



University  
of Exeter

# Future Leaders and Innovators Graduate Scheme



## A Guide to Writing your Application

Thank you for your interest in the University of Exeter, Professional Services, Graduate Scheme!

We're here to support you in writing an application that evidences your skills and experiences.

This guide provides essential advice to help you present your best self and increase your chances of progressing to the Assessment Centre stage.

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# General Guidance

## Understand the Scoring System

- The application is evaluated across two main questions, each with a maximum score. For your best chance at progressing, ensure each answer is complete and relevant.
- Each question has a set word limit: 600 words for the first question and 250 words for the second question. Use this word count fully to provide thorough answers.

## Proofreading and Clarity

- Quality matters - check spelling, punctuation, and grammar before you submit. Reading your answers aloud and having someone else review your application (friends, family, or your University Career support team) can help ensure your responses are clear.
- Take breaks before proofreading: Sometimes stepping away from your work makes it easier to spot mistakes when you return.

## Stay Relevant to the Questions

- Read each question carefully, and make sure your answers specifically address them. Straying from the prompt may impact your score, so double-check that your response is directly related to the question.

## If Needed - Use AI as a Helper, not a Substitute

- AI is best for drafting opening sentences and polishing your language —not for writing your answers for you.
- We want to hear from you; your lived experience and your voice.



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## Specific Question Guidance

**Q1:** We are looking for you to provide examples of the following skills.

- Exceptional organisational skills and attention to detail
- Ability to work under pressure, prioritise tasks and adapt to changing priorities and timescales, to meet important deadlines
- Experience of and ability to manage diverse workloads
- Networking and developing contacts
- Excellent written communication skills

Keep a Balanced Word Count for Multiple Points; this question prompts you to discuss several examples and skills, so make sure each point gets equal attention. Remember, you have a limit of 600 words in total for this question.

**Q2:** We are looking for you to provide evidence under our Behavioural Characteristic, “Positive and creative approach to problem-solving”.

Ensure you read the University of Exeter’s Strategy 2030 for context and further alignment of the Higher Education landscape. This will give you an idea of the challenges we are working to overcome.

As our Graduate Scheme is set out to hire the Future Leaders and Innovators of Higher Education we would like you to evidence how you overcome a challenge or solved a problem.

We are looking for evidence-driven examples, not statements that you have the above skills, experience and understanding.

# How to Structure Your Answers: The STAR(R) Method

Using the STAR(R) framework can help you create concise and relevant answers.

**Situation:** Briefly describe the context.

**Task:** Explain what needed to be accomplished.

**Action:** Share what you specifically did.

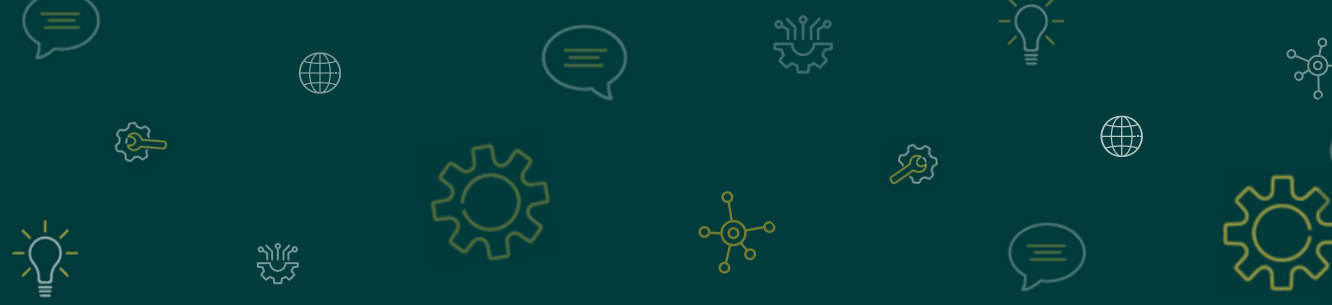
**Result:** Provide measurable outcomes.  
Use stats if available, even if they're estimated.

**(Reflection):** End by reflecting on what you learned or how it relates to the role.

**Use Quantifiable Results;**  
Where possible, quantify your achievements to make your responses more impactful. E.g., if you helped grow a club or manage a project, estimate the increase or improvement ("This increased engagement by 30%").



**STAR(R) Example:** 'In my university's LGBTQ+ society (Situation), I was responsible for increasing member engagement (Task). I created a targeted social media campaign (Action), increasing membership by 40% in one term (Result). Reflecting on this, I learned the importance of clear communication, a skill I'll bring to the Graduate Scheme at UoE. (reflection)'




## Showcase Diverse Experiences

We aren't expecting you to have extensive career experience.

We value examples from all areas, including:

- Academic projects: Highlight any group work, research, or leadership.
- Extracurricular: Describe your involvement in clubs, societies, or volunteer work.
- Employment or Internships: Part-time, full-time or temporary work experience can provide valuable evidence of your skills.
- Personal Life: Time management, commitment, and other skills gained from hobbies or family roles.



Using a variety of examples adds depth and breadth to your portfolio.

## Make Sure You Apply!

If you're considering applying but feel uncertain, go for it!

Even if you don't have all the experience you think you might need, remember that it's a graduate scheme. We're not looking for a fully formed career history but rather for potential and alignment with our values. This application process is a learning experience in itself, and applying is a great way to develop your skills further - **there's nothing to lose by trying!**

# Additional Support

For further assistance:

- Contact your University Career support team for personalised advice on your application.
- Contact Meg Towers, Graduate Scheme Manager and Line Manager of the position for any further information you require.
- If you have questions specific to the programme, please email [graduate-scheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:graduate-scheme@exeter.ac.uk).

Reasonable Adjustments:

We strive to make this process as inclusive as possible.

Let us know if you need any accommodations at any stage by contacting [graduate-scheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:graduate-scheme@exeter.ac.uk).

At the University, we review our People data regularly and are striving to be representative of the communities that we serve.

In review of our People and EDI data, we have noted that there is disproportionate under-representation of colleagues from Black, Asian and Other Ethnic Minority backgrounds in Professional services roles and this is an area of focused improvement in our [Race Equality Charter Application](#) and one that meets the criteria for [positive action](#) under Section 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010. We have undertaken an equality impact assessment on the scheme and believe that this is a proportionate way of addressing the under-representation and would not create a disproportionate negative impact on any other protected characteristics under the Equality Act and will be additional to our duties under the Disability Confident Scheme.

We will be piloting this positive action approach for this cohort of the Graduate scheme and evaluate this fully prior to the next cohort or wider application of positive action for ethnicity.