likely to perform a specific role in a certain industry for their entire working lives. Previously the perception of a successful career involved progressing through the ranks of a company to senior management, and job stability and security was a main priority.

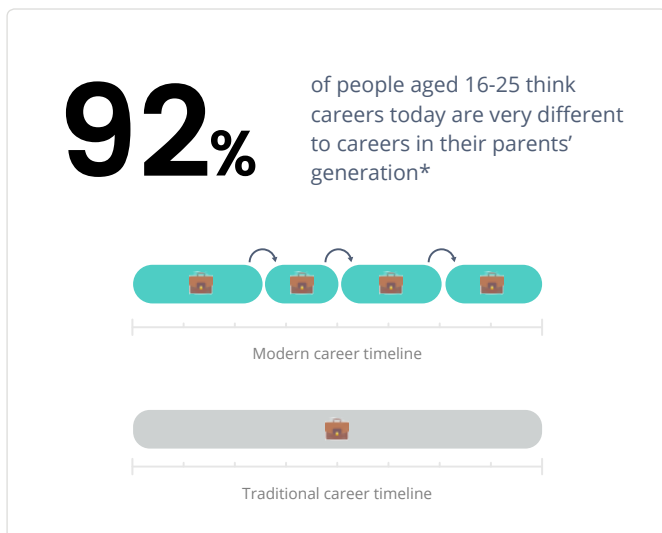
Today's careers look very different. In certain industries, job hopping is on the rise, with recent graduates working through a number of different roles and positions - sometimes across numerous industries - in the years after graduation.

Careers now are a much more nuanced and complex concept, often involving a number of jobs, freelance work and projects. Employers are increasingly looking for people with the right skills to be able to adapt for the future - research has shown that [80% of the job roles in 2025 don't even exist yet](#). Being able to work in different roles and industries is considered a strength, as industries benefit from cross-sector pollination and a transfer of skills.

But how is the UK preparing young people for this dynamic, modern job market? While the Government emphasises that ["Every child should leave school prepared for life in modern Britain"](#), whether this is truly being provided is debatable.

Talking 'bout my Generation

Young people think the career they'll go on to have will be very different from the kind of careers their parents pursued. The rise of the digital age, along with economic flux and increasingly transient job roles, mean that careers are no longer as static as they once were. For example, the majority of people aged 16-25 expect to work in a total of 3-4 different job roles during their career. The days of one stable job role for the duration of a career no longer exist.



If careers have changed so drastically in the past 10 years, is the older generation still qualified to give relevant careers advice to our young people?

It's up to careers advisors to ensure that the information they're providing reflects the state of the current job market, and not the job market as they knew it when they graduated.

Legally, schools are obliged to ensure all pupils receive some form of impartial careers advice, which covers a range of different pathways, and always promotes the pupils' best interests' at



Sonali
University of Warwick

"Our generation is more open to taking your time to figure things out, as well as career changes. For most jobs these days it's becoming more accepted to come from a different industry. We are now focusing a lot more on transferable skills as well."



Dan
University of Birmingham

"Careers nowadays are far more fluid. I don't think there are many people now who go into a job and stay within that company for their entire working lives."



Borislava
University of Kent

"Nowadays, from what I've seen from the experiences of friends, family and myself, the structure [of a career] seems less rigid [...] The focus tends to be on the individual's development, rather than finding one job and sticking with it forever."

heart. Beyond this the government merely make recommendations on what this careers advice should look like.

46%

of people aged 16-25 say they did not receive any careers advice before making important educational choices (A levels or degree subjects)*



Calum
University of Nottingham

"I didn't even realise the National Careers Service was a thing, and any careers advice I got at school came from an outside source."

The Government

“High quality, independent careers guidance is [...] crucial in helping pupils emerge from school more fully rounded and ready for the world of work” claims the government.



Such guidance should include the following, according to the latest [‘Careers guidance and inspiration in schools’](#) template:

- Provide access to a range of activities that inspire young people, including employer talks, careers fairs, motivational speakers, colleges and university visits, coaches and mentors.
- Offer high quality work experience that properly reflects individuals’ studies and strengths, and supports the academic curriculum.
- Widen access to advice on options available post-16, for example, apprenticeships, entrepreneurialism or other vocational routes alongside the more traditional A levels and university route.
- Provide face-to-face advice and guidance to build confidence and motivation.
- Work with local authorities to identify vulnerable young people, including those with special educational needs and those at risk of not participating post-16, and the services that are available to support them.
- Provide information to students about the financial support that may be available to help them stay in education post-16.
- Work with Jobcentre Plus to develop a smoother pathway between education and work.
- Consciously work to prevent all forms of stereotyping in the advice and guidance they provide, to ensure that boys and girls from all backgrounds and diversity groups consider the widest possible range of careers, including those that are often portrayed as primarily for one or other of the sexes.

There is no mention of how careers have changed in the past 10 years, and how school careers advice should reflect this.

The impact of this is obvious. Our research shows a worrying 22% of people aged 16-25 said the careers advice they received led them to make the wrong educational choices, having a negative impact on their career. If the advice pupils receive at the age when they're making these crucial decisions doesn't reflect the job market they find themselves in after graduation, young people won't have been able to make the appropriate decisions.

39%

of people aged 16-25 said they didn't trust that the careers advice they received at school was relevant and up-to-date*



George

University of Edinburgh

"Careers advice at school felt a bit like 'have a look at this website, it has a list of careers you can do', but in many ways it felt too early, for me personally, to be trying to make those decisions."



Jessica

University of Leeds

"I felt that the careers advice I received at school was pretty outdated and not very relevant for what I wanted to do. I remember completing lots of generic questionnaires and tests which told me my strengths and what industries I was best suited for, but this seemed quite abstract from the reality of the job market today."



Alex

University of Birmingham

"Generally speaking, the advisors focused on getting people into top unis and not much beyond that."

The government's current careers advice framework makes a number of suggestions for schools regarding how to approach careers advice. However it is not part of the official curriculum and careers-related activities must be arranged outside of core lessons. With funding being cut, schools often can't afford to employ an official careers advisor, and the role is often taken up by other teachers instead.

67%

of people aged 16-25 think the government is failing at providing a careers advice framework at schools*



Adam

University of Cambridge

"Perhaps a greater emphasis on career skills in classrooms should be introduced to provide a broader awareness of the world of work, rather than a focus on the university/no university dichotomy that appears to currently exist."



Over 84% of employers answered either 'No' or 'Not Entirely' to the question: Do you believe careers advice available in schools today prepares students with adequate skills, knowledge and the commercial awareness that companies are looking for from candidates?***

Representatives from recognisable global companies, including Virgin Media and L'Oréal responded to our survey. Clearly the government's framework isn't doing enough, and young people are still failing to receive the information they need to make informed decisions about their future and develop the skills they need to succeed in the modern job market.



Over 25% of employers said 'communication' is the top skill they wish students were taught from school careers advisors***

Career Timelines



The major problem that still persists in school-based careers guidance, government-funded services and recruitment models that have the power to reach young people in the UK, is that they are all still working towards delivering a strategy for careers that no longer exists.

Careers advice in schools disregards the reality of careers in 2017 - failing young people who need to develop the necessary skills in order to succeed, stand out and be flexible in an ever-evolving job market, and failing the companies that seek well-equipped and open-minded young people.



35% of employers stated they would consider hiring candidates who haven't studied a directly related course or subject for more than 60% of their roles.**

Careers advice is still too often focused on deciding what type of 'career' a student is best suited for and fails to adequately tell them how to prepare for that career. Knowledge of things such as work experience, internships and placements is just as important as other aspects of careers advice, and schools are failing students in this area.

79%

of people aged 16-25 say they have gaps in their knowledge, or no knowledge at all about when and how to prepare for a future career*

21%

of people aged 16-25 say they are knowledgeable about when and how to prepare for a future career*



Aneka

University of Southampton

"I honestly don't remember having much emphasis put on the 'career' I wanted to pursue - my school was more interested in pushing people into further education.



Dan

University of Birmingham

All I know is to get grades, experience and network if I can.



Jessica

University of Leeds

"I know it's difficult for careers advisors to have an in depth knowledge of every single industry, but I wasn't given much advice on how best to prepare for a career in the media, and I've worked most of it out for myself as I go along."



For a number of school students, university is still the main avenue that careers advice pushes them towards. But even if obtaining a degree is the right start to entering a desired career, little emphasis is placed on what else is required by students on top of simply completing courses or degrees.

Many people - schools careers advisors included - fail to address the fact that much more is required from university students than just achieving a good grade in order to break into their desired industry and gain a foothold on the career ladder early.

There are many points within the three years spent at university that require extra attention from students, but understanding when to apply for internships and graduate roles, and the importance of extracurricular experience is rarely discussed.

As an example, here at Debut we have created a careers timeline for university students to familiarise themselves with important milestones during their studies. A full version of the timeline will be made available on our website soon.



Aneka

University of Southampton

"A university degree used to almost guarantee you had a good start in your career, but now employers are more interested in 'life experience.' If you dedicate yourself to studying and getting a good grade now, it's to your detriment - because employers also want evidence that you've had part-time jobs and taken up extracurricular hobbies."

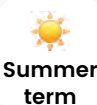
First year



- Join clubs and societies, decide on modules and change them if needed.
- Begin to scout out the part-time job environment.
- Head to the university careers advisor to discuss how to make the most out of university.
- Begin looking at Spring / Summer internships and what companies will take first-years. Also look into work experience opportunities for the upcoming holidays.

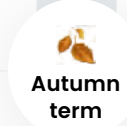


- Head to careers fairs and networking events to get a taste for what you may like to pursue as a career.
- Look into any upcoming internships or work experience placements in the Spring and Summer holidays.



- Chase summer work experience placements.
- Get a draft CV and cover letter together to be updated with any summer experience.

Second year



- Pull on previous ties to secure positions of authority within societies.
- Head again to the university careers advisor.
- Think about Spring / Summer internships and other work placements. These months mark the start of application season so don't miss out on any internships or work placements.



**Spring
term**

- Head to specific events pertaining to your industry to gain contacts and network.
- Push for summer internships.
- Host events, help around the department or university overall and get stuck into volunteering work.



**Summer
term**

- Bolster your CV with internship placements, work experience, exciting escapades and anything extra.

Third year



**Autumn
term**

- Use the summer holidays to prepare a CV and scout out graduate schemes.
- September marks the start of recruitment season so begin applying.
- Prepare for interviews (video and face-to-face, as well as assessment centres).



**Spring
term**

- Time to knuckle down and nail those January exams and dissertation hand-in.
- Make headway by getting in touch with specific employers or companies you wish to work for and network directly.



**Summer
term**

- Peak time for recruitment is June/July. Focus on perfecting a CV and cover letter, and undertake further interview prep.

Tackling the Government

A comprehensive careers strategy has been promised by the government and is yet to materialise. Debut, and a large percentage of the 80,000+ students and graduates that it represents, is concerned that a review or new strategy will fail to really address the problem, unless it takes into account how drastically careers have changed and works to prepare students adequately for a fluid job market.

One of the only ways the government can effectively achieve this is to use the experience of the younger generation to help guide any new strategy. Those under the age of 30 will be better informed on what it takes to succeed in the current job market than any others - they'll be able to provide advice on making the jump from education to work more effectively than someone who went through the same experience over 20 years ago.

76%

of people aged 16-25 say they would have found it useful to speak to a recent graduate / someone in the early stages of their career, for careers advice*



Daisy

Arts University Bournemouth

"I would've found it very useful to speak to a recent graduate. Speaking to someone who you can relate to and know recently went through the student process can make it easier to trust their judgement, and know that their experience is similar to what you might go through."



Final thoughts



With the information gathered from our report findings, it is clear that the government needs to address the issue of poor careers advice in school and publish their 'comprehensive careers strategy', as promised back in January 2017, as soon as possible.

The government must ensure this strategy includes relevant information on the current job landscape and adequately prepares students for the modern careers trajectory. The future of careers advice in schools needs to address the change in careers from previous generations, ensuring all students receive guidance before making important educational choices. A priority should be equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the working world, such as preparing for a future career and introducing them to recent graduates for modern, relevant insights into work in 2017 and beyond.

32%

of people aged 16-25 say the careers advice they received before making important educational choices had a positive impact*



Thomas
University of Nottingham

"Whilst careers education at my secondary school was very good, that was off my school's own back, not something needed by the government."



Charlie Taylor

Founder and CEO of Debut comments on the issues the report has revealed:

"The reality around careers evolution appears yet to be addressed by careers advice in the UK. Gone are the days when a career was for life – we asked 16-25-year olds how many job roles they expect to have and the most common answer was 3-4. We know that well over half of 16-25s would not be happy staying in one job for their entire life (58%).

"Career mobility is positive today, and the ability to transfer skills from one sector to another is incredibly important for innovation – there's a lot of cross-sector pollination, and careers advice today disregards this.

"Our open letter calls for the government to invite a new member onto the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) board under the age of 30 to push the 'new career' agenda, and provide more relevant careers insight and advice, as well as introduce a 'Modern Mentor' volunteering programme, whereby every 'careers advisor' is teamed up with a person under the age of 30 to ensure careers advice in schools is current, and relevant.

"With these actions, careers advice in the UK can be a positive influence and revised appropriately for the modern job market."

*Based on a Debut survey of 500 male and female respondents aged 16-25 within the UK. Run on 26/09/2017 via OnePulse. Hereby referred to as: 'our research.'

**Based on a Debut survey of 19 businesses based within the UK. Run on 10/10/17 via Survey Monkey. Hereby referred to as: 'our survey.'

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Where careers find you

