



*International graduate routes:
Narratives from the UK job market*
CASE STUDIES



AGCAS

The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

FOREWORD

International Graduate Routes: Narratives from the UK job market

In July 2021, the UK launched the Graduate route visa, allowing international students to remain in the UK to seek work for a two-year period (three years for PhD candidates) after graduation.

In April 2022, AGCAS embarked on a research project, funded by the UPP Foundation, designed to capture the experiences of international graduates seeking employment in the UK following the launch of the Graduate route visa.

International Graduate Routes: Narratives from the UK job market was published in February 2023. It provided the first evidence for the HE sector on the facilitators and barriers to success in the UK jobs market, and assessed the effectiveness of the Graduate route and other post-study visas.

The research findings were based on a June 2022 survey and November 2022 focus groups with survey respondents. A total of 1,010 international graduates engaged with the survey: 396 completed responses representing 77 nationalities from over 50 UK universities. AGCAS and its International Task Group led on this work, with support from members organisations of the International Student Employability Group (ISEG). The research was endorsed by Universities UK International (UUKi), the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), and the British Universities' International Liaison Association (BUILA).

Our primary intention for the research was clear; to humanise the experiences of international graduates and provide them with a platform to tell their stories of seeking UK graduate employment. As part of this research, we invited international graduates to submit a case study of their story. The fifty case studies in this document were published between February – July 2023. They were housed on UKCISA's website until March 2024, and are now collated into this volume.

Thank you to all of the international graduates for sharing their experiences.

We invite you to read and share these stories.

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Case study 1: Anonymous, Nigeria, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Nigeria
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University region, level of study and programme of study	University in North-West England Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Information Technology, Management and Organisational Change
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Industry	Business Consulting
Region of your contracted place of work	London-based
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current role?	I first heard about the company through a careers fair. I heard about the job opening through the company's website after university.

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It has provided me with opportunities that might have been difficult without this visa, especially in getting a job to remain in the UK.

The application for the visa was pretty straightforward, although the form was very lengthy. My visa came out in under 4 working days, which I found really impressive. The cost was a bit high to be honest, especially as I had not gotten a job at the time I made an application.

'Seek help from the careers team when needed'

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and practised recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres. I attended an employer event, a careers fair and gained access to job vacancy listings. I received help from the careers team during my time as a student.

I extended my studies by going for an exchange programme outside the UK. I studied a course more specific to the career I wanted, which provided me with some great skills and knowledge about consulting.

“Some employers are so positive and accepting of this visa type.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Based on my job search, I would say not all employers are aware of this visa. I sometimes had to explain this new visa to some of the recruiters I had interviews with. Also, some employers are still unbending towards recruiting those with this kind of visa.

I would say some employers do not want to get those with this kind of visa on board, due to the fear of the unknown. While some also do not have a sponsorship license to help the candidate after the graduate visa expires, so they would rather not take the candidate. Some are so positive and accepting of this visa type.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

- Aim to get a sponsored job, as that clears doubt now and in the future.
- Begin applying for jobs early, and do not wait to finish school because the competition is high.
- Develop skills and build yourself with on-demand skills.
- Seek help from the careers team when needed. Attend career fairs – who knows – your job might be with one of the firms.
- Lastly, don't give up because it might not be the easiest journey as an international student. You just need to persevere.

Case study 2: Saejin Lee, South Korea, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Saejin Lee
Nationality / country of origin	Korea (South)
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Nottingham Undergraduate degree Media, journalism and communications
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed - full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Communications Coordinator
Employer / organisation	Riverlinx/SK ecoplant
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Managing social media, event planning and working with stakeholders on projects
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current role?	Through social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter)

"I think it has been quite tough for me to enter the UK work industry."

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It is a great opportunity that I can stay 2 years with my Graduate route visa and I am very glad that this post-study work visa has been relaunched. However, it is quite expensive compared to other visas and this isn't counted as a skilled work visa. I have to get a Tier 2 visa and then work for more than 5 years if I want to apply for a permanent resident visa. With the post-study work visa, I should be working in the UK for a total of 7 years to be eligible to apply for the permanent resident visa and this sounds like a massively long time.

Since this visa was launched last year, it was quite hard for me to get the appropriate details. There was a well-written description on the website, but some information such as deadlines regarding Covid was insufficient.

In the process of checking the biometric residence permits (BRP) on the app, I had a technical issue and had to arrange a meeting with the visa immigration team in person. Some of my friends also had the same issue, although they had no issue with their devices, they also had to arrange the meeting with the team. In this case, there was less information provided so I was stuck during the weekend, and I also paid extra money because of the meeting with the immigration team. The visa process was delayed because of this meeting. I called the visa team but it was really, really hard to reach them via phone. When I asked questions because of the lack of information, they just told me to wait or keep checking my email, but I asked about the deadlines and technical issues.

The process of applying for the visa online was easy, but I was wondering if I really should be in the UK to apply online. I ended up going to the office to check my ID so I was fine, but it was very hard to travel from my country to the UK when I was applying.

Luckily, I got the visa quickly, it took approximately 10 days and an extra few weeks to receive my BRP. To sum up, I can say most of the processes including applying online, paying and registering were easy, but at the same time there were difficulties in accessing the app to check my current BRP before the expiry date, some extra costs and travelling to get this visa.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and received CV feedback. I attended an employer event, skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair. Since university, I have volunteered, tried to get a certificate and taken part in online training.

“I had some interviews and they asked me to describe what exactly the post-study work visa is.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I had some interviews and they asked me to describe what exactly the post-study work visa is. It seemed that they were not that familiar with this visa.

All the jobs I have applied for asked if I have a work permit in the UK. I had a graduate visa so there was no problem to apply for a job, but the application section was closed when I clicked no (before getting this visa). They also double-checked if the graduate visa was right to work in the UK.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I would advise them to try to apply for lots of jobs before their current visa expires. It is because this visa isn't counted as a skilled visa so they might face another visa problem when the graduate visa expires. Also, keep checking LinkedIn or specific communities focusing on EDI. I think it has been quite tough for me to enter the UK work industry.

I also would like to advise that work experience is one of the important skills in the UK I believe, so maybe applying for an internship after the first year or during the second year! Most of the companies that I interviewed for also asked about my extracurricular activities during my university life. Keep trying a lot of activities, as much as you can before graduation!

Case study 3: Anonymous, Nigeria, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Jordan
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University region, level of study and programme of study	University in Wales Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Psychology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed – full time (more than 35 hours a week) (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Industry	Mental health charity
Region of your contracted place of work	Wales
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	I found the organisation through a google search, volunteered with them for 4 months and then applied for employment with them

“Make connections and volunteer while studying, it’ll save you a lot of time looking for a job after you graduate.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I was disappointed to find out the visa was issued from the date of acceptance of the application. My student visa would have allowed me to stay until February, but I applied in December out of precaution. My graduate visa was issued for 2 years starting 4 days after my application date which made me lose out on 2 months. Although I appreciated the quick decision, I was disappointed to lose out on time in the UK.

The application process was fairly simple for me. However, I can foresee someone who is not as technologically savvy having difficulty using the online portals and online app. The health insurance was expensive, especially considering that I am

now employed and paying for health insurance through my taxes that I already paid for in my application. I believe I got the decision 4-7 days after my application which was reassuring, but at the same time made me lose 2 months of residency in the UK as it was issued from the date of the acceptance of my application rather than the end of my current visa which made me think I should have waited until the end to apply. No one advised me on this and I somewhat regret it.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I haven't received support from my university careers service but have done some volunteering since leaving university.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Employers vary in the amount of knowledge on the post-study work visa. Some knew lots, some knew nothing. My current employer knew little but had an HR rep who knew to ask for my visa details and right to work documentation.

Employers are somewhat hesitant to employ someone who doesn't have a permanent right to stay in the UK.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Don't apply too soon and prepare yourself for work as soon as possible during your degree.

Make connections and volunteer while studying, it'll save you a lot of time looking for a job after you graduate.

Case study 4: Hannah Vuozzo, United States, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Hannah Vuozzo
Nationality / country of origin	United States
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Stirling Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Media, journalism and communications
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (more than 35 hours a week) (temporary contract)

Where do you work?

Job title	Communications Manager, Careers and Global Opportunities
Employer / organisation	The University of Glasgow
Region of your contracted place of work	Scotland
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I oversee digital and print communications for the Careers Service, design and create promotional and informational social media content and manage social media and other communications channels for the Careers Service. I also support stakeholder relations by communicating with students about their needs and local employers about student-orientated vacancies
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (e.g. Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Yes, the visa is what I expected. I valued having time and flexibility while applying to roles.

The application process was straightforward. I made sure to follow instructions from my university. The University of Stirling informed international students that they should wait to apply for the Graduate route visa until student records were received by the relevant government office.

The cost of the visa ended up being substantial. It's almost like you're expected to pay money in order to make money. Of course, I understand that certain fees are necessary to process the visa and provide healthcare, but it's difficult for students to have such funds available. In addition, I had to pay to attend a biometric appointment and the travel expenses to the appointment which added about £200 to £1,948.

When I applied for the Graduate route visa, I had about two months left on my Tier 4 student visa. While I was happy to receive a quick decision about the former, this meant that I essentially lost two months of visa time. I wish the Graduate route visa would have begun once my student visa expired.

Based on my peers' experiences, the time to receive a decision varies considerably within the specified eight-week window. I received my decision after three days. Some of my peers received their decisions after several weeks.

“The cost of the visa ended up being substantial.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

The University offered a programme called Postgraduate Plus+ which was designed to prepare postgraduates for employment. The programme lasted several weeks and consisted of workshops on topics including presentation skills, teamwork and self-branding. I volunteered as a Programme Representative and did a part-time job as a Postgraduate Faculty Officer.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Because my organisation is quite large, not everyone is well-aware of post-study work visa options. I recently spoke to my line manager about my concerns as a temporary worker and visa holder. My line manager only knew that the Graduate route existed. Some of my colleagues have more knowledge of it, but that's because they are Careers Advisors, so it's their job to know.

The University of Glasgow is a registered sponsor and, according to the website, has a clear and established process for managing the visas for international employees. When I went through onboarding, it was clear that the University had dedicated staff who were up to date on the various work visa options.

Again, the University of Glasgow is a registered sponsor, so it appears that they are fairly open-minded about hiring international employees. It's unclear what their position is on hiring graduates in need of a visa.

“Begin preparing for your visa pathway as soon as possible.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I recommend that current international students begin preparing for their visa pathway as soon as possible, especially if they are master's students and, therefore, are only in their studies for one or two years.

I tell them to start allocating/saving funds for the visa early and to read all of the provided guidance on the government website.

I also urge them to be timely about their decisions and activities. One of my peers had left the UK after her course finished, and I told her that she should return to the UK before her student visa expired or she'd be ineligible to apply for the Graduate route visa.

Case study 5: Nathalie Kaewpruek, Thailand, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Nathalie Kaewpruek
Nationality / country of origin	Thailand
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	Lancaster University Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Sociology, social policy and anthropology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50. I mainly used totaljobs to look for jobs. I sent my resume to almost any company that opened a marketing or content creator role. I only got 5 interviews from more than 50 jobs I applied for.
Current activity	Employed – full time (more than 35 hours a week) (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Marketing Executive
Employer / organisation	School Property Masters
Region of your contracted place of work	North West England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Create marketing content on both online and offline media. Coordinate with event organiser
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (e.g. Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It wasn't easy to apply for this visa because the app didn't work. Also the visa doesn't count towards the permanent resident scheme so it's like I pay almost £2000 for almost nothing. The only good thing is I don't have the great pressure on finding work right after I graduate.

I applied for the visa early so the waiting process was very short. I got the answer a week after I had submitted my application. However, the application process was a nightmare for me. I couldn't use the app to scan my biometric residence permit (BRP), therefore I had to pay an extra £125 to go and get my fingerprints and photo taken in Manchester.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Through the university careers service, I've had a one-to-one appointment with a careers advisor and received CV feedback. I'm currently taking a Google online course.

“My employer is open to the idea of sponsoring me after this. However, because of the graduate visa, I told them that they didn't have to sponsor me right away.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My employer has no knowledge of post-study work visas, I'm the first foreigner working in the company.

They're open to the idea of sponsoring me after this. However, because of the graduate visa, I told them that they didn't have to sponsor me right away. That's fair for both sides since they have more time to assess my value to the team.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Find job-related skills and experiences in the UK and put them on your CV. As an international graduate student, having the job experience from outside the country that barely relates to your job is not going to make you stand out from other British graduates. Find an internship – it will help you adapt to work culture in the UK as well. I still believe that I got this job because I decided to do an internship with my faculty during my last term.

“Find job-related skills and experiences in the UK and put them on your CV.”

Case study 6: Anonymous, Turkey, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Turkey
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University region, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Undergraduate degree Law
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11-25
Current activity	Employed – full time (more than 35 hours a week) (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Legal Claims Handler
Industry	Law
Region of your contracted place of work	Yorkshire and the Humber
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	I found a recruiter in my area and messaged him on LinkedIn

“Definitely apply for the visa, because at least you will have the chance to gain experience.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It's been difficult trying to secure my first legal role. I waitressed for the first 6 months. And even though I've secured my first starting role, this position isn't enough to offer me a sponsorship. Law being one of the most competitive fields to get into, means that unless I can secure a training contract by September 2023, then I am out of the country. Nevertheless, without this new visa, I wouldn't even have the chance to gain experience in the UK.

The application was very quick and easy to complete. It was quite expensive which was the most difficult part in obtaining the visa for me. It took about two days or so to complete and I received an answer in the next few days.

“The application was very quick and easy to complete.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Through the university careers service, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, and attended an employer event, a skills enhancement session and a careers fair. I also gained access to job vacancy listings.

Law is just really difficult to get into. And the main reason for rejection is often the lack of experience. Had my university provided a legal shadowing experience, the story might have been different.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

They don't look at post study work visas very warmly. It definitely stands as an obstacle.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Definitely apply for the visa, because at least you will have the chance to gain experience.

Case study 7: Anonymous, Tanzania, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Tanzania
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University region, level of study and programme of study	University in the East Midlands Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Architecture, building and planning
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (more than 35 hours a week) (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Part 2 Architectural Assistant
Industry	Architecture
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I work on production of designs and drawings for clients under a qualified architect. I also take part in site visits and attend design team meetings
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a contact (e.g. tutor, friend, previous employer)

“I get to work full time in my field of expertise with no limitations apart from it being only for 2 years.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I get to work full time in my field of expertise with no limitations apart from it being only for two years.

Honestly, being an international student meant that getting a job was a long process since many companies would opt for a home student without visa complications. It took me longer than my fellow graduates to get a job. Even so, moving from one company to another becomes challenging as my right to work is

questionable. I got a job 3 months later than any of my friends from architecture school.

“It took me longer than my fellow graduates to get a job.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Through the university careers service, I attended an employer event and a careers fair and I gained access to job vacancy listings. After university, I undertook a short course on Mental Health First Aid in the workplace.

“We are always at a disadvantage compared to home applicants with similar skills and qualifications.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My employers had no clue how the post-study work visa worked, especially the graduate visa. It is always considered an extra cost as they have to pay to sponsor the employee, and due to that, we are always at a disadvantage compared to home applicants who do not need one and have similar skills and qualifications.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I would encourage them to get the visa as it offers a good opportunity to gain experience in their field of study.

Case study 8: Yi Hui Lee, Taiwan, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Yi Hui Lee
Nationality / country of origin	Taiwan
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	Lancaster University Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Language and Linguistics
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed – full time

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	My first graduate role was as a Translation Project Manager Intern. Since first providing the case study, I have progressed to Translation Project Coordinator.
Industry	Translation industry
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Time between the end of your course and start date for your first role	3-6 months
How did you find your first role?	Through a contact (e.g. tutor, friend, previous employer)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I didn't have very clear expectations when applying. In terms of processing time, the application is quite fast and efficient, which is amazing. Some people might think it would be easier to get a job with this visa. I'm not sure about this as I was using my Tier 4 student visa most of time when finding a job. But overall, the visa helped me a lot during the hiring and onboarding process.

“Overall, the visa helped me a lot during the hiring and onboarding process.”

The application requires you to answer many questions, mostly personal details related to your nationality, your course in the UK, travel history, addresses etc. They were not hard to answer. The only difficult thing during the application was using a phone to scan the chip inside the old biometric residence permit (BRP). Lots of

iPhone users found it difficult to scan and make the phone read the information inside the chip, so we had to borrow Android phones from friends to complete this process. There was no need to book an in-person appointment to complete my ID check.

The cost is a little bit high (almost £2000), but I think this is for 2 years and it is very flexible in terms of finding a job (compared to Tier 2 working visa which has several criteria to meet), so I would say it is worth it.

It took around 10 days to get the decision letter after completing the application online, and around 2-3 days to get the new BRP after receiving the decision letter. So it's about 13 working days in total, which I think is acceptable and efficient. However, the time spent on waiting for the result really depends, since some people get the letter within a few days but for some it might take more than a month.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback, practised recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres and attended a careers fair.

Since university, I first tried to apply for data-related jobs, so did some online training and courses such as Excel and SQL, but then I changed my mind and started applying for positions in the language service industry. I realised the most important thing to be a translator is to gain lots of experience, so I started finding some freelance jobs or volunteering tasks in this field. Before I started my current position, I also did some project management and communication courses for preparation, as my current position requires these skills.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

As I applied for my visa quite late, I couldn't have a full picture of many employers' understanding and knowledge of post-study work visas. I think my current company know it well, as everything went smoothly when checking my right to work in the UK and all my documents. There was no confusion or doubt from the company.

I think many companies would prefer someone who doesn't require a visa to work in the UK. There's a frequently asked question like 'Do you require a visa to work in the UK?', and it might be one of the reasons for employers to decline my previous applications (but there might be other reasons for sure).

Some companies would be concerned about whether they should recruit someone with a Tier 4 student visa if the expiration date is close, even when they are eligible to work full time. I had the experience of a company contacting me for further discussion, but later on they didn't move on due to the expiration date of my visa and request for a new visa to work. That's very understandable as they have to ensure how long the graduate could contribute to the company and confirm whether additional processes are required (e.g. visa sponsorship).

However, some companies do consider recruiting international graduates who

require a visa and they are interested in knowing more about us first. A few companies invited me to assessments/interviews and also went through many stages when I was still using my student visa.

“Prepare for your job search while still at university.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

First of all, start preparing for your job search as soon as possible when you arrive in the UK. Support and useful resources will be relatively easy to access when you are still in the university. From my personal experience, it is a struggle to do preparation and search for jobs simultaneously when you start living on your own outside the university, especially in places like London. Finding your dream job can be very time-consuming and you might spend ages browsing through every job website. It is better to finish all the preparation such as building a CV/cover letter/creating a LinkedIn profile and developing the skills required in your industry early, when you are still in the university. But don't worry if you don't manage to finish the preparation before leaving, as you can still find the support from the university's career centre or even some relevant seminars online.

“Expand your network.”

The other advice I would offer is expand your network. It was not until I started searching for jobs in the UK that I realised the importance of connecting to people working in the industry that you're interested in. Aside from employers' concern about visas, sometimes it would be difficult for international graduates to find their first job in the UK as we might not be able to capture all the opportunities and job information on many different websites/career exhibitions/webinars.

Having a friend already working in the industry is very helpful as they have access to the first-hand recruiting information. For example, I learned the recruiting information of my current position from someone I knew. Without him, I wouldn't have known this valuable information and would have probably missed this chance. In addition to sharing information, your network can also refer or introduce you to companies and prove your skill set and experience to the employer. As a result, it is definitely a very good idea to make more friends or talk to more people in the industry during your job searching journey.

Case study 9: Anonymous, China, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	China
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University region, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Higher Degree -mainly by taught course (eg. MA.MSc,MBA) Languages
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Audit Trainee
Industry	Accountancy / business advisory
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	I was mainly looking at graduate schemes because they have a standard procedure for hiring and provide training and mentorship for graduates. I passed the online test which tested for numeracy skills and completed a short video interview. I was invited to an assessment centre. I finally received an offer three days afterward.

“Start your job search early and stay positive.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I am really happy with the Graduate route visa, which allowed me more time to find a job. However, due to it being a newly introduced visa, many companies still preferred the Tier 4 visa holders to Graduate route visa holders. Many companies do not accept Graduate route visas. Overall, I found the process easy and self-explanatory. The costs are fair. I received my new biometric residence permit (BRP) within 15 days after I submitted my application.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

My university careers service helped me to practice recruitment activities such as interview techniques and assessment centres.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Recruiters are familiar with how to switch from a Tier 4 visa to a Tier 2 visa and they are happy to do so, but some companies have not decided their stance on the Graduate route visa. Other than that, I have found that employers are fair when it comes to recruiting graduates that require a visa.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Start early! Many graduate schemes are hiring on a rolling basis, so it is best to start preparation work and send applications early.

Stay positive. The whole process of applying for jobs, doing tests, and going through multiple interviews on a daily basis can be very stressful and tiring. Speaking to your friends and family for emotional support really helps! Also, remember that it is common to receive rejections. Do not feel disheartened, just move on. There are tons of opportunities elsewhere. Hang in there and it will work out!

Contact your university careers service to see if they can help. They are very professional and really helped me with my interviews.

“Contact your university careers service to see if they can help.”

Case study 10: Arshjit Saini, India, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Arshjit Saini
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	Durham University Undergraduate degree Computing
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11-25
Current activity	Employed – full-time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Graduate Software Developer
Employer / organisation	Akixi
Region of your contracted place of work	Crawley, South East England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	My main responsibilities include creating new innovative solutions and maintaining the existing codebase. Programming in languages including core Java mainly, with other languages being used as supportive languages such as Python, SQL, HTML, JS, and CSS
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a contact (e.g. Tutor, friend, previous employer)

“I found the cost of the visa unnecessarily expensive.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Undecided. This is because my goal was to acquire British Citizenship and Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). I am not sure whether the time I am spending in the UK doing hard work is even counted towards the time to get an ILR.

The application process was simple and easy. I found the cost unnecessarily expensive. The time to acquire the visa was quick.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I did practice recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres. I attended a careers fair and gained access to job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

As this visa is not displayed with a Tier number, it can be hard to explain what it is. Most employers prefer, and type in their job description, that they are not able to sponsor a visa, even though they clearly are a big company and can easily sponsor graduates who need a visa. This is very wrong and makes life a lot more difficult in getting a job for people who need a visa to work.

“Do internships in the summer break to get some work experience.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Do some internships in summer breaks to get some work experience. Don't be disheartened if you apply and get rejected. Practice test interviews and practice doing some situational judgement tests (SJT).

If you feel confident that you will get a job in UK, apply in time to get the graduate visa and meanwhile keep applying for jobs in the UK. Keep smiling and keep trying.

Case study 11: Anonymous, China, Skilled Worker, undergraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	China
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Undergraduate degree, including integrated Master's Degree (eg. BA, BSc, MBChB, Meng) Media, Journalism and Communications
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11-25
Current activity	Employed – Full Time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Operations
Employer / organisation	Investment banking company
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	Company's official website

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I would advise aiming for getting a Skilled Work visa.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

During my penultimate year, I started to apply for internship/graduate programmes mainly in the media industry. In the beginning, it was quite daunting, as I did not have a clue what the application process or what the hiring criteria were. I got rejected or never heard back from my 20 applications.

I reached out for guidance from my university's career centre. They provided me with a CV sample which was great. However, it was still hard to know what job opportunities were out there (in the media industry mainly) and would fit me as a foreign student to apply. Due to a lack of knowledge of general job markets for

graduate students and my experience, this stage of applications all failed.

At the beginning of my last university year, I connected with another Chinese student who secured a graduate job in the financial industry. She shared a lot of first-hand insights about the industry. I then started to research and swerved my application direction to banking. Within two months, I received a summer intern offer that eventually led to a return offer for a graduate talent program.

I received support from my university careers service, including having a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser. I received CV feedback and practiced recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres. I also attended an employer event as well as gaining access to job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Some large institutions stated that they would not accept candidates on a Graduate route visa, as there will be an extra cost switching from Graduate route to a skilled work visa. More small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who need a cheaper human resource for positions that are highly replicable, benefit from it. However, for private SMEs they will have to raise the benchmark for candidates who need sponsorship.

“Make use of your university careers centre”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I would say to start your research and application process early. Make use of your university careers centre and connect with alumni.

Case study 12: Anonymous, Colombia, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Colombia
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Higher Degree, mainly by research (eg. PhD, DPhil, MPhil, MRes) Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Research Associate
Employer / organisation	University
Region of your contracted place of work	North East England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Research in environmental engineering within microbiology of waste water treatment plants
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a contact (eg. Tutor, friend, previous employer)

“It is very frustrating that the applicant is not allowed to leave the country during the application process”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It was not easy to get a job straight away because the visa takes time to be issued and the university will not hire you if you do not have the residence permit issued on the graduate visa. I feel very lucky for having the opportunity to apply for a graduate visa. The application process was easy, but I do find the costs of the NHS per year unfair, especially because we are already paying all the taxes through our job including National Insurance. So, I feel we are paying taxes twice.

I also had a problem with the expiry date of my graduate visa as it expired in two years even though I was entitled to a three-year visa, because I finished a PhD and not a masters. So I had to apply for an Admin Review and finally got the correct date. It is very frustrating that the applicant is not allowed to leave the country during the application process and, in my case, when I had to send back my biometric residence permit (BRP) to get the correct expiration date. These dates can be during Christmas so it is very sad not being allowed to travel back home. I also found that although the immigration office states that the applicants are entitled to work while getting the BRP, companies are not willing to interview you if you do not have a valid right to work code or your BRP.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I had one-to-one appointments with a careers adviser. I practiced recruitment activities such as interviews and assessment centres. I also attended skills enhancement sessions.

Since leaving university, I've done a programming course on data science while looking for a job. I also paid for a service for enhancing my cv, so that it didn't look so academic as I have an interest in working for industry.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

So far I can see that employers are not knowledgeable about the Graduate route. I think once they know you have a visa then they are willing to recruit.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

They should think about getting a driving licence as many jobs require one.

Case study 13: Iskandar Suhaimi, Malaysia, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Iskandar Suhaimi
Nationality / country of origin	Malaysia
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Bristol Undergraduate degree, including master's degrees (eg. BA, BSc, MBChB, Meng) Law
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11-25
Current activity	Employed – Full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Content writer
Employer / organisation	Tumelo
Region of your contracted place of work	South-West England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I write content for a Fintech company, including articles, product offerings, and marketing pieces.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (Linkedin, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I do not feel my expectations are being met. Having a digital visa with no way of compelling companies to accept it is an obstacle to accessing some services. The application is detailed, so it is a bit tedious. However, it was an easy and speedy process.

The cost is ridiculously high as the person bearing the cost is a fresh university graduate. It was a very stressful period for me trying to gather enough money to pay for the exorbitant fees.

'It was stressful paying for the exorbitant visa fees'

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser. I received CV feedback and practiced recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres. I also attended an employer event, a careers fair and skills enhancement sessions.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I think employers have a baseline awareness of the Graduate route visa. Most employers do not seem to have a problem when hiring a graduate on a Graduate visa.

However, there is an unwillingness to sponsor visas generally. Most employers who do offer visas, when making an offer are recruiting for specialised roles which are very competitive.

‘Surround yourself with a strong support system’

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Find employment in a role that fits your skills, compared to just applying to random jobs. It will make interviews easier. Surround yourself with a strong support system who are willing to help you out in times of difficulty. Be upfront about your visa situation. Explore all avenues of job advertisement e.g. company websites, recruitment agencies, job listing websites, LinkedIn, etc.

Case study 14: Anonymous, China, Graduate route, postgraduate route

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	China
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in the East Midlands Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Computer Science (Artificial Intelligence)
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50 For an international student, job hunting is quite challenging. We don't have a longer work permit here (Graduate route visa = 2/3 years). Lots of companies rejected me because they couldn't support my visa sponsorship in the future. I struggled with the lack of a network, especially during the pandemic.
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Deep Learning Engineer
Employer / organisation	Finance organisation
Region/nation of your contracted place of work	Scotland
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Deep Learning in Finance
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (Linkedin, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The Graduate route visa has a limited working time (two years). Companies are not willing to support Tier 2 for graduates. Therefore, no matter what, you need to find a company that can support your visa sponsorship now or in the future.

The process is fast and convenient through the online service. The ID identification APP is quite good, saved me so much time.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I attended a careers fair and gained access to job vacancy listings.

“Lots of companies rejected me because they can't support my visa sponsorship in the future”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I felt that employers don't accept the visa well, and some of them haven't heard of it which is sad. The two/three-year work permit is the main reason that employers don't want to accept the visa. It is so difficult for graduates to get a visa sponsorship from a company. They said they prefer to give it to someone with at least two or three years of work experience.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Unfortunately, we can't get enough benefit from the post-study work visa (especially the 2/3 years work permit. We have to try harder to seek a job.

Case study 15: Anonymous, Hong Kong, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Hong Kong
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-West England Undergraduate degree, including integrated master's degrees (eg. BA, BSc, MBChB, MEng) Accounting and Finance (Industry)
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed full-time. I had a fixed-term contract due to the visa issue and am changing to a permanent one.

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Associate
Employer / organisation	Restructuring advisory firm
Region of your contracted place of work	North West (England)
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I work in a restructuring advisory firm, supporting insolvency cases with day-to-day work as a case administrator. I take the research and analysis role for business development and different advisory projects.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through my university career service

'It was very easy to apply for a Graduate visa'

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I could not start an Associate Chartered Accountant (ACA) study with the Graduate visa. The graduate visa has been an excuse and reason for the employer postponing and delaying the application for a skilled worker visa.

It was very easy to apply for a Graduate visa, which I could have done online with a mobile app. However, it caused confusion with no biometric residence permit (BRP)

posted. This has been confusing on police registration and getting into the UK airport.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received CV feedback, attended an employer event and attended a careers fair. Since university, I've undertaken self-study on data analytics but it is not related to my current job.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My employer does not really understand the eligibility for a Graduate route visa holder. They were not sure if a Graduate route visa holder could take ACA study. They seem to not know how to switch me from a Graduate route visa to a skilled worker visa. It has been used as an excuse for them delaying granting me a long-term working visa. This is different to what I expected and was told when I joined the firm.

They are positive about recruiting a Graduate route visa holder as they do not need to sponsor a visa at the first instance. But again, it has been used as an excuse for them delaying granting me a long-term working visa.

My employer has been working on a Skilled Worker visa for me for two months. I will hopefully be switched to a skilled worker visa soon.

'Go for a Skilled Worker visa if you can'

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Do go for a Skilled Worker visa if you can, it could take longer than you expect to transfer from a graduate visa to a working visa.

Case study 16: Parth Nilkanth Kulkarni, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Parth Nilkanth Kulkarni
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Yes
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Bristol Higher degree, mainly taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Nuclear Science and Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed – Full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Consultant Mechanical Engineer
Employer / organisation	Alten, UK
Region of your contracted place of work	West Midlands (England)
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Heat transfer analysis, GD&T, 3D drawings, material testing and simulation
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Before being officially launched, the brief description and the actual visa process and terms are very coherent. It is a lengthy application, but the process is very smooth and systematic. The only problem I think is the awareness of the UKVI employees about the visa process.

'It is a lengthy application, but the process is very smooth and systematic'

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and received CV feedback. I attended an employer event, skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair.

Since leaving university, I have developed my skills with a short course of Siemens NX, Matlab and Simulink.

'After the two years, I don't have the guarantee that I will be sponsored by my current employer...This uncertainty is what bothers me the most'

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My impression is that employers are very aware of the Graduate route visa. The only thing that bothers me is that at the moment I do have a secure permanent job but, in the future, i.e. by the end of my Graduate route visa, I don't have the guarantee that I will get a sponsorship from my current employers. This is a minimum thing anyone would ask, because after all it will be a turning point for an individual.

Most international students come here on a bank loan which has to be re-paid, and in those two years of the Graduate route visa, the individual only earns enough money to sustain, repay some part of the loan and live a normal life, but won't be able to save any money for the future. This uncertainty is what bothers me the most.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Apply for a lot of jobs. Don't wait for the right time. Start getting in contact with the professors, personal tutors, and mentors if they have any connections in the relevant industry. A recommendation from a professor does help.

Stay focused towards your studies, but at the same time enjoy the life around study because that is going to help you make a lot of connections, shape your personality, and mould yourself according to the culture. The moulded person is what any recruiter is looking for.

My last suggestion would be to remain calm while attending an interview. But that is only possible if you have got a good amount of knowledge and willpower in the respective field. The recruiter must know that you are a person who is interested to do a lot of things and can balance out all the aspects of life.

2023 UPDATE

Since providing this case study in 2022, Parth has moved from this role to a fully funded PhD at the Open University under the Imperial College London Nuclear Energy Futures CDT programme, researching materials for nuclear fusion.

Case study 17: Anonymous, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Scotland Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Business Analysis & Consulting
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50. I have applied to more than 1000 jobs. Got rejected for being an international student despite having a strong background.
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Business Analyst
Employer / organisation	Energy company
Region of your contracted place of work	South-West England
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (eg. LinkedIn, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I'm not sure how I feel about it. Most of the companies I applied to rejected me because of just having a two-year visa. The job I'm working at is a fixed-term contract because of my visa situation.

Applying for a Graduate route visa is the easiest of all. It's all online and you don't have to go for any appointments. Moreover, the processing times are way faster than the normal visa without having to pay any additional fees. I received mine in less than 5 days.

'Applying for the visa is easy...but companies rejected me for just having a two-year visa'

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I didn't receive support from the careers service while at university. I am working on gaining certifications that could help me in getting sponsorship.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

The majority of companies are unaware of the Graduate route visa, therefore many of my applications got rejected because the job profile didn't have the option to select the visa option.

'There is a bias in the hiring process'

In my opinion, employers have a negative attitude to recruiting graduates that require a visa. I have more than five years of relevant work experience, still, my classmates without any experience got good jobs just because they were from European countries. I don't believe that companies are willing to sponsor international students. There is a bias in the hiring process.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Try to apply to as many jobs as possible and pray for the best.

Case study 18: Anonymous, Kenya, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Kenya
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in South-West England Undergraduate degree, including integrated master's degrees (eg. BA, BSC, MBChB, MEng) Sociology, social policy and anthropology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Helpdesk Consultant
Employer / organisation	Financial services company
Region of your contracted place of work	South-West England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Providing customer support
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (eg. Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

My visa still poses a barrier to getting employed in my desired field and in a role that corresponds to my skill level. Companies and organisations still don't want to hire me because my time here is limited.

'Considering how much the visa costs, it doesn't seem worth it.'

Getting the visa was straightforward and quick. The health surcharge was too expensive. I worked in care for the first 4-5 months and now I'm working as a

Helpdesk Consultant. I'm still getting passed on for jobs due to my visa and considering how much the visa costs, it doesn't seem worth it.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received support from the careers service including CV feedback, attending an employer event and attending a careers fair. Since university, I have got a mentor.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

They have no clue what the Graduate route visa is and aren't educated about it. I also found that my letting agent was unaware of how it would impact my tenancy. My impression is that employers are not open to recruiting graduates that require a visa. One outright told me that unless you're an exceptional candidate, we don't want to hire someone who's going to leave in a year or two because we don't have the funds or facilities to sponsor their visa.

'Find a job environment that caters for your growth'

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

It's hard. You get a lot of no's. Don't expect to receive the expected annual salary or a desired role. Just find something that sparks your curiosity and a job environment that caters for your growth.

Case study 19: Anonymous, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Industrial Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Logistics Engineer
Employer / organisation	Agricultural machinery company
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (eg. LinkedIn, Twitter)

'The visa was expensive'

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

International students have had a hard time getting a first job, primarily due to the requirements of a driving licence being a starting point or requirement for most jobs. The typical scene for international students is that they also need to look for Tier 2 sponsors for jobs which is difficult for many students unless they persist for over six months or have a driving licence.

Although the visa is expensive, most companies don't offer graduate roles with the company as they expect us to be UK nationals, thereby leaving the cost of Tier 2 sponsorship.

I was fortunate enough to land a temporary contract from a multinational corporation six months after graduation, which leaves me 1.5 years to look for

sponsorship to get the Tier 2 visa. In a nutshell, if you are willing to accept rejections and not frown upon the outcome you are one step closer to getting an offer, but generally, this comes with a time range of six months.

I'm 50% inclined to both sides of the scale as I agree and disagree as you have read my story. Most of my friends who are international graduates are yet to be employed. But here's the deal, no one has a preference over another in terms of employment regarding nationality. It's completely skills based. My friend who is a UK citizen of Indian origin too struggled to find a job for six months. So, on a positive note, I could say that patience was key and my requirement was slightly met.

The visa was expensive for an international student at nearly £2,500. The application process was easy. I got mine relatively quicker than my peers in 4-5 weeks.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and received CV feedback. I practised recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres. I attended an employer event, skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair and gained access to job vacancy listings.

***'Some employers are naïve about visas, some are aware...
it's all on the candidate's strength to excel'***

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Some are naïve about the Graduate route visa, some are aware. If it's a Tier 2 sponsored company, then it's all on the candidate's strength to excel. If not, no matter how talented or skilful you are, the company isn't interested in spending money as they have limited resources and won't hire you even in their graduate roles even when your graduate visa date is longer than the end date of the contract for the scheme.

Case study 20: Anonymous, Indonesia, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Indonesia
Current visa	Graduate Route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Undergraduate degree, including integrated master's degrees (eg. BA, BSc, MBChB, MEng) Agriculture, food and related studies
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (fixed term contract, maternity cover)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Technical Co-ordinator
Employer / organisation	Global food service company
Region of your contracted place of work	South-East (England)
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through general recruitment website (Indeed, Totaljobs)

*'The visa application process was quite straightforward...
the fee was too expensive'*

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I obtained a job within three months of obtaining the visa, which is not bad considering that it generally isn't easy for an international student to obtain a job in the UK, particularly after the pandemic.

I found the process of applying for the graduate route was quite straightforward in terms of questions and information required. I obtained my visa in about a week which is quite fast. However, I personally felt that the fee was too expensive for only 2 years of visa.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received CV feedback, gained access to job vacancy listings and received feedback on application forms. Since university, I have watched webinars related to my field of study.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I think that they are not really aware that students get two years now on the graduate route. I am the only employee on a visa.

'Do not give up...you can do this, fellow graduate!'

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

It will be tough for sure, no one's saying it's a piece of cake. Make sure to apply to lots and lots of companies so that you have more chances of getting accepted. 100 is not enough. Do not give up even if you get rejection emails, every single day. By failing, you're building yourself stairs that will lead you to where you want to be. You can do this fellow graduate!

Case study 21: Roberto Perez, Mexico, Skilled Worker, postgraduate research

Name	Roberto Perez
Nationality / country of origin	Mexico
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Bristol Postgraduate research (PhD) Biosciences
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Senior Fermentation Scientist
Employer / organisation	Folium Science
Region of your contracted place of work	West Midlands
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Development and optimisation of bacterial fermentations to produce biotech
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (eg. LinkedIn, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

This visa allows me to live and work in the UK with the possibility of settlement after 5 years. Finding a job was a soul-crushing experience at moments. Many recruiters told me I filled the “profile” they were looking for but asked me to “fix” my migration situation before applying for a job.

Regarding the process of applying for a visa, the company hired a law firm to help me with the process and thus, it was rather easy for me. However, applying for a visa is always a stressful procedure. I was really anxious that the visa would be denied if I made any mistakes.

“If you haven’t left the UK in at least 12 months before applying for the visa, and you apply within the UK, it’s cheaper.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I did not attend careers service events as I was busy finishing my thesis and viva. I did receive information regarding the Graduate route. I went straight to my current work after passing my viva.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Many recruiters straight away said that I had the skills and knowledge needed but since I needed sponsorship my application wouldn’t move. One company strung me along for a month saying they would sponsor me and then changed their mind.

“If you have a master’s degree before a PhD, take an IELTS and use it as proof of language.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

If you have a master’s degree before a PhD, take an IELTS and use it as proof of language. You can be hired with a bachelor’s or master’s degree before completing a PhD. Be ready to be heartbroken at times, but don’t let that bring you down.

Check if the position requires the application of an ATAS, as this certificate can take up to 6 weeks to arrive.

Case study 22: Anonymous, Nigeria, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Nigeria
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Geospatial engineer
Employer / organisation	Power network organisation
Region of your contracted place of work	Yorkshire and the Humber
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I use software to help optimize the performance of electricity networks. I model and carry out temperature calculations on circuits to predict the likelihood of falling trees on electrical lines and to ensure that electric wires don't encroach certain heights detrimental to human lives with the use of data.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a graduate recruitment website

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The visa has made it possible to gather more knowledge working over here. Without the visa, I wouldn't have been able to work my way to the opportunity which I now have. Seeing as not all jobs sponsor visas, most organisations tend to shy away from giving you the opportunity to work with them even when you have what it takes.

The process for applying for the visa was quite smooth. I believe the only thing I was unclear about was the fact that the visa starts to count from the period you apply

for it instead of the expiration of your previous visa. Although some organisations are willing to let you work for them as long as you've got a visa, it still isn't the easiest finding jobs that are willing to sponsor. What happens when you work an organisation for the whole 2 years, and at the end they don't sponsor your visa?

“The visa has made it possible to gather more knowledge working over here.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I don't believe all employers fully understand what the Graduate route visa is. As stated earlier, some people are only hired for the duration of their visa, even if they adequately carried out all their duties properly.

Apart from the top companies that sponsor visas, other employers are quite straightforward. When they realise you require a visa, you don't even get the chance to be interviewed.

“Don't box yourself in, spread your CV across several job search engines.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Don't box yourself in, spread your CV across several job search engines. While waiting for the dream job, don't turn your back on other roles.

Case study 23: Anonymous, Pakistan, Skilled Worker, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Pakistan
Current visa	Skilled Worker (application in process)
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in the East Midlands Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Marketing
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10 I was rejected from about 5 companies, but convinced the company I was interning with to apply for a sponsor license
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract as I could not sign a permanent contract on a student visa, and my company was in the process of getting a sponsor license)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Paid Media Specialist
Employer / organisation	Digital marketing agency
Region of your contracted place of work	East Midlands
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I work in an agency where I run ads on digital platforms and develop strategies for advertising
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a contact (eg. Tutor, friend, previous employer)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It takes 5 years for an immigrant to get indefinite leave to remain (ILR) and a license lasts 4 years. That means a company and an individual have to pay twice, and it just seems unfair. Otherwise, the timeline for the company's license was fast and my own visa came within a week. It was an extremely smooth process and the online service to switch visa is extremely easy and doesn't need any extra evidence.

Once I had received my Certificate of Sponsorship, the process was quite simple. Previously, the process was in person, but my entire application was online and was processed within 5 days. The cost, however, is extremely high.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and received CV feedback. I had practice interviews and attended assessment centres. I attended an employer event, skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair. I also gained access to job vacancy listings.

I managed to get the job right after graduation, but during university I did multiple internships, short courses, and networking events.

“I feel like there is a huge resistance to hiring people who need a visa.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I would say employers' knowledge of post-study work visas is non-existent. Although the Graduate route visa was introduced and, I believe, the Skilled Worker visa was made cheaper, employers are unaware of the process and may feel daunted by it. I work for a relatively small company and the process was long for them as well. Companies may also find themselves not wanting to invest in a license without knowing if the employee they are hiring is worth it.

When employers don't want to get a license, they also don't want to hire those on the Graduate route as they know it expires after 2 years.

I have only applied to a few companies, but I feel like there is a huge resistance to hiring people who need a visa. That question is part of the application form and it instantly makes us feel alienated. Some companies also claim that they will not sponsor. It's just a given. It's hard. Employers are not educated on the process and are daunted by it heavily.

“Internships give companies and students both a chance to see if they're a good fit.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I would advise them to:

1. Do internships. Internships give companies and students both a chance to see if they're a good fit. From an employment perspective, companies can feel more confident in sponsoring as they have already seen the work of the student.
2. Be your own brand ambassador and memorise the sponsorship process, then prove your worth in an internship, keep an eye on their vacancies, and convince them to get the license. Talk them through the process and the costs, this is the only way, unless you make it into a big company.

Case study 24: Anonymous, United States, Graduate route, postgraduate diploma or certificate

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	United States
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Postgraduate diploma or certificate Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Engineer (consultant)
Employer / organisation	Engineering company
Region of your contracted place of work	North-West England
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through my university careers service

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I am allowed to work and live here which is what I wanted. It did take a little longer to come through than I had hoped. The application process was very easy and clear. I was disappointed that it took so long for my university to clear me as having passed my course, which took months even after grades were released, but I understand this may not be something UKVI can mitigate. I thought the time from application to acceptance was reasonable.

Some of the staff I interacted with were helpful. However, I was charged twice for the application fee, and there is NOWHERE to go to talk to someone about it. I emailed who I thought were the correct people to ask, and they told me they weren't. They pointed me in the right direction after I begged, but then I got a response saying, "There is only one charge from Worldpay, your case is closed". So rude! And frustrating. This statement was correct because Worldpay only processes the IHS (healthcare surcharge), but it didn't change my problem, and I had

provided screenshots of my bank statements. Then I had to dispute the charge with my card company. I got it back thankfully, but it was really stressful and a financial burden, and it probably cost UKVI money, also.

Why does the visa cost so much? How many hours are people spending on my application? It seems extortionate.

I got it back thankfully, but it was really stressful and a financial burden."

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university I received CV feedback and gained access to job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

They seem to know a little about the Graduate route, but refused to advise me because they were not knowledgeable enough.

Some employers do not mind recruiting graduates that require a visa at all. Most employers say that they can sponsor a limited amount of people, so they only sponsor people with 10+ years of experience.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Good luck and keep trying.

Case study 25: Anonymous, Taiwan, Skilled Worker, Postgraduate diploma or certificate

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Taiwan
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Postgraduate diploma or certificate History and archaeology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Client Relationship Manager
Employer / organisation	Real estate agency
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	No response
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (eg. Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Having to be tied down to one employer for the extent of your Skilled Worker visa is an archaic concept and limits your career progression within the UK.

The application process was straightforward and easy with the help of a solicitor appointed by my employer. The fees were very expensive. I had to sign a clawback agreement with my employer agreeing that should I be dismissed or willingly leave my employment anytime earlier before my Skilled Worker visa expired, I will have to pay back the visa application fee.

“Being tied down to one employer for the extent of your Skilled Worker visa limits your career progression within the UK.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I received CV feedback from my university careers service.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My impression is that employers have limited visa knowledge and wouldn't employ you for a permanent role upon realising you're only holding a two year visa. They are reluctant to even give you an interview.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Apply for as many jobs as possible.

Case study 26: Abdullah Alkattan, Saudi Arabia, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Abdullah Alkattan
Nationality / country of origin	Saudi Arabia
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Nottingham Undergraduate degree, including integrated master's degrees (eg. BA, BSc, MBChB, MEng) Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Graduate Engineer
Employer / organisation	Scottish Power
Region of your contracted place of work	North-West England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	A two-year graduate program that involves training and then different placements across the business
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (eg. Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

It allowed me to get a job as an international student upon graduation and allows me to spend the next two years here. The application was straightforward, and the visa was processed and provided very quickly and promptly. The costs, however, were quite high.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university I received support from my careers service. I had one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback, had practice interviews and attended assessment centres. I also attended an employer event, skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair. I gained access to job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

A few employers did not seem to know much about the Graduate route, but were willing to ask and learn. Others did not seem interested in knowing more about it and seemed to disregard me due to the hassle. Some had already known about the visa and did not ask me about it, including my current employer. Some are more keen than others to recruit graduates that require a visa.

“A few employers did not seem to know much about the Graduate route it but were willing to ask and learn.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Keep trying, provide all details on the visa to employers, and try not to limit your choices to specific locations.

Case study 27: Natalia Norori, Nicaragua, Skilled Worker, postgraduate degree

Name	Natalia Norori
Nationality / country of origin	Nicaragua
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Bristol Higher Degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Medical sciences
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Researcher
Employer / organisation	Health charity
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	In charge of leading the epidemiological evidence base of a UK charity
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social medial (eg. LinkedIn, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The process of getting a Skilled Worker visa was straightforward and I received a lot of support from my employer. Before I applied for the visa, I knew that the Skilled Worker route was the most appropriate one for my personal and professional goals. The UKCISA and UK Gov websites provide extensive guidance on how to complete the process.

Since I was switching from the Tier 4 visa to the Skilled Worker visa, I did not have to attend an additional biometrics appointment. The process was also incredibly quick! I got a visa decision less than one week after I submitted the application. The cost, however, was significant, especially the NHS surcharge.

“The process of getting a Skilled Worker visa was straightforward and I received a lot of support from my employer.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I have undertaken training and webinars to upskill myself.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

There are several options, so explore them in detail. The option you choose will depend on where you see yourself in the long term. It is not an easy process, but the UK job market is now more receptive to recruiting international graduates.

Case study 28: Anonymous, Indonesia, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Indonesia
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Psychology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – part-time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Special Educational Needs (SEN) Teaching Assistant
Region of your contracted place of work	Yorkshire and the Humber
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Following the teacher's instructions to support children's learning. Supporting teachers in managing class behaviour. Helping teachers to plan learning activities and complete records. Helping children who need extra support to complete tasks one to one or in small groups. Getting the classroom ready for lessons. Assisting and enabling pupil's access to learning, for example, listening to children read and reading to them.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through general recruitment websites (eg. Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

By having the Graduate route visa, I'm able to continue my work and apply for any kind of job that is suitable for me. I found it very easy to apply for the visa. The cost was a bit too much for me, however it was reasonable because it is worth it.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I attended skills enhancement sessions with the careers service. Since leaving university, I have developed my skills through volunteering.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Find as much information as you can from different references.

Case study 29: Anonymous, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree by research

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Higher degree, mainly by research (eg. PhD, DPhil, MPhil, MRes) Sociology, social policy, and anthropology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Employed – full-time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Analyst
Employer / organisation	Consulting firm
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Collect and understand data and provide recommendations to clients based on the data trends.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	More than 6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (LinkedIn, Twitter)

“The Graduate route visa has allowed the company to put me on probation before giving me the full-time visa.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I don't have full clarity as to whether I will be sponsored. I do feel much better now I have a job. Plus, I do think the Graduate visa has been beneficial since it has allowed the company to put me on probation before giving me the full-time visa. It was a very quick process, albeit a bit costly.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser. I received CV feedback. I had practice interviews and attended assessment centres, and gained access to job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My employers were very knowledgeable and knew about the options. There were several big companies that did advertise that they accepted applications from non-British/Non-EU nationals. However, some smaller companies were unaware of the new Graduate visa.

Since I had more than a year and a half left on my Graduate visa, some were very receptive to the idea that I could prove myself in this time. However, there were also several relevant jobs advertised as being only for people with the permanent unrestricted right to work in the UK. I was not able to apply for these, sadly.

I found several employers were hesitant to recruit graduates that require a visa. Some jobs would not mention anything about nationality, but, after I submitted my application, would respond that I was not eligible for the role as I am not on a permanent visa. This was frustrating as I put a lot of effort into an application only to have it rejected at the first hurdle.

“I found several employers to be hesitant in recruiting graduates that require a visa.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Apply as much as you can. Try going to careers fairs and speaking to recruiters and HR personnel from companies.

Case study 30: Anonymous, Peru, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Peru
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in South-West England Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Sociology, social policy and anthropology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11-25
Current activity	Unemployed

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

To work in the UK is not only dependent on a visa but also on having a National Insurance (NI) number, a formal address and a bank account. In my experience, getting my NI number took me two months without being able to work; because although it is legally possible to work without it, employers always require it.

I had to wait for my NI number to arrive before I could prove my address, and only with this I could open a bank account. Despite having my Biometric Resident Permit (BRP) card, opening a bank account without proof of address was complicated; only one bank agreed to open a bank account for me.

The application process was a bit complicated and lengthy; however, the positive response to my application arrived the next day. The cost is relatively high. As I can't get a job, I can't replace this investment.

“The cost is relatively high. As I can't get a job, I can't replace this investment.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received CV feedback and attended a careers fair.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I have the impression that employers are aware of the scope of this type of visa. When applying for permanent positions, they were specific regarding permanent residency requirements. Since then, I have applied for fixed-term jobs only, all of them within the validity period of my visa.

“I would recommend other students start with the paperwork as soon as possible.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

My speciality requires working with vulnerable people, so employers have asked me for my DBS, which takes a few weeks to process.

Some employers have asked for a police clearance from my home country. I had to decline some applications because I would have to go to the Peruvian embassy in London to sign a power of attorney for one of my family members to do it in Peru. For someone like me who is not working, these are costs that I cannot afford.

I would recommend other students start with all the paperwork as soon as possible: National Insurance number, bank account, DBS, and police certification from their home countries.

Case study 31: Anonymous, Nigeria, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Nigeria
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in the East Midlands Engineering Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA)
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11-25
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Food and Beverage Assistant
Employer / organisation	Conference centre
Region of your contracted place of work	East Midlands (England)
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I move furniture around the centre, set up tables for dinners and meetings, tend the bars in the facility and occasionally wait on guests.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a contact (e.g. Tutor friend, previous employer)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I graduated with my MSc in Electrical and Electronic Engineering with Distinction from a Russell Group university. I also won my department's MSc Project Prize for designing and prototyping a computer vision-based automated lane-keeping system for connected and autonomous vehicles.

Prior to that, I obtained a Bachelor of Engineering degree with Honours in the same field with about a year and a half of experience in electrical systems and power applications. Upon graduation, I thought I would be able to land a relevant career in engineering to gain more industrial experience in a developed platform by utilising the opportunity presented by the Graduate route visa. Unfortunately, it was the exact opposite.

“I thought I would be able to land a relevant career in engineering to gain more industrial experience”

I have applied for a number of jobs, mostly graduate/entry roles in my field, and have met the respective candidate's requirements. Often, I get calls from recruiters who claim to have come across my CV on Indeed and related platforms, seeing that my interest in various roles matches their requirements. I get my hopes up but then never hear from them again.

While this trend continued, the expensive cost of living in the UK kept making it difficult to keep up hope. Of course, I had no choice but to take up an unskilled job and deal with its physically demanding nature to survive while my acquired knowledge continues to waste.

It is quite heartbreaking that recruiters, or perhaps the organisations of which the recruiters are middlemen, continue to make it difficult for postgraduate degree holders to secure entry/graduate roles, demanding unrealistic years of experience when in fact, they are entry levels roles.

“I had no choice but to take up an unskilled job”

Applying for the Graduate route visa was easy, as the process was quite simple to understand and follow. The incorporation of near-field communication (NFC) technology in the UK immigration app also made it tremendously convenient, allowing us to save extra cost and time for visiting an interview location to verify our documents. The Home Office made a decision on my application within a week and my biometric resident permit (BRP) arrived in about 2 weeks.

While I think the cost of the application is fair owing to its benefits, the health surcharge was outrageous. Since I arrived in the UK, I have never had to visit my GP or use the health service. While this is subjective and case-dependent, the charge is utterly ridiculous for international students. I asked a few of my friends and none of them had bothered using this service, at least not extensively. Therefore, I believe the increase in the Immigration Health Surcharge, which occurred in 2020 was unjustifiable. It does not reflect the medical demands of international students. International students already pay over three times on average what home students pay in academic fees and living. Additionally, most of us work hard and pay taxes. We should not have to suffer, nor be responsible for covering overhead costs of the health service impacted by the Covid pandemic, because we are seeking a better education and life in the UK.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

At university, I attended a careers fair. Since leaving university, I have sought to volunteer or shadow for engineering firms, mainly to gain “more relevant experience”, but have been unsuccessful. As a result, I have had to resort to online courses and YouTube lectures to acquire skills that will keep my knowledge base active and bolster my portfolio in the hope of securing a professional and relevant role in the future.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I think employers have a good enough knowledge of the post-study visa in terms of duration and right to work. I think many of them fear that the two or three years of validity could impact their organisation in terms of workforce stability. This impression is particularly apparent with employers who do not and/or are not willing to sponsor skilled visas.

“I would advise current international students to seek other alternatives”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

If I had a way of turning back time, I would not have sought graduate employment in the UK immediately after graduation, unless I was in the medical and public health sector. The real-world situation is demoralising and quite unfortunate as recruiters are leaning towards experiences rather than academic qualifications with a good enough level of industrial exposure from internships and placements even for their entry positions.

Until better policies for graduate level and non-citizen employment have been made, I would advise current international students to seek other alternatives like progressing further in education or seeking prior experiences before they arrive to study postgraduate programmes in the UK.

Case study 32: Anonymous, Hong Kong, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Hong Kong
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North-East England Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Media, journalism and communications
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Business Outreach Representative
Employer / organisation	Business development organisation
Region of your contracted place of work	North-East England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Business development
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through general recruitment website (eg. Indeed, Totaljobs)

'I received my visa confirmation within two weeks'

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

To be fair, I am eligible for the visa and paid (almost £2,000 together with IHS fee), so the application obviously went successfully. My employer also noted my visa status and offered me a permanent role. However, by the time the visa expires, they may or may not provide a Skilled Worker visa for me.

I experienced a technical problem with my biometric residence permit (BRP) using an iPhone. The cost is £700 (visa fee) + 2 year IHS – almost £2,000, that's quite a lot for fresh graduates. Though officially it can take up to 8 weeks to process, I received my visa confirmation within 2 weeks.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

At university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser. After leaving university, I worked as a part-time customer adviser in a chemist. This experience was useful in helping me understand the local working culture and communicate with both colleagues and customers. My employer liked and appreciated this experience and therefore I think this is helpful in job hunting.

“Quite a few employers refused to offer an interview opportunity because we are not able to stay in the country permanently. This is really frustrating.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Honestly, employers have no idea about the details. It is our job to tell them it's a guarantee to have two extra years of living and working in the UK.

For a Skilled Worker visa, even HR is not familiar with it and thought the company could offer it (without knowing the company has to register to the government/there are salary requirements).

Quite a few employers refused to offer an interview opportunity because we are not able to stay in the country permanently. This is really frustrating.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Get yourself familiar with visa details, most of the employers (even HR) are not aware of the details.

Case study 33: Anonymous, China, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	China
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of in South-West England Undergraduate degree, including integrated master's degrees (e.g. BA, BSc, MBChB, MEng) Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Sales coordinator
Employer / organisation	Manufacturing company
Region of your contracted place of work	South-West England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I generate new leads and manage existing customers who buy atomic force microscopy probes from our company.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3- 6 months
How did you find your current role?	Through my university careers service

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I expected to have the right to work, and I got the right to work. I did everything online without going through any agents, it's a bit expensive but everything got done in time.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback, and practised recruitment activities, such as interviews and assessment centres. I also attended an employer event and a careers fair and accessed job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

We are a small company, so my manager only had a vague idea of visa options. Many employers tend to find other excuses when I bring up the fact that I'm on a 2-year working visa to reject my applications

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Apply for more start-up roles instead of graduate schemes.

Case study 34: Anonymous, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in the West Midlands Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Business and Management
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Unemployed It has been difficult to get a job on graduate visa. Companies are not ready to sponsor or simply reject because you are restricted to two years employment only.

“Recruiters are still not willing to hire international graduates, citing legal issues.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Recruiters are still not willing to hire international graduates, citing legal issues. Most of them will say because they cannot sponsor you in the future, they won't hire you now! Everyone is asking for UK work experience, but no-one is willing to hire.

Applying for a Graduate route visa is very simple and easy. I personally don't feel there are any issues in this process.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback and attended an employer event. I also attended skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair. I gained access to job vacancy listings.

I am part of an Entrepreneurship Club. I completed a virtual internship with a US-based startup and worked for 8 months without any pay. I am now halfway towards receiving BCS international diploma in business analysis.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Many of them are not aware of the visa and its details, like what a candidate is allowed to do. Employers simply do not want to hire graduates that require a visa. The very first thing they ask is for details of the current visa, and then very politely reject the candidate.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Keep trying and hopefully, you will find someone who will be ready to hire you and sponsor you. Keep continuing to learn new skills and improve yourself.

Case study 35: Anonymous, Costa Rica, Graduate route, postgraduate degree by research

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Costa Rica
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	Newcastle University Postgraduate research (PhD) Geography, earth and environmental studies
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11 – 25
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Data Analyst
Employer / organisation	Engineering consultancy firm
Region of your contracted place of work	North East (England)
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I collect and analyse data, plot data, write reports
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current role?	Through a general recruitment website (e.g. Indeed, Totaljobs)

“I really think that being able to have the option of a graduate visa is invaluable”.

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I am very happy with the visa, however, the wait for a response was very long at more than 12 weeks. I am aware that the reasons for this delay may be due to Covid issues. In general, the application process was easy, but it is very expensive. I had savings but waiting more than 12 weeks for a response was very stressful.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received CV feedback

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My current employer was not aware of the Graduate route visa. I knew that I was going to apply for a Graduate route visa and therefore I did not look for a job which would require sponsorship.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I really think that being able to have the option of a Graduate visa is invaluable otherwise it would be very difficult to get a job. Most of my international friends who graduated before me (July 2021) did not get a job.

Case study 36: Likhith Kakaria, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Likhith Kakarla
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	Lancaster University Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Business and management
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11 - 25
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Supply Chain Analyst
Employer / organisation	Young Foodies
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Junior account manager of 2 of the UKs FMCG brands with a joint turnover of >£5m.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I started the application very early, sometime in March 2021, and secured a job within a month. It wasn't too difficult.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I attended an employer event and skills enhancement sessions. I also attended a careers fair and gained access to the job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Employers' knowledge of the Graduate route visa is limited.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Take the risk, it's worth it.

Case study 37: Juvith Ghosh, India, Skilled Worker, postgraduate diploma or certificate

Name	Juvith Ghosh
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Bristol Postgraduate diploma or certificate (including PGCE / PGDE) Engineering
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Software Engineer
Employer / organisation	KPMG LL
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Full Stack Development and Software QA Testing
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Direct Role Search from Company Career Portal

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The visa was sponsored by the company and the cost of booking it including the health surcharge, appointment date and other responsibilities were solely handled by the immigration team of KPMG LLP under the laws and regulations of UKVI.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I received CV feedback while at university. Since graduating, I did a lot of volunteering and training within the firm, such as on LinkedIn or Plural Sight. Azure Certifications were all supported and funded by KPMG LLP.

“A clear indication needs to be provided by the candidates for the requirement of a work visa before stepping forward”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

While filling out the application for graduate roles, a clear indication needs to be provided by the candidates for the requirement of a work visa before stepping forward as this may assist the firm in visa processing after selection. Most of the firms are aware of visa terms and conditions post-study.

KPMG LLP and the member firms strongly believe in diversity and inclusion, introducing a large group of people from different backgrounds with a common interest. I found it very open in terms of hiring and onboarding of people into the firm.

“Practise well before attending interviews and seek guidance from the career service team”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

I would advise them to apply for roles as soon as they are advertised. Practise well before attending the interviews and seek guidance from the university career service team for CV/cover letter and further tips such as for salary negotiation, contract and visa rules.

Apply for roles that are suitable for your background and know the company and business well before joining.

Case study 38: Anonymous, United States, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	United States
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Scotland Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Forensic Science
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11 - 25
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Technical Support Scientist
Employer / organisation	Pharmaceutical company
Region of your contracted place of work	Scotland
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Testing stability samples, participating in testing for IDVR studies, and working on customer complaint investigations
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (e.g. Indeed, Totaljobs)

“You have to communicate with your university to aid sending your academic transcript.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The visa met my expectations because it allowed me to work in the UK, however, it was still difficult to find a job since most companies did not want to offer me a permanent position. I found that many employers would rather give individuals a temporary contract, that way they don't have to go out their way to give a work visa.

The application process for the visa was quick and generally easy to understand. The only problem was that it was not clear that the university has to confirm

completion of my studies to UKVI before I could apply. It is not mentioned in the instructions on how to apply for the program.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Employers had no idea about the visa. I had to explain my situation during interviews. Even though I got offered a position, I couldn't work until I had my visa. I believe you must make an impression on the employer to allow them to take a chance on you for the position. My position could have been given to anyone that did not require a visa to work in the UK.

“Individuals will have higher chances if applying for contract positions vs temporary positions”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Explain your situation to the employer. Individuals will have a higher chance if applying for contract positions vs temporary positions. Especially as employers could give you a permanent position if they liked you during your temporary position.

Case study 39: Ahmad Asad, Pakistan, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Ahmad Asad
Nationality / country of origin	Pakistan
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	Exeter University Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Business and management
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Unemployed

“If you don't get the job within a month, the process feels very frustrating as you are being rejected because you are not local and are on a temporary visa.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I thought a Graduate route visa would open the doors of employment for me, but it hasn't. Most of the responses I get after applying for a job and getting an interview is that as you are on a Graduate visa, you will not be able to work after our training program of 12-24 months as we are not going to sponsor in future. If you do have any other way of getting a visa along with this job, then we can consider you.

The process of applying for a Graduate route visa is straightforward as you can do it from home, and there is no need to go to any centre. The application takes 30-60 minutes on average. It's really good to see how UKVI verifies, and you don't have to provide a long list of documents. Secondly, the process is also very smooth; you get the response on your application within a week, and you receive BRP (biometric residence permit) a week after the response.

The cost is expensive as we students pay a lot of fees in terms of tuition and living costs already and then we have to pay extra for the Graduate visa, including the international health surcharge. After this, if you don't get a job within a month, the process feels very frustrating as you are being rejected because you are not local and are on a temporary visa.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback, attended an employer event and gained access to job vacancy listings. I need experience in the UK market which will introduce me to the industry. I

believe that entering into the industry is the most challenging part of the career progression.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

They don't have much information and are not in the mood to support.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Start applying for jobs five months before you graduate.

Case study 40: John Aanuoluwapo, Nigeria, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	John Aanuoluwapo
Nationality / country of origin	Nigeria
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Portsmouth Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Business and management
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Unemployed

“The process of applying for the Graduate route visa was very easy”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The process of applying for the Graduate route visa was very easy, with little to no complications. The cost was a little too much to pay all at once, but at the same time, the cost layout had been made before concluding my studies, so I could save every month to help with the payment. My application was approved after 24 hours, and I got my BRP (biometric residence permit) a few days after the approval.

The visa has not met my expectations. I expected employers to be more open to international students with the new route. I think it's a challenge for international graduates in the job market.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback, attended skills enhancement sessions and gained access to job vacancy listings. I am currently undertaking a short course.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Some employers do not have a clear understanding of how the Graduate route works. Employers are reluctant to provide sponsorship after the Graduate route visa ends. They prefer candidates with a work permit that does not have a restriction or a time limit.

Employers find it difficult to give graduate opportunities to candidates with a Graduate route visa because it lasts two years. They do not want to invest in candidates that might not have the opportunity to stay back after the programme.

Employers that want to offer candidates a short-term contract are more open to the Graduate route visa.

“Start applying for jobs before your programme ends.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

My advice would be to start applying for jobs before your programme ends. Apply with intent to companies that can help you grow and are willing to sponsor you if you plan to stay.

Case study 41: Abjeet, India, Graduate route, Postgraduate diploma or certificate

Name	Abjeet
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University of Bristol Postgraduate diploma or certificate (including PGCE/PGDE) Data Science
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Associate Consultant
Employer / organisation	Capco
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current job?	Through social media (eg. LinkedIn, Twitter)

“Companies simply don’t want to hire people whom they cannot keep for the long term.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Many companies are still not considering the Graduate route visa as the way to work in the UK. 80% of the companies simply don’t want to hire people whom they cannot keep for the long term. Most interviews were followed by the question – what happens after two years?

The visa process was pretty straightforward. I got the instructions directly through the government website. The cost is relatively very high compared to other countries providing similar visas. After all the documentation and verification of the details, the visa submission was easy. I received the visa within five working days and the Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) within 15 working days.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser. I received CV feedback, undertook recruitment activities, such as practicing interviews and attending assessment centres. I attended a careers fair and gained access to job vacancy listings.

“Employers have very minimal knowledge of the visa.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Employers have very minimal knowledge of the Graduate route visa. Most employers ignore applications from students with this visa.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Try to explain to the employers as much as you can that this visa is a great opportunity for them to hire talented students and ensure that your work will definitely define your further stay in the in UK.

Case study 42: Anonymous, Kenya, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Kenya
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Scotland Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc, MBA) Architecture, building and planning
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25-50
Current activity	Unemployed

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Although the Graduate route visa was meant to make getting a professional job easier, most employers are still looking for people with permanent right to work in the UK. The application process was easy and I got a response within 10 days. The cost is however quite high. I feel like we're being double charged for healthcare since we are taxed when we work but still have to pay the yearly NHS surcharge.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received CV feedback. Since graduating, I have been undertaking free weekly online classes and training courses.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

My impression is that very few employers know about the Graduate route as it is still quite new. Most employers are still looking for graduates with permanent right to work in the UK. Some make it pretty clear in the job advert, and in some cases it has been the first question an employer asked me in our first correspondence. Most of the times I have been passed over for a job at the last stage of recruitment in favour for a British or settled EU citizen.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

To start applying while still in university and get as much UK based experience in the industry they want to work in while in university.

Case study 43: Adnan, Pakistan, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Adnan
Nationality / country of origin	Pakistan
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	Birmingham City University Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Logistics and supply chain management
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25 - 50
Current activity	Unemployed

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Most of the companies I interviewed with are not accepting the Graduate route. Getting the visa after finishing my studies wasn't difficult, but the cost is high.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I had support from my university careers service, including a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser. I received CV feedback and gained access to job vacancy listings. Since university, I have achieved several certificates on LinkedIn.

“When I told an employer about my visa, they simply refused to hire me.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Most of the employers I've interviewed for didn't know about the Graduate route visa, I had to explain it. My impression is that employers do not recruit applicants on the Graduate route visa. I secured one job, but when I told them about my visa, they simply refused to hire me.

Case study 44: Anonymous, Nigeria, Skilled Worker, postgraduate degree by research

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Nigeria
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in the East Midlands Postgraduate research (PhD) Academic Rheumatology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1-10
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Lecturer
Employer / organisation	University in South West England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Engaging in research and teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students. Co-supervising PhD students, personal tutorship, academic mentoring and other administrative roles
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current job?	Through a general recruitment website (Indeed, Totaljobs)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Nothing has changed based on what I originally knew. However, there are professions classified under the shortage occupation list, but lecturers in those fields are not classified under the same list. This seems unexpected because it is tougher to get qualified lecturers in those fields than professionals to work in those fields. An individual has to become a professional first before acquiring higher degrees to lecture in that field.

The application process was straightforward and very simple. It was surprising to see that I did not have to supply hard copy documents or visit a centre for biometrics. The time from submission of my application to when my visa was approved was very short (less than 12 days) with the standard visa application (not priority). The cost was enormous as I had to pay over £4,500 for a five-year visa.

“The cost was enormous.”

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I undertook recruitment activities, such as practicing interviews and attending assessment centres. I attended skills enhancement sessions. I have also started a postgraduate certificate programme in academic practice in order to obtain a teaching qualification.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Right to first refusal until they see that you have a lot to contribute and improve their organisation.

“Start building your profile early. There are lots of short course that can prepare you for any field you would like to explore.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Whilst still studying, view adverts, understand the requirements, and start building your profile early. Also, for those thinking of lecturing, utilise central short courses for modules on Preparing to Teach in Higher Education. There are lots of short courses that can prepare you for any field you would like to explore. Attend interviews whilst you're still studying as this will help prepare you for future interviews.

Case study 45: Anonymous, China, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	China
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg. MA, MSc. MBA) Media, journalism and communications
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Content Executive
Region of your contracted place of work	London
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Produce and manage content including blogs, research reports and videos; prepare and attend external events; contribute to company content strategies.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3 – 6 months
How did you find your current role?	Through social media (Linkedin, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The graduate visa helped me gain the full right to work in the UK and thus secure a role. The application process is clear and it only took three days for me to receive the decision. It was then easy to prove my right to work in the UK to the employer.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I attended skills enhancement sessions. I think the university could provide more support for graduates in the several months after they graduate, *activities might include extra check-in/skills sessions or short-term work experiences.*

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Employers are aware that international students can gain the right to work by applying for this visa and therefore generally require that they already hold this visa before formally offering a job. It is more complicated for employers to employ international students than home students, so I think they are generally more cautious about that.

Case study 46: Anonymous, Colombia, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Colombia
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Politics
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25 – 50
Current activity	Unemployed

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

Even though I have the right to work in the UK, most employers hold their offers back when they know eventually I will need sponsorship. The application process was easy. However, I had to pay for the biometrics appointment. It wasn't clear why some applicants had the opportunity to submit their biometrics by their phone, whilst others had to book an appointment. During my application process, I never had the option to do it by myself.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser, received CV feedback and attended a careers fair.

“Employers prefer candidates that do not need any immigration support.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I haven't reached many interview phases therefore I cannot give an accurate comment about how employers react to it. My main impression is that employers prefer candidates that do not need any immigration support, eg., visa sponsorship, as this makes the hiring process more complicated. This is particularly challenging for small to medium size companies.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Apply as early as you can and try to get volunteering experience.

Case study 47: Anonymous, Hong Kong, Skilled Worker, postgraduate diploma or certificate

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	Hong Kong
Current visa	Skilled Worker
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in Yorkshire and the Humber Postgraduate diploma or certificate (including PGCE/PGDE) Biosciences
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	1 – 10
Current activity	Employed – full time (temporary contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Research Assistant
Employer / organisation	University
Region of your contracted place of work	South East England
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	I work in a genetics lab and am responsible for making transgenic models
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	Less than 3 months
How did you find your current role?	Through the university job website

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The visa allowed me to get the job I wanted. The application process is straightforward and everything went smoothly. My only complaint would be the cost of the application, which was nearly one month's salary.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and received CV feedback.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

I found employers' visa knowledge to be extensive and their attitude supportive.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Improve your language skills, be fearless and apply for jobs that interest you.

Case study 48: Anonymous, China, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	China
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Undecided
University, level of study and programme of study	University in North East England Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA) Languages and area studies
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	11 - 25
Current activity	Unemployed

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I am unsure if it will help me find full-time employment. The application was an easy process, the cost was very high.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

While at university, I received support from the careers service. I had a one-to-one appointment with a careers adviser and received CV feedback. I undertook recruitment activities, such as practicing interviews and attending assessment centres. I attended skills enhancement sessions and a careers fair and I gained access to job vacancy listings.

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

It is my impression that as employers know international students are eligible for the Graduate route visa, many are not willing to provide Skilled Worker visas anymore.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Plan early and avoid the Graduate route if you can get a Skilled worker visa sponsorship.

Case study 49: Anonymous, India, Graduate route, postgraduate degree

Name	Anonymous
Nationality / country of origin	India
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly disagree
University, level of study and programme of study	University in the West Midlands Higher degree, mainly by taught course (eg MA, MSc, MBA) Marketing
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	Over 50
Current activity	Unemployed

“The job market is extremely tough and employers expect employees to stay for a long time.”

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

The application was self-explanatory and it was easy. I understand that the Graduate route visa doesn't necessarily guarantee employment in the UK and it gives a fair chance at employment, when ticking the box of right to work.

The job market is extremely tough and employers expect employees to stay for a long time. If the employer doesn't offer a visa sponsorship after the Graduate route visa expires, it makes them doubt hiring the candidate.

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I gained support from the university careers service, including having an appointment with a careers advisor, receiving CV feedback and practising recruitment activities such as interviews and going to assessment centres. I attended employer events, skills enhancement sessions and careers fairs. I gained access to job vacancy listings.

The Careers in Business team at the University of Birmingham is very helpful to the students and they offer end-to-end support for candidates. They have experts in the field and offer exceptional lifetime career services.

Since university, I have taken up courses on LinkedIn and Coursera to enhance my technical skills, as this could give me an edge over UK applicants.

“I have taken courses to enhance my technical skills.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

They have information on visas, but employers favour UK candidates more than international candidates.

My impression is that employers are not willing to sponsor a visa for candidates, especially for administration or marketing roles.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Apply for the visa and keep searching for jobs.

Case study 50: Felicia Singgih, Indonesia, Graduate route, undergraduate degree

Name	Felicia Singgih
Nationality / country of origin	Indonesia
Current visa	Graduate route
Are your expectations of your Graduate Route visa being met?	Strongly agree
University, level of study and programme of study	Newcastle University Undergraduate degree, including integrated master's degrees (eg BA, BSc, MBChB, MEng) Psychology
How many roles have you applied for since leaving university?	25 - 50
Current activity	Employed – full time (more than 35 hours a week) (permanent contract)

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

Job title	Insights Analyst
Employer / organisation	Levercliff
Region of your contracted place of work	Remote working. I visit the office in Wales every few months,
Briefly describe your role and your main responsibilities	Category management, reports and consumer research (qualitative and quantitative research) in the food and drink industry. I research, data analyse and create reports, presentations, programme questionnaires and analyse them.
Time between the end of your course and start date for your current role	3-6 months
How did you find your current role?	Through social media (eg. LinkedIn, Twitter)

THOUGHTS ON YOUR VISA

I am able to apply for any job without the need to get a work sponsorship. It was very easy to apply and get approval for the visa, everything was done online and no documents needed to be sent through the post. It only took two weeks for me to get the approval and another week to get my new Biometric Residence Permit (BRP).

SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

I gained access to job vacancy listings at university. I started my own small business on Etsy which sparked interest with many employers.

“I’ve had a number of employers turn me down because they’re not sure about my visa arrangements.”

EMPLOYER KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

Not a lot of employees know about the visa options for international students which is frustrating. Despite not needing a work visa, I’ve had a number of employers turn me down because they’re not sure about my visa arrangements.

A lot of companies are not open to sponsoring a work visa which really frustrates me. The moment I mention possibly needing a work visa after the Graduate route visa, they turn me down.

“Connect with other international graduates.”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS SEEKING GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN THE UK?

Connect with international graduates who have graduated in the past few years and have got a job in the UK. Don’t lose hope if an employer turns you down because you’re not a British citizen, we all understand how you feel, you’re not alone. Keep applying and I’m sure you’ll find a role made for you!

Although you need to find sponsored employment after the two-year Graduate route visa expires, if the job application form asks “Do you need a work visa/sponsorship”, answer “no”.

Only explain your visa when you’re on an interview call with them. If you say “yes” on the form, a lot of employers won’t even give you a chance.

2023 UPDATE

Since providing this case study, Felicia took up a role as Commercial Analyst at WARP Snacks until March 2023. Felicia will embark on a Masters in International Business Management (Sustainability) in September 2023.