

## **Will there be anything left for Graduates?**

***By Poppy Surplice, Intern, Centre for Brexit Studies***

After graduating from a course you have been studying for years, you would hope to get into the industry as soon as possible, right?

The Coronavirus pandemic has caused massive implications for University students being able to find their 'ideal' job after the three years of hard work comes to an end. After mass redundancies across the UK and potential closures in many industries, including events, retail and manufacturing sectors, will there be anything left for us students in the years to come?

Post University life should be filled with achievement and excitement around entering into the 'real world' of work. But for the 2020 graduates and upcoming students, the reality of seeking jobs seems undefined. A survey on the effects of COVID-19 on recruitment from graduates (1) saw that many of those who had secured a job or received an offer have seen them withdrawn or deferred as the coronavirus pandemic has caused significant economic disruption.

The survey revealed that out of the 1,202 final-year university students who responded, 26.1% lost their work placement/internship, 29.2% lost their job and 28.2% had their job offer deferred or cancelled. Graduates are simply unsure what the future holds in their ideal industry of work, with those hoping to seek work in sectors such as business, logistics and hospitality being impacted the most (2).

In the worst circumstances, graduates may wish to change their skill sets, and go into high demand industries with necessitated work. This includes health care, electrical and teaching (3). Although this is not the pathway many would ideally like, it creates a back-up solution for unemployment after University.

Unfortunately, for graduates of 2020, they are graduating into a global recession due to the pandemic. According to the Institution of Student Employers, a quarter of businesses have reduced the number of graduates they hire this year already (4). Nonetheless, after studying hard for their degree, students want to feel a sense of achievement and passion for accomplishing the degree, so changing skills set would not be ideal.

Not only has it been proven that graduates have found it challenging to seek employability in their chosen industry, current students seeking work experience or placements have also been impacted. According to the same Prospects survey, 26.1% of internships and placements have been cancelled until further notice, reducing current students gaining any sort of experience in real work within their chosen industry.

For example, in order to gain experience in the event industry, you need to experience it for yourself. I was due to spend a year working for an events company in Barcelona, but it has been sadly cancelled, and I will now be going straight into my third year of University in September. Work experience gives students an idea what their chosen industry is all about. However, due to cancellations, it will be hard for students to gain the necessary skills needed.

So how will job applications look in the future? Of course, more people are seeking jobs due to redundancies. This means that more and more people are applying for a specific role, making it harder to actually get the job. Especially for graduates, who will have less experience than someone who has been in the industry for 10 years.

Not only will the application process be challenging, but how will interviews take place to fit with the government health and safety guidelines? According to Fast Company, the interview process is changing, going from in-person to video platforms like Zoom (5). It looks clear that face-to-face interviews aren't as heavily used anymore, and people tend to prefer virtual interviews anyway.

The question is if Universities will be able to help guide graduates and students to accomplish their dream jobs during a pandemic, or if we all need to be a little more realistic. Often, Universities have extra support faculties like Graduate schemes to help students find jobs after University. However, will there be enough jobs to go around?

Another useful application for University students to use is LinkedIn. This helps students build up a profile of experiences and skills they have already demonstrated, giving employees an idea on their current skills and their employability. The more experience and detail on a LinkedIn profile, the higher chances of seeking employment. But will apps like LinkedIn be able to help during a global pandemic?

For the current 2020 graduates, it looks like a challenging time to find any employment. I may be a year away from graduating, but I know we will still be feeling the impacts of the pandemic even then. Perhaps, for some students, it may be beneficial to undergo a master's degree, or to continue their education, rather than being unemployed.

The uncertainty still stands, perhaps there will be more available jobs for graduates after the pandemic. But for the current time, graduates enter the unknown.

(1) <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/graduating-into-a-pandemic-the-impact-on-university-finalists>

(2) <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/covid-19-downturn-beach-stocks/>

(3) <https://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/news/article-3592534/Britain-s-demand-jobs-revealed-pay.html>

(4) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/apr/10/recruitment-is-on-hold-the-students-graduating-into-the-covid-19-recession>

(5) <https://www.fastcompany.com/90481508/how-covid-19-is-changing-the-recruiting-and-hiring-process>