

## University of Surrey

Careers Service

<http://www.surrey.ac.uk/careers>

# Recruitment Agencies

## Should I use a recruitment agency?

In some areas of work, companies will often register their vacancies with one or more recruitment agencies. The agency, sometimes called a recruitment consultancy, searches for suitable candidates for the vacancies notified to it by employers. They then provide the employer with details of these candidates. They may carry out initial interviews too. The employer makes a decision about who they want to hire and if they pick a candidate the agency has told them about they will pay the agency a fee.

Companies may or may not advertise the vacancy in other ways. Recent University of Surrey graduates have found agencies a good way to find work in a wide variety of jobs in finance, clerical, secretarial and junior administration roles, computing, engineering and science. Jobs in other fields can be found through agencies, but usually not so often or only through specialist agencies, so research the recruitment practices of the occupation that interests you. Agencies should only be one part of your job hunting. More graduates find their jobs by replying to advertisements than through any other way so don't neglect this by only using recruitment agencies.

## How to find a recruitment agency

- Check Yellow Pages phone directory for the region that interests you. Look under Employment Agencies. Check their entry for details of the jobs they specialise in. Also available online at [www.yell.com](http://www.yell.com), search under Employment Agencies or Recruitment Agencies.
- Or use [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk), go to Jobs and Work then Explore Types of Jobs. Consult the concise profile for the job that interests you and you should find relevant agencies (if any) listed. A searchable database of members of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) is at [www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com). Another site with an extensive database of agencies is [www.agencycentral.co.uk](http://www.agencycentral.co.uk), however, not all agencies listed on this site will be REC members.
- Job advertisements in newspapers and magazines are often placed by agencies. Contact ones with vacancies in your field.

## How do they work?

All recruitment agencies bring together job hunters and potential employers. They advertise and search through their database for suitable candidates. They may also contact employers speculatively if they think they have a candidate of interest.

**NOTE: Agencies must not charge you fees for finding or trying to find you work, (Employment Agencies Act 1973). Have nothing to do with an agency that tries to make you pay them to do this.**

Agencies prefer to deal with candidates who are available, or nearly so, for employment. Contact them within a month or so of wanting to start work.

## **What should I look for?**

Agencies are paid by the employer if they successfully place a candidate. This motivates them to work hard to find you something. The danger is that your interests are not their first priority - as it is the employer who pays them. This can tempt them into persuading you into a job that isn't what you want. As with all types of job hunting you must use your own judgement about the vacancy on offer. In order to maximise their chances of getting commission, agencies may discourage you from doing any other job hunting or registering with other agencies. This is bad advice - ignore it.

Check the small print of anything you sign. You may be agreeing to give the agency permission to approach any potential employer (including the one you might already be working for) or restricting yourself by agreeing not to register with another agency. Are you happy with this? Agencies that are members of the REC have agreed to a binding code of good practice. Check if the agency you are dealing with is a member.

## **How to get the most out of them**

Be honest about what you want. You are much more likely to be put forward for a job that is right for you. You need to have an idea about what you want to do and show some knowledge about it.

Your CV needs to be well presented and do you justice. See our leaflet [Writing your CV](#) for details. When you visit an agency look smart and dress appropriately for the job you want. Stress the experience and knowledge you have and, before you go there, remind yourself of what you have done so that you can talk about it in a fluent and confident way. Our leaflet [The First Interview](#) has some helpful guidance. Remember the consultant will be assessing you and forming an opinion which will influence the jobs he or she will consider you for. Be prepared. If for example, you claim to have word-processing skills you may be asked to sit a typing test. You may also be asked to provide details of referees.

Once you have registered, keep in touch. Ask them for progress reports and let them know that you are still looking for a job. They need to contact you when a job comes up so make sure they have your up to date contact details. Consultants vary - if the first agency you try doesn't seem helpful, then try others.

## **What is in a name?**

You are most likely to encounter the term recruitment consultancies or recruitment agencies, sometimes employment agencies or consultancies. They will all be working in basically the same way, acting as an intermediary between candidates and employers. Staff working in them are often called consultants.