

Finance Careers



The finance sector offers a very wide range of opportunities with quite different characteristics. It is therefore important to do your research to understand where you might fit.

Accounting



Accountants must be numerate (of course!) but also have good “people skills” such as communication and teamwork.

While accounting, economics and maths graduates make up a large number of applicants to accounting roles, a significant proportion are from degrees that are apparently unrelated, such as English, science and languages. Many role adverts do not state a preference for any particular type of degree.

There are two main opportunities in accounting. The first is working for a professional services firm (either small or large) that provides accounting services to other companies. The larger players in this industry include Deloitte, EY, KPMG and PwC. Qualified accountants working in this way are called **Chartered accountants**. Trainees in this area usually work towards the ACA qualification, through [ICAEW](#) (England & Wales), [ICAI](#) (Ireland) or [ICAEW global](#). It is normal for your employer to pay for your qualification.

[Inside Careers](#)

[ICAEW training vacancies](#)

Another type of accountant, a **Chartered management accountant** works in the accounting & finance departments of any other kind of company (e.g. a food manufacturer, a TV company, a university). In-house finance teams like this prepare

periodic financial statements including profit-and-loss accounts and budgets.

They provide a support service to the business by working with all departments and the management team to help make financial decisions and make sure spend stays in line with budget.

To become a chartered management accountant you must complete the CIMA qualification. In contrast to a chartered accountant working for a professional services firm, chartered management accountants work in a more long term, strategic way as they do not jump from client to client. It is normal for your employer to pay for your qualification.

[CIMA qualification](#)

You may also wish to consider the role of public finance accountant, working for a public body such as local government. Public finance accountants do the [CIPFA qualification](#).

Investment banking

Investment banks fund the operations of major businesses through mergers, acquisitions, issuing stocks, securing loans and other methods. Roles in investment banks are highly sought after as they typically pay well (with the potential for exceptionally high earnings for high performers). Consequently applicants will need a very strong academic record and experience – ideally, relevant experience (through internships). The hours of work can be long and the working environment extremely competitive and high-pressured.

While many people talk of wanting a career as an “investment banker” in reality there are numerous roles: investment analyst (provides research), Trader (executes trades), sales (connects the traders with clients), relationship managers (build client relationships), risk managers (analyse market risks), operations analysts (doing research and analysis in the “back office”), compliance officer (ensuring compliance with regulations), fund manager (managing client funds), numerous tech roles (programming, support, etc), equity research (advising

fund managers) and mergers and acquisitions (M&A – advising on structural change for organisations). With this many roles to choose from it is important to do in-depth research when considering career choices.

Prospects job profile: [Operational investment banker](#)

Prospects job profile: [Corporate investment banker](#)

Prospects job profile: [Financial trader](#)

Other banks

Retail banks are those that we all recognise from our personal lives: HSBC, Barclays, First Direct, Metro Bank and many others. The key areas of opportunities include relationship management and branch management.

Prospects job profile: [Retail banker](#)

Actuarial



Actuaries use financial modelling and statistical skills to help companies meet the challenges they are facing. Most actuaries work for insurance companies and spend their time calculating risk. Actuaries can also be found in investment and pensions companies.

To be an actuary you will need exceptionally good numerical skills. Most successful applicants are from numerate degrees such as maths and economics.

- Prospects job profile: [Actuarial analyst](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Actuary](#)
- [Inside Careers: Actuaries](#)
- [Directory of Actuarial Employers](#)
- [Actuarial Education Company \(ActEd\)](#)
- [Government Actuary's Department \(GAD\)](#)

Insurance and pensions



Insurance is a huge and varied industry helping everyone from the house owner wanting to insure their house contents to a multinational company wishing to insure against the risk of terror attacks.

Pension companies manage truly staggering amounts of money and, although often not perceived as the “coolest” industry, offer a wide range of exciting graduate careers.

- Prospects job profile: [Insurance account manager](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Insurance broker](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Insurance claims handler](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Insurance risk surveyor](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Insurance underwriter](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Pension scheme manager](#)
- Prospects job profile: [Pensions consultant](#)

To discuss your next steps in finance, book a careers appointment at careersportal.royalholloway.ac.uk

You can also connect with Royal Holloway alumni working in the sector on the Royal Holloway LinkedIn page.