

Graduate Development Programme 2021 – Frequently asked questions

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About Ofwat and the culture

How would you describe the company culture and work environment?

Ofwat has a dynamic and forward-thinking culture, with amazing offices in London and Birmingham and an excellent agile working environment. There's a great team and we are driven by our SAILOR values, which drives the Ofwat culture and brings us together as a community.

We actively encourage autonomy, collaboration and innovation and there is a real adult culture fostered by trust, flexibility and respect and as soon as you join us you will experience that straight away. Everybody comes together to help each other to formulate that forward thinking and culture of trying things differently, being ourselves at work.

Finally, we are a learning organisation and we actively promote and embrace new ways of working. We want everybody to have the freedom and our people to work in a smarter way to get a real work-life balance. Our focus on learning means that there are great opportunities to learn and develop. We support our people to drive their own development and help shape their journey by looking at what you need as our people have different skills requirements and career aspirations.

Ofwat People Director

Ofwat is a really friendly place to work. A lot of people reach out to you when you first start and if you ever need any help people are very open to taking the time to meet and have a chat. In the graduate community there are a lot of people who arrange coffee catch ups to introduce themselves to you.

Economist Graduate

What makes Ofwat stand out as an employer?

Ofwat is a very people-centric organisation. We don't just say that we're people-centric, we mean it and our people focus is embedded in everything we do. In addition to our people-centric approach, Ofwat is forward thinking and ambitious for the size of the organisation and the sector we work in. We punch above our weight and want to be the very best. Ofwat is a creative and learning focussed organisation which ensures innovation and new ways of working.

Ofwat People Director

What are the challenges to working at Ofwat (if there are any)?

It's a reasonably complicated sector so there can be a steep learning curve when getting to grips with the sector and our regulatory approach – but you get great

support along the way. As an organisation, Ofwat is a relatively small organisation but very ambitious and committed to its mission so it can be challenging and hard work at times. Ofwat people are very giving of their time and will therefore be on hand to support you and encourage you to learn quickly.

Senior Economist and previous Graduate

What challenges does Ofwat face?

There are big challenges and exciting opportunities in the water industry and big change is needed if we are to have affordable, environmentally sustainable and reliable water services into the future. The biggest threat is from a growing population that is using more and more water, as well as extreme weather from climate change and this all means that we could run out of water, or through pollution and over abstraction, damage our precious rivers and coastal eco-systems to the point of no return. Addressing these challenges while keeping service levels high and water good value is mission critical to the well-being of society.

Ofwat is central to this important agenda. As the regulator we drive the performance and behaviour of water companies but that is not all, increasingly we use our expertise to influence government policy and we join forces with the Environment Agency, consumer bodies and others to help achieve our goals. We have a clear strategy for getting the industry to do the very best that it can for customers and the environment now and into the future and we are on track to achieve our goals. Ofwat is a great place to work if you want to make a difference and help address some of society's biggest challenges.

Chief Executive

What is being done currently by policy to encourage transformative change and innovation in water companies?

Ofwat's [Time to act, together](#) strategy focusses on transforming the performance of water companies and the wider industry and that transformation is brought about through innovation.

There are a couple of recent examples of Ofwat driving innovation in the water industry, such as Ofwat's recently launched Innovation Fund, an innovation competition where we are asking companies to compete for a pot of money to fund projects that are going to solve the challenges of the future – climate change, population growth and running out of water.

Ofwat also sets the water companies really tough stretching performance targets. If they deliver on those targets they get rewards for their shareholders and if they fail they pay penalties. Those targets focus water companies on improving their performance. We have recently seen, for the first time in two decades, water companies bring leakage down simply because Ofwat set some very stretching

expectations of company behaviour and performance which is a good example of how regulatory tools can really make a difference on the ground and do so quite quickly.

Ofwat's raison d'être is to achieve transformation not just for customers today, in terms of better service and better value, but by also getting the companies thinking much more actively about the future and solving the challenges so that our children and our grandchildren can enjoy safe, clean water and be confident that that isn't ruining the environment as we use it.

Chief Executive

How do you ensure that the water companies you regulate follow through on guidelines set out by Ofwat?

We use a range of tools to ensure companies are delivering for their customers and the environment. Primarily, we: encourage behaviours through incentive mechanisms and, where we consider appropriate, competition; publish reports comparing companies' performance in various areas, and; engage and persuade. In limited circumstances we may also seek legally binding undertakings and issue fines when we have serious concerns. Our website provides examples of all of these tools.

Principal, Performance and Outcomes

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the amount/type of work that Ofwat and its employees do?

COVID has been a big event for us, but a positive one in many respects. In March 2019, when we went into lockdown, it was incredibly busy for Ofwat. We moved to working remotely and made all of the technological adjustments required so that everybody could work from home easily. We were fortunate that Ofwat has great technology, so we were well prepared for this change.

We also had some really big technical and regulatory challenges alongside to moving to working from home. The water industry has a Retail market for businesses in water and as a lot of businesses closed the retailers' revenue streams seized up and there was a need for emergency action from Ofwat to think about how we keep these retail businesses alive. It was a tense, fast paced piece of work. We were looking to keep the businesses alive without lumping a whole load of costs on to customers. Most of the industry is price regulated, Ofwat sets a price cap, and COVID meant that we had a queue of water companies saying that surely we can't live within the limits you've given us Ofwat, COVID changes everything. We very quickly had to put some principles and a process in place for thinking again about what the appropriate approach is to regulating the water industry in the context of COVID.

In many ways Ofwat has become stronger as an organisation as a result of COVID. We have seen the organic, burgeoning of online initiatives to keep us connected such as online yoga, baking sessions and also cocktail drinking as a social activity! Ofwat's strong community spirit and support for well-being sets us apart and has found its way

into our online working arrangements. The Future Lab online initiative facilitated online discussions about the future of work. Future Lab created some podcasts and brought a presentation to our Board to think about where we go as an organisation post COVID, how we use the office, what does all of this mean for diversity and where will it take us long term.

Chief Executive

How does Ofwat handle diversity and inclusion?

We have a big focus on Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Ofwat and are creating our new EDI strategy to be launched later this year. We are committed to making sure that we are a truly diverse and an inclusive employer and reflective of the customers and communities we serve. We have a great campaign internally at the moment, creating a great buzz, “being ourselves”. We want to create an environment where truly all our people come to work and feel comfortable to bring your whole self to the workplace where everybody is treated with respect and dignity and empowered to thrive.

Ofwat People Director

About the Graduate Programmes

How many graduates are you looking to hire?

We have increased the numbers this year and are looking for circa 10 graduates across the three programmes; Economics, Data and Policy.

Ofwat Recruitment Team

The Graduate Programme mentioned rotation across different areas of work, what does that entail? How are placements allocated on the programme? Is there the opportunity to state a preference for a specific placement/project?

We have a number of rotations available across our Graduate Programmes. The rotations for each graduate will be designed on the basis of us trying to find the right developmental work for you. The ideal would be that there would be four rotations. You may stay within the same cluster, but just do a different type of work. Sometimes you will go across different clusters.

Preferences will be taken into consideration where possible, where we have a business need, and we will be training you to be the type of person we need for our organisation. We won't be forcing you to do something you don't like, but hopefully you understand what we do and you find that attractive. As you work through each rotation our aim is to develop you and to give you opportunities to develop the skills that we think you need to work with us permanently.

Chief Economist and Graduate SLT Champion

What types of work do graduates do at Ofwat?

There is no typical day for a graduate at Ofwat! The work is diverse and as Ofwat is relatively small, graduates get a real chance to get stuck in and have an impact on the work that Ofwat does and delivers. You get to rub shoulders with some very knowledgeable people who are really happy to help you learn, grow and develop and get great exposure and visibility, with a chance to collaborate with other regulators and bodies too.

Graduates have worked on many different projects and there are lots of opportunities to get involved in interesting work. Graduates are involved in Ofwat's price controls, working on the design and delivery from complex analysis or high-level design. Graduates can also work on setting strong incentives to encourage water companies to provide better levels of service, through designing and delivering mechanisms that encourage the right behaviour and performance. Other areas of work that graduates have been involved in is policy work, making sure that customers are protected through the right measures, ensuring sector resilience, encouraging innovation and supporting work around the environment. Graduates have also been involved in casework, investigating companies when things are going wrong. The responsibilities vary from leading a piece of work to doing some of the more administrative tasks around project management and coordination, but either way you get the chance to get stuck in and have a real impact!

Previous Graduate

What are the working hours?

A typical working week is 37 hours with fantastic agile working practices.

Ofwat Recruitment Team

How is the training structured throughout the programme and what does it normally look like? (33 mins)

The learning opportunities for graduates at Ofwat are really fantastic. There is more training than you can handle! We have a lot of internal training, what we call "Ofwat Essentials", which goes across all of the pieces of work that we do from economics to policy development, water and wastewater treatment, 2050 water supply challenges to name a few. We also do a lot of external training which is often centrally organised. For example, we are currently running an externally facilitated series of training sessions on resilience and another course on EDI which are both open to all. You will also have access to Civil Service Learning which is a platform providing access to a wide variety of training and development opportunities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Subject to availability, you are encouraged to go out and find training that is relevant to you, that meets your needs but can also serve the organisation. We encourage continuous training and will support you by taking your feedback and understanding your development needs. Not to mention, every single day you will learn from the people that you work with.

Bart Schoonbaert, Director Environment, Public Value and Governance

Ofwat is a learning organisation with learning in its core principals so there are plenty of developmental opportunities internally and externally. Not only will you learn on the job, and there is plenty of that, you are encouraged to propose any training that you would like to do to help you develop or conferences you may want to attend through universities or industrial groups. There are internal teach-ins on technical aspects of the job and as an economist we also have a GES subscription, so all of the GES training is available to us. We also have access to training from other regulators through the UKRN group, the network of regulators.

Additionally, Ofwat runs a series called “Tiny Talks” where colleagues offer 5 minute talks every week, which shows what a knowledge sharing organisation Ofwat is. Everyone is willing to support others and contribute to help everyone increase their knowledge.

Senior Economist, previous Graduate

What is the onboarding and training like for graduates starting?

Ahead of starting in Ofwat, you will be allocated a buddy, who'll provide a lot of the day-to-day support before and after you start. You'll also be allocated a People Leader, who'll look after your learning and wellbeing. On your first day you'll have a one-day induction with all of the graduates followed by online e-learning, meetings with relevant departments and your team. There is ongoing learning and development through formal training and opportunities to attend internal and external training, conferences, site visits to the water companies etc. Some of the training will vary depending on your profession and you can also book your own training if you see the right opportunity.

Senior Economist and previous Graduate

What are the graduates' greatest achievements?

My greatest achievement was something that I really enjoyed working on – delivering a new corporate governance framework for the sector. As well as developing policy skills and working in a very new area for Ofwat, it also provided an opportunity to present on the topic to senior leaders in the water sector.

Senior Economist and previous Graduate

One of my best achievements was the Graduate Challenge, a project promoted and owned by the graduates from start to end – it was a brilliant opportunity to shape a project outside of the normal rotations, develop a broader skillset including learning from the other graduates, and have a real impact on the organisation.

Senior Economist and previous Graduate

My greatest achievement was delivering a teach-in to the wider organisation on an area I had been working on. As I was in charge of organising it, I learnt how to manage different personalities within a team and ensure everyone was clear about their role. The project also helped me to build on my presentation skills, such as learning how to communicate difficult concepts in a simpler way.

Economist Graduate

What is the potential at the end of the graduate scheme?

Our goal is for you to have a long, successful career with us, however there is no guarantee of a job offer at the end as this depends on the successful completion of each of your rotations on the Graduate Programme, your final gateway assessment and the roles available within the business at the time. The scoring of each rotation will determine the outcome of the level in which you are operating at upon successful completion of the graduate programme and will underpin the level of a job offer if an opportunity is available in the organisation. Past graduates have achieved Associate or Senior Associate positions and we have seen many graduates progress beyond this, over time.

Ofwat Recruitment team

The application process

What advice have you got for carrying out a video interview?

Firstly, please do make sure that you have checked that your tech works – have a practise and check that the sound and camera are working as they should. Make sure you're in a quiet spot where you won't be disturbed and remember that we are looking for you to be authentic, and yourself, so please do try to relax!

Ofwat Recruitment team

Is the video interview 'live' on teams/zoom etc or do we film our answers to questions and upload them?

The video interview is not live. You film your answers to questions within the video interview platform itself, (Shortlister), at a time to suit you, and they will be automatically uploaded.

Ofwat Recruitment team

For those of us who have completed our interview, when do we hear back?

Frequently Asked Questions

We will be back in touch with you within 10 days of you completing your video interview (sooner if we can) and will keep you updated at all stages throughout the process.

Ofwat Recruitment team

How can I ensure that I get a place in the assessment centre?

You can definitely give yourself the best opportunity by aligning yourself and your skills to both the organisation and the role itself. We want to discover more about you during the recruitment process, so be yourself, be honest and demonstrate your motivation and understanding of Ofwat and the role.

Ofwat Recruitment team

What are the nationality requirements to apply?

All nationalities are welcome to apply, as long as you fulfil the criteria we have in order to work in the UK.

Ofwat Recruitment team

Are activities such as volunteering/sport outside of the workplace seen as valuable to the company?

Yes, we are looking for graduates with a strong academic background in the right subject area for the programme you're applying for, but if you would like to use volunteering or sport examples in your application then please do as they can help demonstrate your teamwork, interaction, motivate and drive.

Ofwat Recruitment team

I still have questions – can I speak to someone?

Of course, you can speak to our recruitment team on 0121 713 6951 or email ofwat@cohesionrecruitment.com