



Press Release Wednesday 20th September 2023

PwC named the UK's top graduate employer in 25th anniversary edition of **The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers**

The new 2023-2024 edition of **The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers** guide, published today (Wednesday 20th September 2023), reveals that the accounting & professional services firm **PwC** has been named the UK's number one graduate employer.

The rankings have been compiled from research with 13,309 graduates who left university in the summer of 2023 and features graduate employers in eighteen different industries & business sectors – from law, consulting and investment banking & fund management, to engineering, technology and the public sector.

This year marks the 25th anniversary edition of the popular annual guide to the country's most sought-after graduate employers, which is widely used by students and recent graduates across the UK who are looking for their first graduate job.

The new edition also provides the latest assessment of the graduate job market – and confirms that the country's top graduate employers are planning to hire a near-record number of university-leavers in the year ahead. Graduate vacancies in 2024 are expected to be 13 per cent higher than the pre-pandemic peak in graduate recruitment five years ago.

Highlights from the 25th anniversary edition of *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* include:

- In a dramatic result, the accounting & professional services firm PwC has returned to the top of the annual employer rankings for the first time in five years. The firm was previously voted the UK's number one graduate employer for fifteen consecutive years, between 2004 and 2018.
- The Civil Service – best known for its prestigious Fast Stream scheme – is in second place this year, having been ranked the top-rated graduate employer for four years from 2019 until 2022.
- After reaching its highest-ever position in last year's *Top 100*, the NHS has moved down to third place, Deloitte – the second of the 'Big Four' accounting & professional service firms to feature in the new rankings – is unchanged in fourth place, and Google remains in fifth place.
- Banking group Barclays has overtaken HSBC, JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs to reach the top ten for the first time.

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The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers Wednesday 20th September 2023

- The Unlocked Graduates prison officer programme is the highest-climber in this year's *Top 100* and has jumped an impressive forty-five places to 22nd place, up from 67th place in 2022. Law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Derringer has had a similar rise, going up forty-four places to 44th place, and aerospace manufacturer Airbus and Clyde & Co have both climbed more than thirty places in this year's *Top 100*.
- There are fifteen new entries or re-entries this year, the second-biggest changeover of ranked employers in the 25-year history of *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers*. The highest are law firm DLA Piper, which returns in 51st place, and engineering consultants AECOM which reappears in 62nd place.
- Car company Mercedes, the Secret Intelligence Service MI6, professional services firm Mazars, engineering & technical consulting firms Jacobs and WSP, and insurance company Aviva are each ranked in the *Top 100* for the first time.
- Over the past 25 years, a total of 237 different organisations have appeared within *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers*. Thirty-six of these employers have made it into the rankings into every edition since its launch in 1999, including the BBC, Goldman Sachs, Unilever, BAE Systems, McKinsey & Company, Microsoft, L'Oreal, Rolls-Royce and the Royal Navy.
- Together, the employers featured in *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* are offering 28,948 graduate vacancies in 2024. Although this is a 3.3% lower than the number of graduates recruited in 2023, it is the second-highest level of graduate vacancies recorded in the past 25 years. Graduate vacancies at the top employers increased by 6.2% in 2023, 15.7% in 2022 and 9.4% in 2021, following a substantial 12.3% drop in 2020 during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- The largest individual recruiters of graduates in 2024 will be PwC (1,800 vacancies), Teach First (1,750 graduate vacancies), the car & van rental company Enterprise (1,600 graduate vacancies), Deloitte (1,500 vacancies), technology company Accenture, the Civil Service Fast Stream and accounting & professional services firms EY and KPMG (each 1,000 vacancies).
- Graduate starting salaries on offer at employers featured in *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* have jumped by almost 12 per cent in the past two years – to an average of £33,500 in 2023 – and are set to increase further in 2024.
- The highest salaries on offer from graduate employers ranked in the new *Top 100* are at investment banks (£55,000), law firms (£50,000), and consulting firms (£47,500).
- The most generous salaries publicised within this edition of the *Top 100* are at the law firm White & Case (£52,000) and rival firms Clifford Chance, Slaughter and May Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Latham & Watkins and Linklaters (each £50,000)
- Consulting firm Newton is also offering graduate packages worth up to £50,000, whilst retailer Aldi continues to pay a sector-leading graduate starting salary, which has been increased to £50,000 for 2024, along with a fully expensed company car.
- The new 2023-2024 edition of *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* is published by **High Fliers Publications** as a hard-backed, full-colour guide and is distributed **free-of-charge** to students at universities across the UK, through university careers services, Student Unions, university libraries and faculties & academic departments.
- The digital edition of *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* is available to read online at www.Top100GraduateEmployers.com/read

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The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers Wednesday 20th September 2023

Martin Birchall, Editor of **The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers** commented:

“It’s highly appropriate that PwC has returned to the top of the rankings in the 25th anniversary edition of *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers*. PwC has been voted the UK’s number one graduate employer a total of sixteen times over the past 25 years – an outstanding achievement by the firm – and has recruited almost 30,000 graduates in that time, more than any other employer featured in our annual rankings.”

For students due to leave university in 2024, the outlook for the graduate job market remains buoyant with a near-record number of places available on the graduate programmes at the country’s top employers and the best-ever graduate starting salaries.”

But there will continue to be considerable competition for these graduate vacancies – and some of the most sought-after employers are likely to close-off their graduate applications by Christmas. That means the ‘Class of 2024’ need to start researching their career options now, spend time looking into which employers they’re interested in – and make early applications to the programmes they’d like to join after university, particularly as many of the top employers will be recruiting on a first-come first-served basis.”

Ian Elliot, Chief People Office at **PwC** commented:

“We’re incredibly proud that university graduates have voted us as the top graduate employer. It demonstrates our commitment to providing exceptional opportunities to individuals from an array of backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of our clients and the work we do.

As a result, we’re continually evolving our recruitment processes to ensure they’re as accessible and inclusive as possible. Securing first place in *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* helps us to continue to resonate with aspiring, ambitious university students on campuses across the UK.”

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