



AGCAS

The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

AGCAS Internationalisation Task Group FAQs

The AGCAS Internationalisation Task Group (ITG) has collated a list of frequently asked questions and responses to help members working with international students during this time. Thank you to AGCAS colleagues who have provided suggestions to inform this document, with special thanks to Manchester University and their [Student FAQs](#), some of which have been adapted for use in this document. All information is accurate as of 30 April 2020.

1. Is it still worth me trying to get a graduate level job in the UK or would it be better to look for jobs in my home country?

We understand your concerns surrounding the challenges of securing sponsorship to work after graduation in the UK. Your question around employment opportunities and Covid-19 is one that is not easily answered in such uncertain times as we are now facing.

The reality is that at the moment many employers simply do not know how the Covid-19 pandemic will affect their business and any future recruitment. A recent survey from the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) has indicated that 27% of businesses are now reducing the number of graduates they will recruit this year as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, but this figure relates mainly to larger employers. Small and medium sized enterprises may decide to scale back their recruitment even more significantly.

Some employers may already have systems in place to continue their graduate recruitment, or may be rapidly developing their online recruitment systems as we speak to prepare for a wholly web-based recruitment process. Many employers are also moving their assessment centres and interviews online, so if you were due to attend one of these face to face, these may now take place remotely.

Your university careers service may be working with graduate employers to check if they are still recruiting for vacancies which are currently advertised on their website. [Student Circus](#), the online platform advertising jobs with UK sponsors, is still adding new opportunities and they are also following up with employers to check if they are still actively recruiting for advertised roles. Even if your university doesn't subscribe to Student Circus, you can still access the platform for free via a 30 day trial. It is a fast-moving situation, so if in any doubt, do contact the employer ahead of starting your application.

Ultimately there remains a great deal of uncertainty and it is widely believed the situation will impact the number of graduate roles being advertised over the next few months. Competition for graduate roles will be high. As an international student it will be more important than ever during these uncertain times to consider alternative back-up options, and to actively pursue a job search strategy in your home, or in a third country, as well as in the UK.

You might feel tempted to start applying for everything in sight, but instead try to focus on your skills, values and personality, and try to focus on sector areas which interest you rather than looking for specific job titles or companies. This is something your university careers service should be able to help you with if you're feeling stuck and want to talk to an adviser about your career planning.

2. I've gone back to my home country. Will I be able to return to the UK in the months after I've finished my course before my visa expires?

As per the current guidelines, it should be fine for you to continue to use your existing visa to return to the UK to seek graduate employment. The exceptions are if this visa has expired, been curtailed or if you have suspended your studies. You need to be aware that you may get questioned about your intentions when re-entering the UK, so it is important you explain these clearly to UK Border Force.

3. I would like to develop my employability skills during this time- what can I do?

There are lots of things you can be doing now to enhance your employability as an international student. Below are our top tips to help with this.

- **Get some virtual work experience:** We recommend firstly researching what your university has to offer, as some careers services are offering their own virtual internship opportunities. You can also explore [Inside Sherpa](#), a useful resource offering students the opportunity to complete virtual work experience programmes in a range of areas, including law, accounting, finance, tech consulting, marketing and engineering. Programmes are built and endorsed by leading companies including KPMG, Deloitte, Accenture, Citi and Baker McKenzie. Each programme contains a series of resources and tasks designed to simulate the real-world experience of starting a career to help students build their commercial awareness, a key skill graduate employers tell us students can lack in the recruitment process. All of the programmes are free to use and you can sign up for as many as you like.
- **Volunteer:** There are also a number of ways to gain volunteering experience. If you're still in the UK, you could firstly explore whether your university is offering opportunities to volunteer with local communities via its Careers Service or Student Union websites. There are also opportunities being advertised through local councils, charities and specific volunteering websites, such as [Volunteering Wales](#) and [Volunteer Scotland](#). If you have already returned to your home country, there will likely be similar organisations you can explore in your local area. There are also opportunities to volunteer remotely, through websites such as [Do-it.org](#) via their 'Do-it from home' button. The [United Nations' UNV programme](#) is an online volunteering platform promoting opportunities to get involved in online volunteering projects around the world and [Zooniverse](#) enables you to contribute to cutting edge research in fields across the sciences and humanities.
- **Plan for your career:** You might not have a clear idea of what you want to do yet, or you might have several career ideas in mind that you would like to research further. Now is a great opportunity to start researching your career options and ideas using sites such as [TargetJobs](#) and [Prospects](#), as well as your own university careers service website. You could also search for information and advice on the websites of professional bodies or employer websites and social media feeds to find out more about employers that interest you. Remember it is natural to feel a bit uncertain about your future career direction, particularly at this challenging time. If you'd like to talk to someone about this in more detail, we recommend contacting your

university's careers service, as many will offer you the opportunity to book a virtual careers appointment to help you talk through your options.

- **Update your CV:** Now is the perfect time to update your CV! There's lots of useful advice on CV writing on the [TargetJobs](#) and [Prospects](#) websites and your university careers service will likely have additional advice on their own website. Many careers services are still offering CV checks remotely, so get in touch with them if you would like someone to review your CV and provide feedback.
- **Use the resources on your careers service website and practice recruitment methods:** Have you ever been asked to complete a video interview, or maybe a recruitment (psychometric) test, as part of an application? Many careers services have a wide range of resources available on their websites to help you familiarise yourself with recruitment methods you might encounter when applying for internships, placements and graduate roles. Some will also have access to tools which allow you to undertake practice recruitment tests or practice video interviews. Your careers service may also be able to offer you virtual mock interviews, giving you the chance to practice your interview technique and receive feedback from an adviser.
- **Get social:** Look at your social media accounts. Could you think about using Twitter in different ways to make contacts, build commercial awareness and find work experience opportunities? If you have a LinkedIn profile already, you could spend some time updating your profile and adding new connections. If you don't already have a profile, it may be worth exploring LinkedIn to build your online brand, search for opportunities and connect with employers and graduates working in companies or sectors which interest you. Check your careers service website, as many will have sections with advice on how to use LinkedIn. You can also read advice on using social media to find work on the [Prospects](#) website.
- **Browse career and employer events:** Many university careers services are running their own webinars to provide up to date insight into the graduate labour market and advice on making applications. Employers are also running webinars to signpost you to their opportunities and insight into what they're looking for from applications. Follow employers which interest you on social media and check the events pages on your careers service website.
- **Build your commercial awareness:** It is important to be able to demonstrate commercial awareness when you are making applications. Employers will be keen to establish what you know about them and their industry, as well as the wider sector. Think about using this time to really develop your knowledge and understanding of industries which interest you and follow recent news, trends or developments. To help with this, you could keep up to date with business news on BBC Business and the Economist, or follow relevant journalists and commentators on Twitter. You could listen to podcasts in your area of interest and browse YouTube and Ted to watch relevant videos and recorded sessions.
- **Learn something new:** Now is a great time to teach yourself something new, or learn a new skill. This will look great on your CV and can demonstrate a wide range of transferable skills, which are very attractive to graduate employers. There are lots of online courses and apps to help you develop new skills, many of which are free to access. [Google Digital Garage](#) offers a range of online courses to help you gain digital skills, from social media planning to machine learning. Most courses are free and many are approved by industry experts and employers. There are also lots of courses you can take for free via [LinkedIn Learning](#), [EdX](#), [Coursera](#) and [Future Learn](#) sites.

Future Learn also offers a useful free course specifically designed for international students from the British Council, [Study UK: Preparing for Work](#).

- **Get creative!** In this uncertain time, people are being more innovative and enterprising than ever to support one another- from online tutoring to launching your own podcast, blog or vlog, think about what you may have to offer.

4. I'm still in the UK. Are there any places still offering face to face work experience and/or volunteering? Can I work more than 20 hours per week now that teaching is no longer face to face?

Although most people are now being advised to stay at home, there may be opportunities for part time work in some areas;

- Check supermarkets to see whether they need additional support with food deliveries, stocking or working on the tills.
- Investigate seasonal work opportunities, e.g. fruit picking in your local area. Check these meet National Minimum Wage requirements.
- Offer your support to a small business in your local area who may be looking for additional help during this time. Marketing student? Great! Could you get in touch with businesses who may be looking for further support in the next few months?
- If you hold a visa to study in the UK you are restricted to working 20 or 10 hours per week during term-time depending on your level of study, even if you are no longer able to attend classes or undertake research. Make sure you check how many hours you are eligible to work during vacation periods, as this varies depending on your level of study. The [UKCISA](#) website has some useful information on work permissions.

5. I am no longer in the UK. How can I access career opportunities in my home country?

There are lots of different ways to access career opportunities in your home country. Firstly, we recommend checking your careers service website, as many universities advertise international vacancies via their own student vacancies system. Your university may also have access to tools such as GradConnection, GoinGlobal and Passport Career to help you explore thousands of jobs, internships and volunteering roles across the globe. These tools also contain lots of useful local labour market insight and tips on making effective applications for your region. Prospects have useful guides on [working abroad](#) on their website, which provide insight into top employers and links to popular job search sites in your preferred location. [GradLink UK](#) is another useful website aimed at international students and graduates to help you find graduate opportunities and research the graduate job market in your chosen country.

6. How has the crisis impacted graduate recruitment in China?

The crisis has already impacted the Chinese spring recruitment season, which usually takes place in February and March. However, China has launched [nationwide online recruitment initiatives](#), with the country's major recruitment platforms developing newer functions like video interviews and live

streaming to match qualified candidates with suitable employers, and graduate recruitment is continuing over the coming months.

In some industries there is a reduced demand for recruiting overseas talent, such as international trading, finance, banking and manufacturing. However other industries such as IT, computer software and electronics industries have seen increased demand.

The internet industry is seeing high growth: e-commerce and its related industries (online shopping and online entertainment) such as live streaming, logistics and videogames; online services for distance learning and working from home - cloud office support, video conferencing services and software. The Chinese government is also looking to start companies in this space.

As the Chinese government focuses on rebooting the economy, state-owned enterprises and central enterprises are likely to offer more employment possibilities. On the other hand, due to the slowing of economic growth and Covid-19, start-ups who used to rely on investment from venture capital are at risk.

Employers are concerned that the switch to online learning in the UK could result in students having significantly fewer opportunities to practise English or understand local culture, reducing your competitive advantage over domestic students. They encourage you to join online groups and activities to practise English and mix with home students to continue developing your global outlook.

Employers also value relevant work experience more than ever; with smaller budgets they have fewer opportunities and limited time to provide training for new recruits. They want graduates who understand their industry and can work at full power as soon as they are recruited.

Due to the high level of competition between companies in finding high quality candidates, some big brands might start their autumn recruitment earlier than previous years, from around July, so keep an eye on Chinese recruitment platforms as well as your university's events pages as they may be delivering webinars or inviting Chinese employers to deliver webinars about their graduate opportunities.

7. What's the latest update on the Graduate Immigration Route visa?

In September 2019, the UK government announced its intention to introduce a [new graduate immigration route](#) to be launched in summer 2021. This proposed route will enable international students to apply for a post-study work visa and remain in the UK for up to two years to work, or look for work in any sector and at any level.

On 9 April 2020, the Home Office published a guide for employers about the new changes to the immigration system which made reference to the graduate immigration route, indicating that the UK government currently still intends to introduce this. We recommend monitoring the [Home Office](#) and [UKCISA](#) websites for updates on this.

8. My visa has expired but I am not able to leave the UK due to travel restrictions. Am I eligible to work?

If your immigration permission has expired and you cannot leave the UK or make another application, you should stop working. The Home Office has not stated that it is acceptable to work

without immigration permission. The Home Office have confirmed that if your immigration permission expired, or will expire, between 24 January and 31 May 2020, the Home Office will extend it for you up to 31 May 2020 without you having to make an immigration application or pay a fee. However, you must contact its [Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre](#). You can do this by email and we recommend that you email, rather than call, so that you have a record of the contact and save time waiting to speak to someone. Further guidance on this can be found on the [UKCISA](#) website.

9. Can I still receive careers support from my university as an international student?

Most universities are still providing careers advice, information and guidance to students remotely. Most careers services and centres are still able to provide CV and application checks, as well as career planning guidance, through your student query system, via email or via video call. We recommend getting in touch with your university careers service to check what support is on offer and how you can get in touch with them.

This is a very stressful time and you may also be worried about your own health, friends and family, finances or your living situation. Don't forget that your university will likely be able to provide you with additional support during this time to assist you if needed.

10. I was offered an internship/placement/ graduate job a few months ago but am not sure whether it will still be going ahead- can you advise?

If you already have an internship, placement or graduate job offer and aren't sure what to do next, we recommend getting in touch with the employer to understand whether this will still be going ahead. Some employers might take time to confirm what they will be doing with their work experience programmes and graduate opportunities as they may not even know themselves at this stage how the Covid-19 outbreak may impact their medium and long term business planning, so please do be patient with them. You may need to accept that some employers may not be able to give you a straight answer at this time.

11. My summer internship/placement/graduate job offer has been cancelled by the employer. Now what shall I do?

Firstly, if it's bad news and your job offer has been cancelled by the employer, it's important not to take this personally. This is an unprecedented situation and employers are responding to this in different ways.

For internships and placements, it may be worth asking whether the employer is making plans to offer any virtual work experience, or whether they would be prepared to offer you a similar opportunity with them in future. You may also find it useful to explore the potential to complete a virtual internship such as those offered by platform [Inside Sherpa](#) or investigate volunteering opportunities you can do remotely to build skills and gain experience.

If you're looking for graduate work, some employers are still actively recruiting. A great place to start looking for opportunities is through your university's careers service, as many careers departments are proactively contacting employers to check if they are still recruiting for graduate roles. Most careers services also have their vacancies platform, allowing you to browse graduate roles suitable for students from your university.

If your preference is to find graduate work in the UK, keep searching, but it may also be worth exploring back up options. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 outbreak is a global issue, so you may find that global employers are reluctant to advertise as many opportunities at the moment.

12. How can I build contacts while I'm away from campus?

Keeping in touch with your existing contacts and making new ones while you are away from campus can help you uncover opportunities. Connecting with graduates (alumni) from your university is one way to build professional connections – this could be graduates from your home country, or graduates working in a job role or company of interest to you. Some universities offer mentoring opportunities for students to help you do this, so it's worth checking with your careers service to see what they can offer. You can also use [LinkedIn](#) to connect with alumni and other professionals in sectors that interest you.

If you're planning on eventually returning to your home country to find graduate employment, keep in touch with friends, family and professional contacts you have made. In many countries, the connections you have can lead to new opportunities, as some employers rely on recommendations and endorsements from their employees. Think about who you know and how they might be able to help your career development. You could also seek out British Chambers of Commerce based in your home country, or similar business organisations which exist to develop trade between the UK and another country or region. A few examples include the British Chamber of Commerce in Beijing, the UK India Business Council, the UK-ASEAN Business Council and the British African Business Alliance. Members of these organisations will value your combination of knowledge of the UK and your home country.

13. Are there any other useful sources of information and support specifically for international students?

If you are an international student remaining in the UK, we understand that this may be a particularly stressful time for you. For timely and up to date information on matters relating to the current situation, the [UKCISA](#) website is an excellent source of information and support.

You may also be interested in a new [FAQs page](#) from Universities UK International (UUKi). The page addresses queries about the way in which Covid-19 is affecting the international work of UK universities, their international students and students looking to study in the UK.