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Published: 7:00PM BST 21 Sep 2010

University graduates 'taking jobs in call centres'

Almost a third of call centre workers have university degrees, it emerged today, as students scramble to find decent jobs during the economic downturn.



Graduates are increasingly taking jobs in call centres, according to research. Photo: REX FEATURES

Office bosses reported an increase in the number of applications from former students amid a drop in the number of well-paid graduate positions.

The disclosure follows the publication of figures showing that thousands of students are finding work in bars, supermarkets and building sites after failing to secure posts in graduate professions.

According to the latest study, one-in-three call centre staff now has a university degree compared with 25 per cent in 2009.

Almost half of call centre managers said they had seen a rise in graduate applications.

The findings – in a study by Hays Contact Centres – follows a drop in the number of skilled staff taken on by leading firms in recent years.

Geoff Sims, managing director of Hays Contact Centres, said: “Call centres are becoming more demanding of their staff so it isn't surprising that the profession is attracting more people with degrees, particularly when we are still faced with a challenging economy and high unemployment levels.”

The report – based on a survey of almost 300 call centre staff – also found that university graduates increasingly saw call centre work as a career.

Simon Thorpe, programme director at Top 50 Call Centres for Customer Service, which represents the industry, said: "There are record numbers of graduates looking for work this year and it's encouraging that so many are attracted to the call centre industry.

“UK call centres offer excellent training opportunities and competitive salaries, plus the opportunity for graduates to develop their careers and move up the ladder, both within the call centre and across the wider organisation.”

The findings come amid rising competition for jobs linked to graduates' degree courses.

A study by High Fliers Research earlier this year found average of 45 students was applying for every graduate position. Some 270 were vying for position in the consumer goods industry, it was disclosed, compared with more than 100 for media jobs and 75 for positions in finance and investment banking.

But the report warned that the rise “simply restores recruitment to roughly where it was in 2006”.