

Getting into...

Business Services & Management



Business services describes work that supports the running of a business and includes a variety of roles, which exist in all industries.

There can be a huge number of roles that work together to run a business, many of which you may never have heard of before. You might be involved in the operational side of a business, in planning or in general management.

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Exploring Your Options

In this section will be talk about the types of roles that exist within the business services industry, and where you might expect to work. There will be many roles and employers that we don't cover here, but these are some popular examples that you can use as a starting point when exploring your options.

Typical areas

Data, statistics & business intelligence

These roles involve gathering, analysing and presenting information to help a company monitor its performance and plan its future approach (e.g. compiling company performance statistics, monitoring customer behaviour and tracking industry or competitor trends). With experience, responsibilities can develop to include using this data to identify opportunities and business threats to inform business plans and strategies.

Example job titles include: Business Analyst, Junior Data Scientist, Business Intelligence Financial Planner and Strategy Manager.

Purchasing and logistics

Purchasers buy any product or service the organisation needs to carry out its business and can involve negotiating contracts, finding suppliers and developing buying procedures. Buyers source new merchandise and review existing items to ensure products remain competitive. Logistics includes overseeing how resources are obtained, stored and delivered to other locations.

Example job titles include: Product Manager, Purchasing Assistant, Buyer, Distribution Coordinator, Logistics Analyst and Supply Chain Planner.

Human resources (HR) and recruitment

HR roles vary greatly between companies, based on size of workforce. Areas can include learning and development; organisation development; employee relations; employee engagement; performance and reward; resourcing and talent planning. New recruits tend to start in a generalist role with the chance to specialise later. See also 'Getting into... HR and Recruitment'.

Example job titles include: HR Administrator/Assistant, Recruitment Assistant, HR Manager, HR Officer, HR Consultant.

Finance

There are many roles in finance, from forecasting and setting budgets, to credit control, administering salaries and pensions, or producing reports and ensuring compliance with legal and tax regulations. You must be specific about which area of finance you want to work in, so you can convince employers of your motivation and ability to do the job. Many of the roles require specialist training e.g. a professional accountancy qualification, if you want to progress to more senior roles. See also 'Getting into... Banking and Finance'.

Example job titles include: Insurance/Finance Administrator, Accounts Administrator, Auditor, Analyst, Payroll / Pensions Officer and Management Accountant.

Operations and administration

Administrative support can involve a range of tasks which allows the organisation to function effectively e.g. preparing reports, arranging meetings and dealing with client queries. With experience, Office Managers can have responsibility for budgets, delivering projects and the management of junior staff. Admin roles are a common entry route into a company, where you can gain experience and learn about the business before progressing into other areas. Operations (sometimes linked to logistics roles) involves monitoring business processes to ensure they run smoothly, and looking to improve productivity and efficiency.

Example job titles include: Business Operations Assistant, Administrative Assistant, Personal Assistant and Office Manager.

Management

Managers can be in charge of people, a product / service, a process or project for example, and are responsible for ensuring that work is completed effectively. Vacancies exist in all industries and job areas (you can become a manager in all the work areas listed in this section for example). Managerial positions are not normally someone's first role, but gained through work experience and career progression. To enter a management career, you can either apply to a graduate scheme which will specifically train you to become a manager, or find a junior level role and 'work your way up' by looking for promotions.

Example job titles include: Assistant Manager, Trainee Manager, Product Manager, Project Manager and Account Manager

Sales and marketing

Marketing is the overall process of increasing awareness of a product or service, while advertising and PR involve using various methods of promotion to achieve this. Sales uses this awareness to create paying customers and involves building relationships with clients and negotiating in order to persuade them to make a purchase. These roles are customer focused and require an understanding of the potential demand for a product/service, as well as

industry and consumer trends. This can overlap with Business Development roles, which look to identify and exploit new business opportunities such as new customers or new product/service offerings, new business partnerships, or new ways to reach existing markets. See our 'Getting into... Marketing' guide for more information.

Example job titles include: Marketing / Communications Assistant, Brand Manager, Social Media Coordinator, Business Development Officer and Retail Manager.

Typical employers

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

The majority of graduates go on to work for an SME, which is an organisation with fewer than 250 employees. They exist in every industry, so the opportunities are huge - a business related role could mean working for anything from a high-street law firm to a specialist retailer or internet company.

In small organisations, staff tend to have responsibilities across a number of different areas, particularly at graduate level. An Office Administrator may be involved with some finance, operations, recruitment and data analysis for example. For this reason, smaller organisations may offer more variety and flexibility with opportunity to work closely with senior staff and gain exposure to how the business functions as a whole. SMEs advertise vacancies throughout the year, typically one to three months before the start date.

The pandemic has brought about a new demand for certain services (particularly online ones), which has led to the development of many new small businesses. If you spot a gap in the market, you might choose to launch your own SME. Get in touch with our [Enterprise team](#) if you would like support with this.

Larger organisations

Offer entry level or graduate jobs, which tend to be filled as soon as a vacancy becomes available. Roles are advertised one to three months before the start date and are advertised all year round. If a role says a degree isn't required, don't let this put you off applying despite having one.

It is common to work your way up in an organisation, gaining skills and experience that you can use to apply for a more senior position. Starting in junior roles can give you an insight into how the organisation and wider industry works, and enable you to build valuable networks.

Some larger organisations also offer graduate schemes, a structured one or two year programme combining work and training that can lead to a professional qualification. They are generally offered by larger organisations and can involve working in different departments of the business. A permanent position after the scheme is not guaranteed.

Private company, public organisation, charity or social enterprise

Each of these types of organisation represents different working environments and cultures, so thinking about the nature and ethos of the organisation is important. For example a private company has a responsibility to its shareholders to deliver yearly profits, whereas a social enterprise is a business that makes money from selling goods and services in the open market, but which reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community (e.g the Big Issue and Divine chocolate).

For further details about the roles available within this industry, see the Prospects' [Business Consulting and Management](#) page.

Getting Industry Ready

In this section, we will talk about the kinds of skills and experiences employers might be looking for within this industry, and how you can go about gaining them yourself. What employers are looking for will vary depending on the role, but below is a general overview of key areas you might like to think about. It is important to always read the job description carefully to see exactly what the job responsibilities are, and what skills and experiences are required.

What employers want

Qualifications

Do I need a particular degree?

You can work in Business and Management with any degree background and you can build up related skills through work experience and voluntary positions. Some employers do value a degree which develops management skills and knowledge, though.

Do I need a master's degree?

Generally speaking, postgraduate study is not usually a requirement, but it can be valuable, particularly if your undergraduate degree is unrelated. A masters degree is not a substitute for work experience (where you develop skills in a professional environment) and will not guarantee you a job.

Think carefully before beginning postgraduate study. Read job descriptions for junior and senior positions in the area you're interested in to find out what qualifications are typically required (you want to be certain that taking a particular course will enhance your prospects). Professional associations and adult education centers run short courses to boost your CV, allow you to network and explore the subject before committing to a longer and more expensive course.

Skills

Here are some key skills employers within the industry are looking for. As was mentioned before, it is important to always read the job description carefully to see exactly what the job responsibilities are, and what skills and experiences are required for that particular role.

Communication

You will need to communicate and negotiate with your suppliers, potential investors, customers and employees. Having effective written and verbal communication skills will help you to build good working relationships.

Time management

Managing your time effectively may mean delegating responsibility to someone else in the business or outsourcing. Identifying who you can delegate tasks to allows you to concentrate on those tasks that generate revenue.

Leadership

If you employ people, leadership will be a key skill. You must be able to motivate your staff in order to get the best out of them and improve productivity. Allocate time to mentor and coach your employees.

Commercial awareness

Commercial awareness is also referred to as 'business focus', 'client focus', or 'business understanding', and is about having an interest in and understanding of the business world that an organisation operates in. Employers could look for this at application or interview stage by asking questions such as 'what do you know about this company?' or 'what do you know about our competitors?'

How to gain relevant skills and experiences

Student societies and clubs

Get involved in a student club or society and stand for a leadership role. Example societies at Queen Mary include the Business and Enterprise Society and the Law and Business Society. Other roles within clubs, such as captain of a sports team can also help you develop relevant skills.

Volunteering

Work with local organisations who offer a range of opportunities to Queen Mary students, including in business, health, sport and more (See the QMSU Volunteering page for more information). You might find there are local charities who require volunteers to help manage a project or implement a new process. This could be an excellent opportunity to gain some tangible experience.

Attend events

Attend Careers and Enterprise or external events to hear from recruiters, develop your understanding of the industry and make new contacts. You can ask these contacts for advice, or even for an opportunity to shadow them in their role.

Start your own business or social enterprise

This is a fantastic way to learn about how business works. Whether it is a success or not, you will gain valuable practical experience of setting up and running a business. This will help develop important skills, such as initiative and personal drive, which will be valued by potential future employers. It will also develop solid commercial awareness. If you have an idea for a business, our [Enterprise team](#) can help with information, advice and funding.

How can Careers and Enterprise help you?

There are a number of ways Careers and Enterprise can help you build skills and prepare for applying for opportunities.

Appointments

We have a range of one-to-one appointment types with expert careers consultants. These include [Career Guidance appointments](#) where you can talk about your options and ideas, [Application Advice appointments](#) where you can have an application or CV checked before submission and [Practice Interview appointments](#) where you can practice for an interview you are invited to.

Events

We hold a range of [careers events](#) throughout the year where you can learn more about an industry, network with employers and find out what people look for in a graduate.

Programmes

If you are looking to develop your skills, we have several [skill-building programmes](#) that you can apply to and complete alongside your studies.

Online Resources

Our bank of [online resources](#) is a great place to go for careers support. We have guides (such as this one), templates for things like CVs and applications, as well as tools that you can use to build or improve a CV ([QM CV Builder](#)), practice for a psychometric test ([JobTestPrep](#)) or practice for a video interview ([Interview Stream](#)).

Make the most of work experience opportunities

Once you have found a work experience opportunity, it is important to make the most of it! Here are some things to keep in mind before, during and after the opportunity.

1. Discuss your expectations with the employer at the start, so that you have the same understanding of what the experience will involve.
2. Always be polite, motivated and interested. Work experience can involve boring tasks, but being flexible, helpful and willing to get involved will make a good impression and could lead to more opportunities.
3. Be inquisitive and learn everything you can about the way the organisation works. How do they hire? What key skills are they looking for? What are the main issues affecting the organisation at the moment?
4. Talk to people who work at the organisation and find out what they do and how they got there. You might uncover job roles and employers that are new to you, as well as pick up some helpful tips. Keeping in touch with people you meet can be a great way of finding out about future opportunities and expanding your network.
5. Ask for feedback at the end of the placement to identify your strengths and the skills you need to develop further.

For more information or where you can develop your skills and experiences, see the Resources section.

Finding Opportunities

Speculative applications

Enquiring whether organisations have any opportunities available can be an effective approach, particularly when sending to a 'warm contact' (e.g. someone you met during work experience, at an event or interacted with before on social media). Many opportunities, especially in smaller organisations, are not advertised, so you could find yourself in the right place at the right time! Keep in mind that some larger organisations may not accept this type of approach. See our [speculative application](#) resources to find out more.

Networking

Networking is about identifying people who are linked to what you want to do and developing a rapport with them. This will create a group of work-related contacts who may be able to give you help, information and advice. Twitter and LinkedIn are valuable tools for following industry trends and developments, as well as hearing about events, news, jobs and companies. Make sure to follow [Queen Mary Alumni's LinkedIn](#) page to connect with alumni working in roles you would like to pursue.

Think about how you will introduce yourself to new contacts. Make a good impression by having an elevator pitch prepared – a quick outline of who you are, what you do and how it relates to the contact.

Professional organisations

Professional organisations are excellent sources of news and information. They provide information on how to enter the industry, with details of any accredited qualifications required. Many have directories of members you can use to find companies to send applications and speculative applications to.

Being a member of a relevant association/body looks good on a CV and demonstrates your motivation for working in the sector. Many have details of events and conferences where you can make contacts and find out about the sector (including potential employers). Some professional organisations have their own jobsites.

Temping

Temping (a series of temporary jobs in various companies through an agency) allows you to build your skills, experience and network of contacts, whilst trying different roles and organisations. Knowing the type of work you are interested in is helpful, so you can be specific about what you are looking for. Previous work experience may be necessary. Search [Agency Central](#) for recruitment agencies.

Resources

Finding Opportunities

Here are some jobs boards for you to take a look at when searching for opportunities. Remember many organisations will post their jobs directly to their own website or social media platforms, so make sure that you are also looking there.

[Inside Careers](#)

Careers information plus jobs board.

[Milkround](#)

Jobs board for full time jobs and internships across business areas.

[Target Jobs](#)

Industry news plus vacancies.

[The Guardian Jobs board](#)

Use search terms such as 'entry level finance jobs'.

[British Management Jobs](#)

Vacancies, news, events & courses. Purchasing, logistics, procurement and supply chain.

[Careers in Logistics](#)

Vacancies, plus careers advice articles, industry overviews and job profiles.

[Retail Choice](#)

Buying, purchasing and other management jobs in the retail sector.

[Supply Management Jobs](#)

Use 'job level' filter to search for entry level and graduate jobs. Advice section has excellent careers articles.

[Human Resources People Management](#)

Jobs board plus training, resources and case studies.

[Simply HR](#)

Vacancies, news, volunteering and resources.