



Universities and Higher Education:

A guide to good employment
for students and graduates

GREATER MANCHESTER
**GOOD
EMPLOYMENT
CHARTER**

“In Greater Manchester we want to help our university students and graduates to understand what good work looks like. We want you to be empowered, have high expectations and challenge employers who do not offer good work.

We also want you, as future managers and leaders in the city region, to know how to create good work.

By learning about what good employment looks like, you will be in a better position to make informed choices about who you want to work for and how you want to work. Partly driven by the impact of the pandemic, the world of work has changed. Our perception and priorities around work have shifted. This has been particularly evident in the expectations of people starting out in their careers and working lives.

In Greater Manchester, we have developed The Good Employment Charter to help raise the bar and elevate employment standards.”

Andy Burnham,
Mayor of Greater Manchester



What is the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter?

The Charter is a voluntary membership and assessment scheme, which aims to improve employment standards for all organisations of any size or sector across Greater Manchester.

The Charter sets out seven key characteristics of good employment. Employers make a commitment to uphold the highest set of standards in these characteristics and demonstrate actions have been taken to ensure the comprehensive criteria has been met.

Questions to ask an employer to discover if a job is good or not.

Students and graduates work part-time to fund studies, undertake work experience or placements during their studies and get jobs on graduation. Whether you are already in a job or looking for one, there are questions you can consider to help you evaluate whether a job is good or not and is one you really want to get or keep.

Some (but not all) of these questions may even be suitable to ask at a job interview. Of course, suitable questions will vary depending on the role you are going for. You may also be able to find answers to important questions in other information provided by employers or when using review sites (or other exploratory activities) as part of your career research.

Below are suggested questions, linking to each of the characteristics of The Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. You might feel better prepared for an interview if you select two or three questions from the list that you feel would be appropriate to ask. Alternatively, these questions may be relevant to ask your current boss, or to help you in choosing what jobs to apply for.

The characteristics of good employment

The seven criteria of good employment in the Charter address: secure work; flexible work; pay; engagement and voice; people management; health and wellbeing; and recruitment. In the sections below, we define each good employment criterion before going on to suggest related questions. Questions are phrased as if asking an employer.

Secure work

The employer offers secure work, giving employees security over their income through transparency in communications and contracts, guaranteed minimum hours, and regular review of these terms. Employees are thus given the ability to effectively manage their work and non-work commitments.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- Will I receive a contract prior to my start date?
- Will my contract outline my hours of work?

- Will my contract state my pay?
- If I work shifts and a shift gets cancelled at short notice, will I still get paid?
- Am I guaranteed a specific minimum number of hours?

Flexible work

An employer enables flexible working by designing jobs in a way that, wherever possible, are flexible in where people work, when people work, and how much people work. They also provide clarity on the possibility of job flexibility from the outset of employment.

Employees have access to a clear flexible working policy that encourages flexibility, gives opportunity for staff to request flexible arrangements, and offers regular review of such arrangements.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- Do you have a flexible working policy?
- Are there any arrangements in this role to work flexibly (e.g., re location, hours)?
- If I work remotely, will you provide the equipment that I may need? E.g., laptop
- What options for flexible working do you offer?
- Am I able to request a flexible work pattern at the start of my employment?
- In general, how far in advance will I know my hours of work?
- What arrangements are there if I need time off unexpectedly due to an emergency or caring responsibilities?
- What is the normal location of this job?
- How much travel is expected in this job?

Pay

An employer pays staff the Real Living Wage as set out by the [Living Wage Foundation](#).

The Real Living Wage is an independently calculated hourly wage that covers the basic living expenses of an employee and their family. It is voluntary, and higher than the government minimum or government living wage. It takes into account factors like housing, food, transport, and aims to provide a decent standard of living.

Employers will also ensure that they will ideally provide sick pay from day one of absence.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- Do you pay the real living wage?
- What are the terms and conditions relating to holiday pay and sick pay?
- If I am off sick, will I receive sick pay?
- Is sick pay paid from the first day of my absence?
- Are there any exit fees associated with the role if I leave early? If so, what are these based on?
- Are any of the earnings from this job

performance-related or commission-based? If so, what is the basic pay?

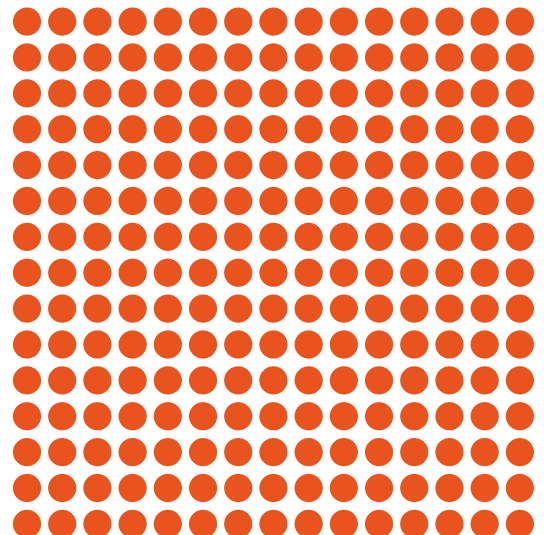
- Is there scope for pay progression in this role?

Engagement and voice

An employer utilises employee engagement and voice, building a confident, empowered workforce. Employees are involved in decision-making and managing change through effective communication and consultation, and trade unions are recognised and positively engaged with where applicable.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- Do you hold regular staff meetings?
- Will I have regular meetings with my line manager?
- Do you have employee forums that I can get involved with?
- Do you welcome staff suggestions from all employees?
- Is there a recognised trade union?



Recruitment

An employer has excellent recruitment practices, involving prospective employees in an inclusive, fair recruitment process that is accessible, enables both equality and equity, eliminates unconscious bias, and supports the building of a diverse workforce.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- If I am selected for interview, is it your policy to share interview questions beforehand so that I can best prepare myself?
- Will I get any feedback on any tests I do as part of the recruitment and selection process?
- Can I claim expenses for attending an interview with you? (if I need to travel)
- Before arriving for interview, will I be informed of who to ask for at reception?
- If I am successful, what does onboarding look like?
- Will you inform me of recruitment timescales so that I might know when to expect to hear the outcome?
- Following the recruitment process, will you provide me with feedback about whether I am successful or not?

People management

An employer ensures excellent people management and development of their workforce, giving employees a clear set of organisational values and expected behaviours along with the right to a workplace free of bullying and harassment.

With an emphasis on organisational development, all staff are provided with training that enables them to perform effectively in their role and develop skills and experience that supports progression.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- Do you provide training and development opportunities?
- Am I allowed time within work to carry out work related studies/training?
- How do you recognise employee achievements?
- Are there opportunities to progress within the organisation?

Health and wellbeing

An employer actively supports employee health and wellbeing. Employees have the ability to thrive in a workplace where adjustments are made, and individual needs recognised.

This employer acknowledges that mental and physical health need to be considered in relation to an organisation's wider values and objectives. Strategies are in place and internal and/or external support is available to facilitate ongoing discussion, training, and monitoring.

Questions you might ask the employer:

- Do you have a health and wellbeing strategy?

- Do you arrange events for employees to socialise?
- Do you provide health and wellbeing training e.g., mental health awareness?
- Are conversations relating to health and well-being encouraged?
- Do employees have access to occupational health support or an employee assistance programme?

How to recognise good work if you don't have a conventional employer?

Some students and graduates earn money through freelancing, self-employment or gig work. In such circumstances, you can ask yourself questions about what work you are prepared to do or not. These questions are inspired by the seven criteria in The Greater Manchester Employment Charter.

Security and Pay

Questions you might ask:

- Am I being fairly paid for what I do based on a Real Living Wage hourly minimum? If not, how long will you keep trying and what advice can you get to increase profitability?
- Am I being paid promptly for services or products provided and do my clients have a policy of paying on time? Is there anything I can do to speed things up, like invoicing more quickly, negotiating payment timescales at the outset and chasing overdue payments?
- Am I prepared to work for less than the minimum wage to gain experience or exposure? If so, how long do I want to do this?
- Is my client really my employer and should they take me on as an employee?
- Am I fully aware of my tax and national insurance liabilities if not working as an employee?
- Do I know the rights I have to equal treatment, regardless of my work status? And do I know the rights I don't have by not being an employee?

Wellbeing and Career Management

Questions you might ask:

- Is self-employment and freelancing the norm for the field I am in? If so, have I got access to good information about running my own business?
- If I am combining self-employment with other forms of work, is this portfolio a balance that works for me?
- Am I satisfied with my work conditions (you may prefer to work independently, and is the trade-off worth it if your pay is currently low or insecure)?
- Does this work add valuable experience to my CV? Am I continuing to learn or am I not able to learn from others due to working on my own?

- Do I feel respected and treated fairly in the work I do?
- Do I feel safe at work? How might I be protected if I have an accident at work?

Engagement and Voice

Questions you might ask:

- Is there a relevant trade union or membership body I can join to give me advice and support if working independently?
- Do I have a supportive network of people working in a similar way to me?
- Who can I talk to if I am unhappy about anything to do regarding work?
- If doing gig platform work, how does an employer monitor what I do? Am I happy with their mode of surveillance?

- Actively participate in your workplace. Look for chances to engage in meetings, surveys and employee voice.

Remember that your first few years of working are a great chance to gain experience and an understanding of the world of work. However, if things feel uncomfortable or you feel compromised in any way, seek advice.

What can you do to make your job 'good'?

'Good work' can depend on a reciprocal relationship. Think about what kind of employee you are and how to make the most of your working self, your role and your relationships at work.

Your working self

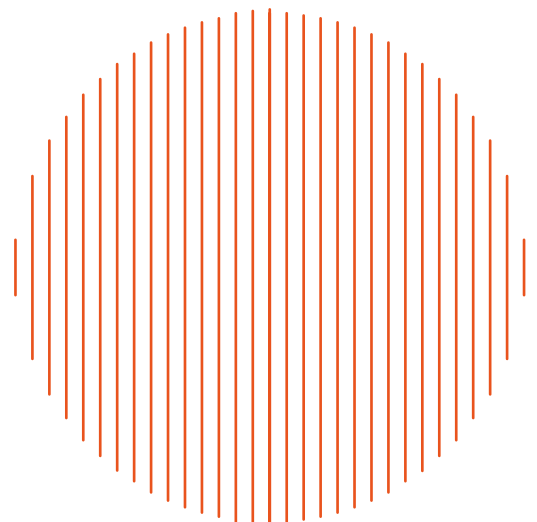
- Find out what is expected of you, for example, dress code, behaviour, time management, showing initiative and behave appropriately.
- Don't be afraid to try new things – you won't always get it right, but you can learn as much from mistakes as you can from successes.
- Keep a check on your own health and wellbeing at work and speak up if you have any problems.

The work you do

- Challenge yourself to learn more and to do the job better. Even if your job is just a temporary role you can develop valuable transferable skills for your future career.
- Wherever possible, prepare yourself for tasks at work. But remember, you will sometimes have to think on your feet.
- Familiarise yourself with key policies and contract details to inform yourself of your working rights and responsibilities.

Working with others

- Identify people you can talk to - at work and about work. Treat others with the respect you would want for yourself.
- Take opportunities to learn from others with more experience. Ask for feedback and if you don't know something just ask.





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Supported by



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