

SHL.

An Exploration of Graduate Profiles by Industry

Adapt your hiring strategy based on the availability of graduate strengths in your industry.





Introduction

As the graduate job market continues to evolve and economic conditions grow increasingly uncertain, employers are looking to more stable trends and tangible data to build their early careers hiring strategy. Organizations need to fully understand the graduate talent that they are hiring in order to build the workforce needed for the future.

Do graduates entering the job market have what it takes to thrive? How does the graduate competency profile differ by industry? And are organizations providing graduates with the right opportunities to succeed?

11 Graduate Competencies that Lead to Success

SHL has conducted extensive research to identify the key competencies that lead to success in graduate roles. By combining data from Occupational Information Network (O*NET)¹ – such as knowledge, skills and abilities, and work

activities – with the job analyses conducted with our partnering organizations across the globe, we were able to identify **eleven key competencies** (Table 1) that are predictive of success in graduate roles across a variety of work industries.

Table 1. The Competencies Measured by SHL’s Graduate 8.0 Job-Focused Assessment

Competency Name	Definition
Takes Responsibility	This measures the extent to which the candidate is accountable for work outcomes and accepts responsibility when things go wrong.
Fosters Team Cohesion	This measures the extent to which the candidate energizes the team and keeps them cohesive.
Maintains Good Working Relationships	This measures the extent to which the candidate puts effort into developing good relationships with others.
Analyzes Information	This measures the extent to which the candidate identifies key factors and integrates information to understand data or situations.
Learns Quickly	This measures the extent to which the candidate picks up new information and techniques easily.
Generates New Ideas	This measures the extent to which the candidate creates innovative approaches.
Uses Time Efficiently	This measures the extent to which the candidate manages own time and delivers work on schedule.
Works to High-Quality Standards	This measures the extent to which the candidate completes every task with a high degree of quality.
Adapts to Change	This measures the extent to which the candidate accepts and adapts to changes without difficulty.
Copes with Setbacks and Criticism	This measures the extent to which the candidate stays positive when facing difficulties and does not dwell on negative events.
Strives to Achieve	This measures the extent to which the candidate sets demanding goals and makes a determined effort to meet or exceed them.

¹ O*NET OnLine. (2022). National Center for O*NET Development, Occupational Information Network. Retrieved December 2022 from www.onetonline.org

Following the Data

We analyzed recent test scores from almost 20,000 candidates applying to jobs in different industries (Figure 1) to better understand how graduates were scoring against the competencies that are critical for success. Data from SHL's Graduate 8.0 Job-Focused Assessment was used to identify the key areas of strengths and areas for development in graduates.

Using this data, organizations can adapt their hiring, onboarding, and development strategy to maximize the effectiveness and productivity of their graduate cohorts.

Figure 1. Industries Represented in Sample (n=19,547)



Overall Strengths and Areas for Development

Our findings from a previously published [white paper](#)² showed that the typical profile for a graduate entering the workforce today is characterized by three key areas of strength: **Takes Responsibility, Copes with Setbacks and Criticism, and Adapts to Change**, and three areas for development: **Analyzes Information, Strives to Achieve, and Uses Time Efficiently** (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Typical Graduate Profile



Our findings challenged the perception that this generation tends to display lower resilience than the generations before them.

To build on these findings, we took a deeper look at segmented data to understand how graduate competency profiles differ across nine industries and highlighted strengths or development areas that vary from the wider group data.

² SHL (2023). Graduate Competencies Report: Get the most out of your graduate recruitment in 2023. Retrieved February 2023 from shl.com/resources/by-type/whitepapers-and-reports/understanding-graduate-competencies/

Key Findings by Industry



In the **Automotive** sector graduates are **1.5x** more likely to score highly on **Learns Quickly** relative to the typical graduate.



Graduates applying for roles in the **Utilities & Energy** sector are **2x** more likely to score highly on **Fosters Team Cohesion** relative to the typical graduate profile.



A unique strength for the **Consulting industry** is **Working to High Quality Standards**.



A unique area for development for the **Government and Public Sector** is **Generating New Ideas**.



Graduates in the **Financial Services, Insurance, and Banking** sector, the **Food and Beverage** sector, and the **Professional Services** sector show strengths and development areas consistent with the typical graduate profile (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Comparing Graduate Competencies by Industry



Competencies are displayed in rank order. Shaded competencies are competencies uniquely identified for a particular industry but not globally.

Key Takeaways

What are the implications of this research to organizations hiring graduates in different industries?

The availability of the 11 competencies that SHL has identified as predictive of success in graduate roles (Table 1) varies across industries. Our findings can support talent leaders in building a robust talent strategy despite the volatile market. The insight from this research can be used to inform graduate attraction, hiring, onboarding, and development initiatives.



1

Adjust your hiring criteria

Adapt your strategy with laser focus. If you are hiring graduates in the retail industry, you now know that candidates are less likely to **Learn Quickly**. As such, you want to identify and engage candidates that possess this competency early on in your hiring process.

You might also adjust your search strategy and hiring criteria to remove subject-specific degree requirements in favor of particular competencies. This way, you are expanding your talent pool and capturing suitable graduates while increasing inclusivity and diversity.

2

Provide stretch opportunities

Trust that your graduates can thrive in the ever-changing world of work. **Taking Responsibility, Adapting to Change** and **Coping with Setback and Criticism** have been consistently identified as strengths for graduates across all industries, showing they are more resilient than often given credit for. Give your graduates opportunities and challenges that allow them to learn and grow.



3

Leverage the candidate data collected in the recruitment process

Understanding where graduates in your industry need support can help you shape your onboarding and development initiatives. If you are recruiting graduates in the Government and Public Sector, knowing that **Generating New Ideas** is an area for development should prompt you to emphasize innovation in your learning and development strategy.

In the Manufacturing sector, where **Maintaining Good Working Relationships** is more likely a challenge, you might consider increasing investment in team building activities or introduce team-based incentives.

Take the same approach with other development areas, such as **Using Time Efficiently**, which is something that graduates across all industries could improve on.

Why SHL?

SHL's rich history of market-leading scientific research and innovation is able to help organizations today better understand the talent around them. We assess over 35 million candidates each year, and over 1.5 million of them are graduates.

SHL's Graduate Solution will help you form a comprehensive view of every hire, which in turn helps you

build a thriving talent marketplace to ensure your people can deliver on the business's goals.

With our state-of-the-art, valid toolkit, organizations can identify current and future potential through easy-to-interpret talent insights. These tools have been uniquely designed to be an engaging experience for candidates.



Hire, onboard, and develop the right graduate talent with SHL.

Learn more shl.com/graduate.

