

4 February 2014 Last updated at 00:37

Graduate job vacancies predicted to 'rise by 10%'

By Patrick Howse BBC News, Education reporter

Big growth sectors include IT and telecommunications, energy and banking

Employers are expected to recruit many more graduates this year, according to the Association of Graduate Recruiters.

Numbers of vacancies rose by more than 4% last year, with the AGR predicting a rise of 10.2% in 2014.

The rise reflects growing business confidence and economic growth, the association says.

Big growth sectors include IT and telecommunications, energy and banking, but a rise in public sector recruitment is also predicted.

Stephen Isherwood, the AGR's chief executive, said the results were "welcome news".

"There are some sectors looking at double digit growth for 2014," he said.

'Right mix'

However, he warned that graduates still needed to "think carefully" about their job applications, and make sure they understood "what an employer is looking for".

"What this doesn't mean is that graduates should be any less focused on their career search," he said.

"We know that, even through the darkest days of the recession, our members reported unfilled vacancies because they couldn't find graduates with the right mix of skills and attributes."

The National Union of Students (NUS) welcomed the figures, but the union's president, Toni Pearce, said the improvement in job prospects for graduates did little to address the "endemic problem of youth unemployment".

"The lack of graduate jobs is in fact one issue under the more catastrophic umbrella of youth unemployment," she said.

"Graduates will always survive better than non-graduates, who are in fact twice as likely to be unemployed, according to NUS research," she added.

"A rise in graduate jobs does not mean that the wider and more pressing issue of youth unemployment will just disappear."

Universities Minister David Willetts said the "substantial rise" showed that "confidence in the UK economy is growing and businesses really value the skills the UK's first-rate graduates can bring to their companies".

"A degree is still one of the best routes to a good job and a rewarding career," he said.

"The increased number of graduates has been met by increased demand from employers which is why we have made the historic commitment to remove the cap on the number of people who could go to university by 2015-16."

The AGR surveyed 202 of its members in the UK across 19 sectors, and found they expected to provide over 23,000 graduate vacancies in 2014.

The survey was conducted online between December 2013 and 10 January 2014.

School leavers

The association carries out two surveys per year.

For the first time its winter survey also looked at school-leaver recruitment programmes.

It found that almost 55% of members were currently actively recruiting school leavers, even though they had traditionally concentrated on graduate recruitment.

A further 15% said that school-leaver programmes form part of their future recruitment plans.

But the AGR says this does not mean employers are replacing graduate vacancies with school-leaver positions.

"Businesses are investing in a range of different programmes to attract and recruit a diverse range of young people, from apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships, to school-leaver training leading to professional qualifications," the AGR's Stephen Isherwood said.

"It is reassuring that many employers continue to invest heavily in emerging talent," he added.

Asked why they were recruiting school leavers, employers said these recruits entered different positions to those filled by graduates.

Many employers reported they had always offered opportunities to school leavers and also that they wanted to help support social mobility.