



The University of Edinburgh

Careers Service

Where do I start?

Civil Service

Introduction

The role of the UK Civil Service departments is to help the Government develop its policies: the role of Government Agencies is to administer and deliver the public services for which they are responsible. The Civil Service is a major employer in the UK and has staff throughout the country and overseas.

There are a variety of roles available in a wide range of settings. This diversity is reflected by the fact that there are a number of ways in which you can enter the Civil Service. A common misconception is that the Fast Stream is the only way for graduates to get a job in the Civil Service. In fact, many graduates work for the Civil Service without going through the Fast Stream.

General entry (i.e. non fast stream)

- Vacancies in the various government departments are advertised on the **Civil Service** website: www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs
The searchable database allows you to search for vacancies by department and location.

Newspapers, specialist journals and **JobCentre Plus offices** are also used to advertise Civil Service vacancies.

- If there is a department that you are keen to work for, ask them where they advertise vacancies. To find links to government departments, use the directory on the Gov.uk website: www.gov.uk.
- Remember that the Civil Service has many departments outside London.
- Some departments have their own graduate recruitment schemes

which are quite separate or in addition to the Fast Stream.

Departments with a separate graduate recruitment scheme include:

- **Ministry of Defence (MoD): Defence Engineering and Science Group (DESG):** www.gov.uk/defence-engineering-and-science-group
- **MoD Defence Commercial Graduate Programme:** www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/recruitment - choose: **Graduate Recruitment Programmes**
- **Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ):** www.gchq-careers.co.uk
- **HM Revenue & Customs:** www.hmrc.gov.uk/graduate.index.htm

To find out which other departments offer graduate opportunities, visit the **Jobs** section of the Civil Service careers website:

www.civilservice.gov.uk/jobs. Vacancies are also advertised on MyCareerHub, accessible through the Careers Service website www.ed.ac.uk/careers.

Fast Stream entry

- The Fast Streams are the Civil Service's accelerated development programmes. They involve a series of intensive job placements designed to prepare you for more senior managerial positions. Fast Streamers regularly move between projects and sections within their departments.
- The Civil Service Fast Stream is a very popular choice with University of Edinburgh graduates. The Fast Stream is, however, very competitive and you should be fully committed if you want to make it through the rigorous selection process.
- Civil Service employees also apply to the Fast Stream as internal candidates and do so with coaching and support from other members of staff. This can be an alternative method for getting a place on the Fast Stream if you aren't successful first time round as an external candidate.
- Visit the Fast Stream website (**www.faststream.civilservice.gov.uk**) for **exact opening and closing dates**, details of the selection process, resources, including a practice e-tray exercise, and other useful information.

There are six **Fast Stream schemes**, details of which are outlined below.

1) Graduate Fast Stream (GFS): there are **4 options** within this stream. When you apply you need to choose the option that's of most interest to you, and you can put your preferences in order. There is only one application round, which takes place during Semester 1.

N.B. The minimum entry requirement for the GFS is a **2:2 degree in any discipline**.

- i. **Central departments** – covers all departments except the Diplomatic Service (FCO). You do not choose the department yourself, the Civil Service uses a 'best fit' method to place you.
- ii. **Science & Engineering** – for candidates from a science, engineering or other numerate discipline who wish to use their technical knowledge (this is about having scientific **knowledge** rather than the practical application of science). Within this option you can select either Ministry of Defence (MOD) or 'other'.
- iii. **Diplomatic Service** – you will spend your first couple of years in the UK before going overseas. You need to be prepared to spend about half of your career overseas and not necessarily in the country of your choice. You should note that this is a **particularly competitive** option.
- iv. **Clerkships in Parliament** – Clerks are officers of the House of Lords or the House of Commons, rather than Civil Servants. They work supporting the business of the Houses, committees and members.

In addition to the Graduate Fast Stream there are **four specialist streams**:

2) European Fast Stream – for those who want to become EU civil servants.

- In addition to the minimum 2:2 degree requirement, you must have French or German to at least A-level (A - C) standard. You must be a national of the EU.
- In the first 2 years you will be given EU-related postings, including working in the EC for 6 months. This training boosts your chance of

passing the EU's demanding recruitment competition.

3) Analytical Fast Stream: www.ges.gov.uk: There are **4 roles** within this stream. In some years there will be two application rounds, depending on demand. Broadly speaking the first application round takes place during Semester 1, and the second during Semester 2.

i. **Economist** in the Government Economic Service (GES):

www.civilservice.gov.uk/ges

- Minimum entry requirement is a 2:1 degree or postgraduate degree in economics, or a joint degree if 50% of the course modules are in economics.
- The **Diplomatic Service Economist Fast Stream** is also applied for under this option, not through the GFS. If this is your preferred option **you must apply during round 1** and select the Diplomatic Service as your first option. The selection process combines that of the Government Economic Service and the Diplomatic Service, reflecting the need for graduates with both economics and wider skills.

ii. **Operational Researcher** in the Government Operational Research Service (GORS): **www.operational-research.gov.uk/recruitment/fast_stream**

- Minimum entry requirement is a 2:1 numerate degree, or a postgraduate degree in Operational Research.

iii. **Social Researcher** in the Government Social Research Service (GSR): **www.civilservice.gov.uk/gsr**

- Minimum entry requirement is a 2:1 degree in a relevant social science subject with a substantial social research methods component, or a 2:2 degree with a relevant postgraduate qualification in social research.

iv. **Statistician** in the Government Statistical Service (GSS): **<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/government-statistical-service/gss-recruitment/current-gss-vacancies/faststream-scheme.html>**

- Minimum entry requirement is a 2:1 degree or postgraduate qualification in a relevant subject. Your knowledge will be tested throughout the selection process.
- If successful, your first two years will be a demanding and closely monitored probation period spent as an Assistant Statistician,

followed by a series of 12-18 month assignments. You would be expected to advance to full Statistician status within three to five years.

4) Technology in Business Fast Stream: www.faststream.gov.uk

- This scheme provides an entry route for graduates interested in an IT career within the public sector.
- There is only one application round which takes place during Semester 1.
- Minimum entry requirement is a 2:1 degree or postgraduate degree. Applications are accepted from a wide range of disciplines, not only IT, but you must be able to demonstrate your interest and ability in technology.

5) HR Fast Stream: www.faststream.gov.uk

- A demanding 3-year programme offering the opportunity to train as an HR professional.
- You will have 2 x 18-month placements, covering a variety of roles, while working towards the CIPD charter.
- The minimum entry requirement is a 2:2 degree in any discipline.

6) Northern Ireland Fast Stream

- The majority of positions are based in the Greater Belfast area, but you must be flexible. You may be required to work in various departments and locations.
- The minimum entry requirement is a 2:2 degree in any discipline.

Finding out more about the Fast Stream

- Watch for relevant workshops on campus during semester to get more information about the Fast Stream, and other ways to join the Civil Service. Further details are available from the *Events* section of MyCareerHub.
- Search the Resources section of MyCareerHub for insider news items.

Security Services

- Recruitment for the security services is now much more open and the two main agencies have specialist recruitment websites:
 - Security Service (MI5) www.mi5careers.gov.uk
 - Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6) www.mi6.gov.uk
- Their vacancies are also advertised on MyCareerHub.

Opportunities in Scotland

Scottish Government

- The Scottish Government takes a small number of successful Fast Stream candidates each year. Applications are made through the general Fast Stream (see above), but you should bear in mind that you are not guaranteed to get a place in your preferred department, and you could end up in a department based in another part of the UK.
- **There is no specific graduate scheme at the Scottish Government.** The vast majority of vacancies are advertised as and when they arise. These posts are open to non-graduates, although the majority of applicants are graduates. Vacancies are advertised in several places:
 - the government website: www.work-for-scotland.org
 - the Scotsman: www.scotsman.com/jobs
 - S1 Jobs: www.s1jobs.com
 - MyCareerHub
- Temporary jobs can be an opportunity to gain some experience and make contacts. The Scottish Government currently uses the recruitment agency Pertemps (www.pertemps.co.uk) to hire temporary staff. They use Hays (www.hays.com) to recruit staff for specialist positions and also advertise in specialist journals, such as the New Scientist.
- **The Scottish Government does not have a formal summer internship programme.** If you contact the Scottish Government they may refer you to your university placements officer, as some universities operate this way. The University of Edinburgh does not, so you will need to mention this if you approach them directly. You should specify what department or area of work you are interested in if you apply on a speculative basis. For more information about the different departments visit the Scottish Government website: www.scotland.gov.uk

Scottish Parliament

- The Scottish Parliament does not have any formal scheme for recruiting graduates. Opportunities that would be suitable for graduates arise on an ad hoc, and relatively infrequent, basis.
- Vacancies are advertised on the Scottish Parliament's website

(www.scottish.parliament.uk), in the Scotsman (www.scotsman.com/jobs) and on SI Jobs (www.s1jobs.com).
Speculative applications are not accepted.

- If you are keen to work for the Scottish Parliament then you should try to obtain 1-2 years of relevant work experience before you apply.
- Temporary work can also offer a way in. These are mostly administrative posts but reception, visitor service and retail vacancies are also filled using temporary staff. The Scottish Parliament uses two employment agencies: Pertemps (www.pertemps.co.uk) and Hudson (www.hudson.com) to fill any temporary vacancies. As the Parliament is in recess in line with school holidays there tends to be less demand for temporary workers over the summer.
- For students seeking work experience for a couple of weeks, you should email jobs@scottish.parliament.uk for information about the different areas of the parliament and an application form. The application form should be returned with a CV, stating the area that you would like to be placed in. This experience is normally unpaid.
- Be aware that the whole process from application to appointment can take 2-6 months because of security checks.

Opportunities in other parts of the UK

- The **Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS)** is a major employer in Northern Ireland. In addition to those who join via the NI Fast Stream, the NICS appoints new entrants each year to a large number of posts at administrative, supervisory, graduate and management levels. As well as advertising vacancies, the Department of Finance & Personnel has a lot of very useful careers information on their website: www.nicsrecruitment.gov.uk.
- The **Welsh Assembly Government**, based in Cardiff, offers work experience placements and a summer internship programme, in addition to more general vacancies. It may also take a small number of successful Fast Stream candidates, depending on need. Further information can be found on the Welsh Assembly website: www.wales.gov.uk (choose *About > recruitment*).

Nationality requirements

The nationality requirement varies depending on which part of the Civil Service you apply to. For example, the Security Services and Diplomatic Service will only accept applications from British citizens. Other areas such as the Central Departments, Clerkships

and NICS accept applications from a wider group: British citizens, Commonwealth citizens, EEA nationals and certain non-EEA family members. If nationality requirements are not clear, check with the department you are applying to.

Work experience

- There are some departments who offer work experience but generally the Civil Service does not offer formal internships. There are work experience placements for students from groups who are under-represented in the Civil Service, e.g. students from ethnic minorities. To find out more go to the Civil Service website: **www.civilservice.gov.uk/recruitment** (choose *Entry into the Civil Service > undergraduates > work experience*). These opportunities are also advertised on MyCareerHub.
- A range of events are held which enable you to find out in more detail the sort of work that is done on a day to day basis. Details are advertised on the Civil Service Facebook page and website: **<http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk/Events>**

Applications and interviews

- As part of the selection process the Civil Service often uses verbal and numerical reasoning tests. The Careers Service has many reference materials to help you prepare. For details of the resources that we have on offer and links to online practice tests look on our website: **www.ed.ac.uk/careers** (choose *Job applications and Interviews* from the 'Quick links' menu, then *Selections tests*).
- Assessment centres are also used by the Civil Service and we have resources in the Careers Service that will help you to prepare, including practice assessment centres during semester. Find more information in the *Events* section of MyCareerHub.
- As part of the selection process you may need to complete a supervised e-tray/in-tray exercise. An online practice test is available on the Fast Stream website under *How do I apply?*: **<http://faststream.civilservice.gov.uk>**
- You can also do a practice paper in-tray exercise at the Careers Service. To book, speak to a member of staff at the Help Desk.
- A practice interview with a Careers Consultant is a great way to prepare for any interview that you have coming up. You can book one using MyCareerHub.

Finding out more about the Civil Service

Reference books (the brackets indicate which Careers Service office holds them)

- *Dods Civil Service Companion* (11th edition) ^(C)
- *Diplomatic Handbook* (8th edition) ^(C)
- *European Union and Public Affairs Directory* (22nd edition) ^(C)
- *How to be a Civil Servant* (2nd edition) ^(C)
- *Politicos Guide to Careers in Politics & Government* ^(C)
- *Scottish Political Guide* (10th edition) ^(C)

Web:

The Careers Service links to many useful websites including the links mentioned above: www.ed.ac.uk/careers/occupations. Within Occupations choose *Administration > Public Sector Administration*

Connect.Ed

Through Connect.Ed you will be able to get in touch with University of Edinburgh alumni and other professionals to find out more about their careers and the sectors in which they work. They are not able to offer you a job, but can provide you with useful advice and information. You can search for contacts through the Connect.Ed channel on MyEd.

Individual support

If you would like to talk about any part of the selection process for the Civil Service, including whether it is the right option for you, have a discussion with a Careers Adviser. You can phone or come in to the Careers Service to book an appointment. For further information about how a Careers Adviser can help you please visit our website:

www.ed.ac.uk/careers (choose *Using the Careers Service > talk to a Careers Adviser*).

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Space for your notes



The University of Edinburgh

Careers Service

MyCareerHub

- job adverts
- insider information on employers and interviews
- exclusive information resources
- booking for appointments and events
- features you can personalise
- access anywhere, any time

www.ed.ac.uk/careers

You can access MyCareerHub via the Careers Service website and log in using your EASE/MyEd username and password.