

<http://www.allaboutschoolleavers.co.uk/articles/article/67/what-is-a-school-leaver-programme>

What is a School Leaver Programme?

School leaver programmes aren't as easy to define as apprenticeships and will vary from company to company and industry to industry. Some employers have retitled their Higher Apprenticeships as 'School Leaver Programmes'; others have veered away from the whole apprenticeship structure completely.

What's the difference between a school leaver programme and a sponsored degree programme?

There's plenty of crossover between the two, with some school leaver programmes more akin to sponsored degrees and some sponsored degree programmes more like school leaver programmes. Take a look at our 'What is a Sponsored Degree?' article to get the lowdown on the different types of sponsored degrees and how they compare to school leaver programmes.

Examples of school leaver programmes...

Enough talk, here are examples of some actual school leaver programmes offered by some of the top companies in the UK:

- Airbus Undergraduate Apprenticeship
- Barclay's Retail Development Programme
- BDO School Leaver Programme
- **Deloitte BrightStart Scheme**
- **Grant Thornton School Leaver Programme**
- Harrods School Leavers Programme
- **Kainos Learn to Earn Programme**
- KPMG School Leavers' Programme
- Marks and Spencer's Trainee Retail Management programme
- National Audit Office
- National Audit Office School Leaver Programme
- National Grid Engineer Training Programme
- RSM Tenon School Leaver Scheme
- Sainsbury's Trainee Manager Scheme
- **Santander Flying Start**
- Siemens Finance & Commercial Academy
- **Tesco Trainee Management Options Programme/ Commercial Development Programme**
- Travelodge Junior Management Programme

Types of School Leaver Programme

Since school leaver programmes are a fairly new addition to the job market, they can currently only be found in certain industries. Don't worry though! School leaver programmes are on the rise. More and more schemes are cropping up all the time, as increasing numbers of companies are beginning to realise the value that talented and intelligent school leavers can bring to their organisations.

In fact, you can now find school leaver programmes in all kinds of areas, from accountancy and engineering to retail and PR. We thought it'd be a good idea to dig a little deeper and tell you a bit more about the different types of school leaver programmes out there at the moment.

Banking, finance & accountancy...

If you're analytical, confident and good at maths, and you're interested in the big bad world of finance, you will find a school leaver programme that's right for you. The majority of school leaver programmes on offer can actually be found in the banking, finance and accountancy sector.

Major accounting firms like PwC are the real trendsetters in the school leaver programme market. In fact, PwC has been hiring school leavers this way for over a decade now. Recently, the other three accounting firms that are known collectively as the Big Four alongside PwC, i.e. Deloitte, KPMG and Ernst & Young, have launched their own school leaver programmes. Hot on their heels, other major accounting firms such as BDO, Grant Thornton and RSM Tenon have launched their own schemes. The accounting industry really is at the epicentre of the current school leaver programme explosion!

If you do a school leaver programme with one of these major companies, however, you won't simply become a generic accountant who is in charge of bookkeeping or other simple tasks. You will get the opportunity to specialise in a challenging area of the financial services industry, such as audit, tax, risk, assurance, business recovery or corporate finance, and work towards a professional accounting qualification.

Accounting firms aren't the only financial services companies getting in on the act. Major banks, such as RBS and Santander, are starting to launch school leaver programmes in their corporate banking divisions. These schemes enable aspiring business advisors to work towards a Chartered Institute of Bankers qualification (or similar) whilst gaining valuable work experience.

School leavers can now even enter the world of retail banking by joining retail development schemes such as the one offered by Barclays. These programmes are designed to train up the future branch managers of our high street banks.

If you don't fancy working for a major corporate company, you can explore school leaver opportunities in public sector finance; for instance, with the National Audit Office, where you'll play an important role in auditing the accounts of central government departments.

Engineering...

If you're good at science subjects and have a passion for solving technical problems, a school leaver programme in the engineering sector might be right up your street. The engineering domain is currently dominated by apprenticeships, but a number of school leaver programmes are beginning to materialise in this fascinating industry. National Grid's Engineer Training Programme is a prime example.

On an engineering school leaver programme, you will work towards a professional qualification, foundation degree or similar, and use your practical skills and technical nous to solve complex and challenging engineering problems.

Retail...

Are you a shopaholic? Do you have commercial instincts? Do you want to manage a major retail store one day, become a buyer, or develop a career as a merchandiser? Well then, you

should definitely consider a retail school leaver programme. If you 'shop' around (sorry) you will find the scheme that's right for you.

Retail giants, such as Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Marks & Spencer, Harrods and Arcadia, have all launched their own school leaver programmes. So if you fancy working for a supermarket, a luxury department store or the company behind Topshop, you're in luck. What's more, if you join one of these schemes, you won't be stacking shelves; you'll be working on the business and management side of the retail industry, using your commercial awareness and proactive nature to boost the profitability of your company.

Marketing & PR...

Graduate schemes currently dominate the recruitment activities of marketing and PR agencies; however, a few companies are beginning to dip their toes in the school leaver programme pool.

Shine Communications, a PR and marketing communications agency, for instance, has launched a school leaver programme for aspiring PR consultants, where school leavers gain experience on-the-job and work towards a Chartered Institute of PR qualification.

So if you're bright, dynamic and interested in something a little bit more creative, you don't necessarily have to go to university; you can enter the fast-moving world of marketing and PR straight from school.

Property & construction...

The property and construction sector boasts a wealth of school leaver programmes in a range of different areas, including surveying, civil engineering, construction management and property development.

So if you're good at maths, are interested in construction and want to contribute to the development of the built environment, the school leaver programmes offered by Balfour Beatty, Thomas & Adamson, Aggregate Industries, Bowmer & Kirkland and Laing O'Rourke are certainly worth a shuffy.

Defence...

Finally, another sector 'gunning' for a foothold in the school leaver programme market is defence. Major defence systems companies, such as MBDA, employ apprentices in engineering roles, but they also offer school leaver programmes for business trainees in commercial areas such as procurement, supply chain and business forecasting. You won't need a particular talent for scientific subjects to work in this area; you'll just need excellent teamwork, communication and leadership skills.

Tons of school leaver programme opportunities are up for grabs and new schemes are being launched all the time. Take a look at our school leaver vacancies and read up on our list of employers offering school leaver programmes to find out more. Keep an open mind, read up on industries you might not have considered and get applying!