

# Career Ideas for Languages Graduates

The aim of this handout is to provide you with a brief insight into the career options open to you, as well as an indication of further sources of information to help you research these further. It also outlines the help available from the Careers Service and general advice on finding jobs, work experience and postgraduate study.

## Getting started

There is a wide range of career options open to Modern Languages graduates and whilst this is positive it can be a bit overwhelming. A good place to start is the 'Careers with my Degree' section on the Careers Service website <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/degree/mdl>. The section includes:-

**1. What graduates do?** - Here you will find information about what language graduates at Sheffield go on to do after their degree along with in-depth Graduate Case Studies. These can provide ideas and inspiration.

**2. Understanding Yourself** - If you are not sure what you want to do, this section introduces you to a range of on-line self- assessment tools. The 'What jobs would suit me' (Prospects) link will generate career ideas personally suited to you. 'Profiling for Success' activities will help you think about your motivations, interests, personality and career ideas. For more help on getting started you can download the 'See the Bigger Picture' workbook or pick up a copy at the Careers Service.

**3. Your options** – This provides a broad picture of options open to languages students.

## What do Languages Graduates do?

Below are some of the occupations that will allow you to use your language skills to a greater or lesser extent. In addition it is worth bearing in mind that in the UK approximately 60% of graduates enter employment where 'any' degree subject would be acceptable. In such situations what an employer will be interested in is the range of transferable skills which you have developed through your academic study, work experience, and involvement in activities at University. So you may wish to consider career areas that are not on the list below.

### Careers directly using Language Skills

**Interpreter** - Interpreters convert spoken statements from one language to another. Interpreting involves listening to, understanding and memorising content in the original 'source' language, then reproducing it in a different 'target' language. This is often done in only one direction, normally into the interpreter's native language, but may be on a two-way basis. It can be done in person, by telephone, via video conferencing or through the use of internet based technologies.

**Translator** - Translators convert written material from one or more 'source languages' into the 'target language', ensuring that the translated version conveys the meaning of the original as well as possible. The target language is usually the translator's mother tongue. Translators ideally need an excellent command of two or more languages and those most in demand are the official languages of the European Union and the United Nations. They may work on a range of documents which could be commercial, technical, scientific, educational, literary, legal or educational. Many translators work on a freelance basis from home either for translation agencies or directly for clients, although some organisations employ in-house translators.



**Secondary School Teacher (Languages)** - Secondary school teachers teach one or two languages to pupils aged 11-18. Teachers plan lessons in line with the national curriculum and deliver them to their pupils with the aim of ensuring a positive learning culture. They also observe and record the progress of their class. Teachers must network and liaise with colleagues, parents, carers, and other education professionals. They need to keep up to date with government requirements, new resources, teaching methods and developments in their subject.

**Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)** - This involves teaching adults and children whose first or main language is not English. This could take place abroad or in the UK and the students may be learning English for leisure, educational, or business reasons. Teachers can work in a variety of settings including schools, further education colleges, universities, commercial language schools, and industry. Classes are usually taught in English, even with beginners. Teachers can work for an organisation or be self-employed doing freelance work.

**Working within the European Union** – The institutions of the European Union recruit graduates into a variety of posts via the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). Final year students / graduates can apply for traineeships and entry-level positions in various fields, which can be the starting point to a European career. They also regularly recruit Graduates with work experience and experienced professionals in a wide range of fields including working as translators and interpreters.

### **Careers where Language Skills can be useful**

**UK Civil Service** – The Home Civil Service recruits graduates into a variety of administrative and policy roles via the Fast Stream or the general entry routes. Language graduates may be particularly attracted to roles/departments such as the Diplomatic Services Operational Officer in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which has a lot of links to Europe

**Purchasing** - Purchasing Managers are responsible for buying the best quality raw materials, goods, services, and equipment for their company/organisation at the best price. Many companies source these goods and services internationally and language skills can be useful when obtaining quotes, negotiating prices and drafting contracts.

**Sales Executive** – Sales executives sell their company's goods and services to businesses and individuals in the UK and abroad. They contact potential customers with the aim of winning new business and also maintain good relationships with clients in order to make repeat sales. Sales is a target driven industry and suits people who enjoy that environment. Job titles likely to be of interest to language graduates are Export Sales Manager or look for companies with overseas clients. The job may be based in the UK but have opportunities to travel or have phone contact with international clients.

**Travel/Tourism/Hospitality**- Whether working in the UK or abroad, these career areas can offer opportunities to use and develop language skills. Job roles include Tour Manager, Tourism Officer, Hotel Manager etc. Students may be attracted to temporary positions which allow them to work abroad perhaps before moving into other career areas.

**Journalism/Broadcasting** – Journalists and Broadcasters research, investigate, and present news, current affairs, and specialist interest items, for newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the internet. Roles and organisations that are particularly relevant to language graduate, particularly those with wide international language skills and knowledge of culture and business, are foreign correspondent, BBC World Service, Reuters, Bloomberg etc.

**International Banking** – Most retail and investment banks are international corporations having branch networks and offices overseas. There can be opportunities to work in the UK assisting in trade across national boundaries or work in specialist divisions investing in international ventures. There may also be opportunities to transfer to work in branches abroad.

**Logistics/Distribution/Transport Manager** – Managers in these roles organise the storage and distribution of goods to ensure the right products are delivered to the right location on time and at a competitive cost. They are likely to be involved in transportation, stock control, warehousing and monitoring the flow of goods and must have an understanding of the complete supply chain in order to co-ordinate it effectively. The role will include liaison, sometimes internationally, with suppliers, manufacturers, retailers and consumers.

Further information on these and other jobs can be found at [www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-profiles](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-profiles)

Also see our leaflet '**A Career in Translation and Interpreting**' <http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/translationcareers.pdf>

## Postgraduate Study

While most graduates go into employment after their degree, a postgraduate qualification is usually or often required for certain areas of work such as translation, interpretation, teaching, journalism or for a career in lecturing and academic research. Of course there are other reasons for going on to postgraduate study besides career motives. For example you may wish to obtain a higher degree purely out of interest. Whatever your reasons you need to consider the options available to you and the costs involved as well as the career prospects. Seek advice from tutors and the Careers Service and information is available at [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) and [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/study](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/study)

## Looking for Jobs or Work Experience

Graduate vacancies can be of two main types. **Graduate programmes** are offered by large organisations, some in the public sector but most in the private sector. These are highly competitive and only 10-15% of students who apply whilst at University will be successful in securing a place. **Direct entry posts** - where an organisation simply has a job and advertises it when it becomes vacant. These can be with major organisations but are often with small to medium-sized enterprises.

**Graduate programmes** are usually advertised from the autumn of your final year and continue throughout the year and although the closing dates for many schemes fall in October/November onwards, so you will need to look into these well in advance. This is the case for example with 'Fast Stream' opportunities with the UK Civil Service, although other entry-level posts in Government departments may be advertised throughout the year.

**Direct entry jobs** become available at any time so you will need to look for these closer to the end of your final year. Check vacancies regularly and register on relevant sites for email alerts.

Check the recruitment patterns for the types of work and employers that interest you and refer to the Careers Service guide 'Finding Graduate Jobs' <http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/flipbooks/jobhunting/> In addition we run talks by employers during each semester and 'Recruitment Fairs' in both autumn and spring, attended by many major organisations. Full details can be found on **Career Connect** via MUSE. We have also produced a leaflet called '**Graduate Programmes – Languages**' which details schemes that will enable you to use your languages/work on international projects [http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/lang\\_gradschemes.pdf](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/lang_gradschemes.pdf)

The key to getting a graduate job can often be relevant **work experience**, so making the most of work experience and part-time jobs is vitally important. The experience gained on your Year Abroad is very much valued by employers so make sure to include details of it on your CV/Applications. In addition, internships or placements with employer are available in some areas of work. Use the **vacancy sources below** to help you find out about these and other work experience. Many students arrange their own work experience or work shadowing directly with an employer, by contacting them and asking about opportunities. Doing this often requires an organised and persistent approach, so to help, use the Careers Service's guide to '**Finding a part-time job**' at <http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/flipbooks/findingparttimework/> and '**Finding a Work Placement**' <http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/flipbooks/placements/>

## Finding Vacancies

**Career Connect** lists graduate jobs and work experience opportunities, including summer internships and placements. You can find **Career Connect** via MUSE or [www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs](http://www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs) along with links to other vacancy websites. IMPORTANT: general graduate careers websites do cover a range of

careers but tend to be dominated by large commercial organisations or those with major graduate schemes. For certain careers, including many of those listed earlier, you will also need to use specialist professional sites. Some of these appear below while others are listed in the 'Occupations/types of jobs' section of the Careers Service's **'Information resources'** [www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/infotree/](http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/infotree/)

If you want to look for employment abroad then you will find **'myInternational Career'** and **'Going Global'** very useful resources. They are a gateway to careers and job search websites covering 66 different countries <http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/infotree/EmploymentOverseas.php>

We have also produced a leaflet called **'Using your Language Skills -Working in a Company in the UK or Abroad'**. This gives information on looking for work internationally and also gives details of companies in the UK who may value students with language skills <http://careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/pdf/usinglangskills.pdf>

## **The Careers Service**

If you need help with any aspect of your career planning then book an appointment with a Careers Adviser either through the weekly brief appointments offered in the School of Languages and Culture or at the Careers Service, Level 1, 388 Glossop Road, Sheffield. Both of these type of appointments can be booked through Career connect accessible via MUSE.

## **Further Information**

### **Specialist Recruitment Agencies**

Appointments Bi-Language <http://appointmentsbilanguage.co.uk>

Euro London Appointments [www.eurolondon.com](http://www.eurolondon.com)

Multilingual Vacancies.Com [www.multilingualvacancies.com](http://www.multilingualvacancies.com)

Top Language Jobs [www.toplanguagejobs.co.uk](http://www.toplanguagejobs.co.uk)

### **Useful Websites for Languages Students**

Association of Translation Companies [www.atc.org.uk/en](http://www.atc.org.uk/en)

The Big Word – One of the world's largest translation services [www.thebigword.com](http://www.thebigword.com)

Careers with the European Union [http://europa.eu/epso/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/epso/index_en.htm)

Careers with Languages, Translating, Interpreting, Teaching and more [www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/careers-advice/1378/careers-with-translation-interpreting-teaching-an-more/](http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/careers-advice/1378/careers-with-translation-interpreting-teaching-an-more/)

Capita – Translation and Interpreting Company [www.capitatranslationinterpreting.com](http://www.capitatranslationinterpreting.com)

Chartered Institute of Linguists [www.ciol.org.uk](http://www.ciol.org.uk)

Civil Service European Faststream [www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-fast-stream-europe](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-fast-stream-europe)

Civil Service Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office/about/recruitment](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office/about/recruitment)

Civil Service jobs <https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/index.cgi>

European Commission Traineeships Office [http://ec.europa.eu/stages/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm)

GCHQ <https://www.gchq-careers.co.uk/index.html>

Institute of Translation and Interpreting [www.iti.org.uk](http://www.iti.org.uk)

International Federation of Translators [www.fit-ift.org](http://www.fit-ift.org)

National Register of Public Service Interpreters [www.nrpsi.org.uk](http://www.nrpsi.org.uk)

Prospects website – careers with Modern Languages  
[www.prospects.ac.uk/options\\_modern\\_languages.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/options_modern_languages.htm)

Security Service MI5 - Using Your Language <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/careers/opportunities/language>

United Nations Careers <https://careers.un.org/lbw/Home.aspx>