

Considering the Defence industry

Introduction

The defence industry directly employs approximately 146,000 people in the UK and covers research, development, production and maintenance of military equipment and facilities. The technologies developed within this industry are often at the cutting edge of science and have far ranging applications beyond the defence field.

This information sheet covers civilian roles in the defence industries. For information about a career in the Armed Forces, see [Army](#), [Royal Airforce](#) or [Royal Navy](#).

Related areas include the aerospace industry, telecommunications, energy, nuclear, IT, manufacturing, cyber security and intelligence. For information on these industries start with resources such as [Job sectors](#) pages and [Prospects](#) (click on Jobs and work experience and Types of jobs).

Is this the right sector for me?

There are nationality restrictions in many parts of the defence industry, but if you are not a British national, there may still be options for you working on areas which are not a risk to national security.

Think about how much you would like to use science, engineering or computing skills in your employment. Would you like a job which is fairly practical or more theoretical? Are you interested in developing new technologies using the most up to date research?

Do you have any ethical concerns about this sector? The defence industry offers job opportunities in a range of business functions as well as the scientific and technical areas.

Researching the sector

There are organisations of all sizes in the UK defence industry. Here are some of the larger ones:

- [Leonardo](#)
- [Airbus Group](#)
- [AWE](#)
- [BAE Systems](#)
- [Dstl](#)
- [MBDA](#)
- [Ministry of Defence](#)
- [Qinetiq](#)
- [Rolls Royce](#)
- [Thales](#)

Work experience and developing skills

Several of the large organisations in the sector offer year in industry placements and summer internships. If your department offers sandwich degrees, speak to your placement officer about available opportunities. See individual company websites for more information and also look at the information sheet, [Getting work experience in science and engineering](#).

There are usually several defence organisations present at the Autumn careers fairs – speak to company representatives about opportunities to gain experience with them.

The [Defence Engineering Science Group](#) (DESG) offers a student sponsorship scheme

Note: some internships offered in this sector may be unpaid. Before starting an internship, you should be clear about the length of the internship, pay and conditions, what you will be expected to do, and what you will gain from the experience.

Routes into the sector

Companies often recruit new and recent graduates onto graduate development programmes. These typically last from 18 months to 2 years, and require a 2:2 degree or above, some ask for a 2:1.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) offer various different graduate programmes:

- The [DESG](#) graduate scheme is for people wishing to use their engineering or science with the MoD and its industrial partners
- The [Civil Service Fast Stream has a science and engineering branch](#), if you wish to be involved developing public policy surrounding science and technology
- The [Defence Commercial Graduate Programme](#) is for people interested in building a career in procurement

Direct entry is also possible into science and engineering roles, especially with the smaller companies in the industry. A post graduate qualification is not essential for a career in this industry, but as with all technical roles, a PhD may enhance opportunities for progression.

Look for vacancies on:

- [Handshake](#)
- Company websites
- Specialist recruitment agencies, eg [Gradcracker](#)

Useful resources - careers websites

- [Job sector pages](#) (see Civil service and government for careers in security - introductory information about working in the sector, including training, employment and useful links) –
- [York profiles and mentors](#) (search by under the Job sector heading) –
- [TargetJobs Engineering](#) – useful article about the defence industry, aimed mainly at engineers
- [Institute of Physics](#) careers web pages include a section, Armed services and defence solutions
- The [IET](#), the professional body for engineers has sector pages for engineers working in particular specialisms to share information
- The [Maths Careers](#) website has a section for mathematicians planning an engineering or science career, which includes the defence industry, especially in the ‘Who employs mathematicians?’ part of the site

york.ac.uk/careers

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Please note: The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. Careers and Placements cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.

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