

# Options with modern languages

## Your skills

Over the course of your degree you develop a good mix of subject specific and technical skills as well as transferable core skills. Consider these alongside your other activities, such as paid work, volunteering, family responsibilities, sport, membership of societies, leadership roles, etc. Think about how these can be used as evidence of your skills and personal attributes. Then you can start to market and sell who you *really* are, identify what you may be lacking and consider how to improve your profile.

Studying modern languages will give you excellent and varied career opportunities and life-long skills. Language skills are in scarce supply and can be used in almost any job. Studying a language clearly makes you a communicator, both orally and in writing. Additional skills gained through a language degree include the ability to:

- gather information, assess and interpret it;
- lead and participate in discussions and groups;
- organise workload and work to deadlines;
- develop opinions and propose ideas;
- read pages of text and pick out the essential points.

If you spend a year abroad during your degree, you should gain insight into another culture, adapt to new and changing surroundings as well as work both in a team and independently. These skills have value in a job market which is becoming increasingly global and will be appreciated by employers, whatever career you go into.

## Job options

Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Look at [your degree... what next?](#) for informed advice on career planning and graduate employment, or take a look at [what jobs would suit me?](#) a helpful starting point for self-analysis.

You can choose between jobs that are degree-related or those that appeal because they use other interests or elements of your degree.

### Jobs directly related to your degree

- [Translator](#) - converts written material from one or more languages ('source language') into another, usually the translator's mother tongue ('target language') ensuring that, as far as possible, the translated version is as clear and accurate as the source language text.
- [Interpreter](#) - converts spoken statements from one language to another in a range of settings: international events and conferences; technical, business, legal or political meetings; court hearings; police interviews, etc.
- [Secondary school teacher](#) - teaches language classes to pupils aged 11-18.

### Jobs where your degree would be useful

- [Retail buyer](#) - promotes and negotiates sales of products to customers worldwide.
- [Chartered accountant](#) - provides financial information, maintains general accounting systems, and performs audits on clients, often on both their UK and foreign operations.
- [Diplomatic Service, operational entry \(grade B3\)](#) - most posts abroad involve dealing with representatives of overseas governments, explaining British foreign policy and negotiating over different issues or, in some cases, promoting exports and assisting trade.

- [Distribution/logistics manager](#) - coordinates the supply, movement and storage of goods and raw materials, including operational management.
- [English as a foreign language teacher](#) or [English as a second language teacher](#) - teaches English to international students in either the UK or overseas.
- [Event organiser](#) - identifies potential business and researches, writes, plans and runs all aspects of conferences on behalf of an organisation or a client.
- [Marketing executive](#) - involved in business development, market research, planning, product development, pricing, packaging, advertising, PR and sales.
- [Market researcher \(qualitative/quantitative\)](#) - acquires and analyses data on what organisations or people buy, need, do or think, and explores the reasons why.
- [Solicitor, commercial](#) or [Solicitor, non-commercial](#) - advises individuals and organisations on legal aspects of personal and business problems.

## Other options

A languages degree is suitable for a wide range of occupations and sectors. For detailed information go to [using your language skills](#). Many language graduates want to work internationally and there is useful information on this site on [working abroad](#) in over 50 countries.

Although some of the jobs listed here might not be first jobs for many graduates, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. It's also worth noting that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here.

[Explore types of jobs](#) to find out more about the above options and related jobs.

## Career areas

Every year statistics are collected to show what HE students do immediately after graduation. These can be a useful guide but, in reality, with the data being collected within just six months of graduation, many graduates are travelling, waiting to start a course, paying off debts, getting work experience or still deciding what they want to do. For further information about some of the areas of employment commonly entered by graduates of any degree discipline, check out [what do graduates do?](#) and [your degree...what next?](#)

In 2007, six months after graduation, two thirds of language graduates went into employment.

Many graduates choose careers not directly related to their subject but where there is the opportunity to use their language skills, for example working for companies who trade or offer services internationally or to non-English speaking customers and suppliers. 14% entered professional or managerial roles in commerce, industry or the public sector, 12% entered advertising, marketing and sales roles, and 21% entered clerical and secretarial roles. Just over 5% of modern languages graduates were unemployed, compared to the national graduate unemployment rate of just over 6%.

Many enter jobs they don't consider as permanent and will use this as a 'stepping stone' to gain experience and skills for their longer-term career aims.

## Where are the jobs?

Language graduates work for a huge variety of employers and sectors, with media, tourism, PR, business, finance, commerce and the public sector all featuring in the destinations of graduates.

Take a look at the following sectors for further information:

- [Advertising, marketing and PR](#) - marketing includes planning, promotion, media relations, product development, direct marketing, sponsorship and market research. Advertising and PR are concerned with promoting and selling products and services.
- [Local, regional and national government](#) - local government is the collective term for local councils and local authorities. The Civil Service consists of government departments and their agencies whose role is to implement government policy and to advise ministers. Language opportunities exist with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, GCHQ and European Union institutions.
- [Accountancy and business services](#) - this sector can be divided into those firms that provide advice and accounting services to a range of clients in the public and private sector and those working in one particular organisation in industry, commerce, or the public sector.

Career management is an ongoing process; one that you'll no doubt develop throughout your working life. [Explore job sectors](#) for further information on all the above employment areas.

## Further study

A large proportion of modern language graduates - 18% in 2007 - go on to further study. You can choose to specialise in an area of language study that has interested you during your undergraduate degree. However, as many postgraduate courses will accept graduates from any subject you can choose courses in subjects such as marketing, finance, business, law, IT and journalism. This will help you to gain further skills in career-related areas. Many go on to the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in preparation for a teaching career. Some choose to [study abroad](#) in order to increase their chances of getting an international career.

These trends show only what previous graduates in your subject did immediately upon graduating. Over the course of their career - the first few years in particular - many others will opt for some form of further study, either part time or full time. If further study interests you, start by thinking [about postgrad study](#). [Find courses and research](#) to identify your options; you can also [apply for courses online](#).

Look at [funding my further study](#) for more details relating to finance and the application process.

## What next?

Don't forget there are alternatives to entering employment or postgraduate study, such as taking time out, volunteering or travelling. Longer term, you may want to consider starting your own business. For something different, check out [self-employment](#) and [flexible working](#) or explore [working and studying abroad](#).

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whether you are in the early stages of career planning, or you have definite ideas about what you want to do, you will find further information to help you in the following sections:

- Analyse your skills, interests and motivations to find out [what jobs would suit me?](#)
- [Explore types of jobs](#) to find out about entry requirements, salaries and working conditions.
- [Explore job sectors](#) for hints on breaking into various industries.
- [Find graduate employers](#) and see what they have to offer.
- Look at the advice on [applications, CVs and interviews](#).
- Get [work experience](#) through vacation work or a work

placement.

- [Find courses and research](#) and investigate postgraduate study opportunities.
- If you have already graduated, get online [interactive advice](#).
- Visit [your university careers service](#) for a wealth of advice and resources to help with your career planning.

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