

2026

# Careers Guide

Monash Accounting Students' Association





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# President's Address

The Monash Accounting Students' Association (MASA) is a non-profit, student-led organisation dedicated to bridging the gap between university students and industry professionals in the accounting and business world. Our mission is to create meaningful opportunities that help students connect with industry leaders, develop professionally, and thrive personally within a supportive and ambitious community.

Led by a passionate and driven team, MASA is committed to fostering an environment where students can build lifelong connections, explore diverse career pathways, and make the most of their university experience.

As President for 2026, I am incredibly honoured to lead an organisation that continues to empower students and inspire growth. Accounting is more than just balancing sheets, 'debits' or 'credits', it's a foundation that opens doors to countless opportunities across banking, finance, consulting, private equity, and beyond. MASA aims to showcase the versatility of an accounting background while equipping our members with the confidence, skills, and network to succeed in any field they choose.

Through our networking nights, professional development workshops, and social events, MASA strives to help students build their careers while growing as individuals. Whether you're discovering your path, seeking industry insights, or simply looking to meet like-minded peers, MASA is here to support and guide you every step of the way.

If you see our team around campus or at one of our events, don't hesitate to say hello, we'd love to meet you! Stay connected with us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and keep an eye out for updates on our upcoming events and initiatives.

University is a time to learn, grow, and create unforgettable experiences. While the journey can be challenging at times, you're never alone, MASA is here to help you navigate, connect, and reach your potential. Together, let's make 2026 a year of opportunity, connection, and success.



Parsa Aghajani  
President



# Application Dates

Graduate recruitment in Australia runs well ahead of your actual start date, so mark these windows now. Applications for most Australian graduate programs cluster around two main waves each year: February to April is usually the biggest intake window for large national programs, with July to September being a second wave of top-up roles.

## **Application Periods**

Big 4 graduate program application dates in Australia typically open in February and March for intake the following year, with major firms like PwC opening around late February and KPMG deadlines landing in early March. Some firms, like Deloitte, open again in July for new or remaining opportunities.

Smaller firms may also open on a rolling basis. For these firms, it is important to get your applications in as early as possible, as spots close once filled.

## **When to Prepare**

It is recommended to begin preparation at least a couple of months before applications open. By being well prepared, this can save you a lot of stress and also enable you to write higher quality submissions. Start now and reach out to other Graduates and staff at your target firm for firm-specific advice.

*Tip: Set calendar reminders for your target firms' opening dates now. The February–April window is easy to miss while you're settling back into the semester. Use the first few quiet weeks of the year to shortlist employers and get your CV and cover letter ready before it's live.*



# Career Pathways

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An accounting degree is one of the most versatile tickets you can hold — it's not just a straight line into audit. Here's a snapshot of the main directions graduates go, and the two qualifications that can accelerate any of them.

## The main pathways

- **Audit & Assurance** — examining financial statements and internal controls to make sure businesses are compliant and reliable. Structured, deadline-driven, and the most common Big 4/mid-tier graduate entry point.
- **Tax** — advising on compliance and tax planning, and helping clients navigate Australian and international tax law. Detail-oriented work with strong specialisation potential (see CTA below).
- **Consulting** — solving business problems around strategy, operations, and HR. Project-based rather than cyclical, and a natural fit if you enjoy variety over routine.
- **Financial Advisory** — supporting major financial decisions: M&A, valuations, restructuring, transaction support. Highly sought-after and competitive to break into.
- **Corporate Finance & Banking** — capital management, investment banking, budgeting and forecasting. A common pivot point from Big 4 financial advisory into industry or investment banks.
- **Risk & Compliance** — identifying and managing operational, financial and regulatory risk, and strengthening governance. Growing fast as regulation and technology both increase in complexity.
- **Management Accounting** — working inside a business (not a firm) on budgeting, forecasting and performance — the core commercial/industry pathway.
- **Forensic Accounting** — investigating fraud, disputes and financial crime. Niche, but in demand and often law-adjacent.
- **Government & Not-for-Profit** — Treasury, the ATO, or NFPs needing the same technical skills applied to public-interest outcomes rather than private clients.
- **Entrepreneurship & Business Advisory** — many accounting graduates end up advising small businesses directly, or start their own.

You don't need to lock in one of these now. Most graduate programs run rotations through 2–3 service lines in your first year or two, specifically so you can find the one that fits before committing.



# Career Pathways

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## How CA and CPA fit in

Whichever pathway you choose, a professional qualification is what turns "accounting graduate" into a recognised, portable credential — and it's expected, not optional, in almost every one of the pathways above.

- CA (Chartered Accountant, CA ANZ): the standard in audit, assurance and public practice. Involves the Graduate Diploma of Chartered Accounting (9 subjects) plus 3 years of Mentored Practical Experience.
- CPA (CPA Australia): broader in scope, strong in commercial, industry, government and management accounting. Involves 6 subjects plus 36 months of relevant experience, with more flexibility in timing.

## Why it matters for your career:

- It's usually the gate to promotion past the first 2–3 years — most firms expect you to be qualified or actively studying to move beyond Associate/Senior Associate level.
- It signals technical credibility that a bachelor's degree alone doesn't, especially if you later want to move across pathways (e.g. audit into advisory, or industry into consulting).
- Both are internationally recognised, which matters if you're considering working overseas or through a secondment.
- Most employers subsidise the cost and give paid study/exam leave — so the main investment is your time, not your money.

## Bottom line:

The pathway determines where you work; the qualification determines how far you can go once you're there. Choosing between CA and CPA usually comes down to which pathway you're in rather than one being objectively "better" — audit and public practice lean CA, commercial and government roles lean CPA.

*Tip: Take taxation and audit units at Monash if you can — they keep both your CPA elective options and your general employability open, regardless of which pathway you end up choosing.*

Turn the page for more information on a tailored pathway to kickstart your career at BG Private!

## At university

### FOUNDATION

#### Study Accounting with purpose

A B.Com or B.Bus majoring in Accounting is the standard entry path. Go beyond the curriculum: develop a working understanding of SMSFs, SMEs, family groups, and how high-net-worth clients structure their finances. Demonstrate genuine curiosity through independent research. Your academic results matter — strong marks open doors to graduate roles.

### EXPERIENCE

#### Get client-facing experience

Internships and part-time roles involving clients or customers count. Earning a promotion in a part-time role signals commitment and strong interpersonal skills. Even retail experience builds soft skills that matter. In Advisory roles, your ability to build relationships is just as important as your technical ability.

### FURTHER STUDY

#### Plan your CA or CPA pathway early

Familiarise yourself with the CA or CPA requirements before you graduate. BG Private funds study fees and provides exam leave once you join — arriving with a clear plan already in place sets you apart from other candidates.

### NETWORK

#### Connect with the BG Private team

Attend careers events and follow up each conversation with a specific, personal email. Read BG Private's website, insights and socials so you can speak to our philosophy and approach — not just accounting in general.

### THE APPLICATION

#### Apply early with a tailored application

Graduate roles typically open in September and October — apply as early as possible. Reference BG Private specifically; generic applications are filtered quickly. Keep your CV to one page and highlight relevant skills and experience. Make it easy for the recruiter to see you are a great match.





## INTERVIEW

### Prepare for both technical and behavioural questions

Dress professionally — look like you belong in the industry. Expect questions on your accounting knowledge and scenario-based questions. Draw on real examples when answering behavioural questions. If you don't know something, say so; we want to understand the depth of your experience, not catch you out.

## Once you join

### FIRST YEAR

### Ask questions, deliver consistently

Communicate proactively in your first 6 months. Begin your CA or CPA with BG Private's support. At your 6- and 12-month reviews, come prepared with specific examples that demonstrate your growth and impact, and consider joining the mentoring program.

### PROGRESSION

### Build client trust and internal visibility

Progression is built on technical excellence, consistent delivery, and genuine client relationships. Volunteer for new opportunities — visibility within the firm matters as much as the quality of your work.

**For Today, Tomorrow & Beyond.**

+61 3 9810 0700

info@bgprivate.com.au

8301 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn VIC 3122

bgprivate.com.au

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# Service Lines

The Big Four accounting firms are the largest globally and are widely recognised for their extensive graduate programs, opportunities, and diverse service offerings. These firms are the following: EY, Deloitte, KPMG, PwC.

These firms help organisations improve performance, manage risk, meet regulatory obligations, and make informed strategic decisions by providing them with expert advice across a range of business functions, including accounting, finance, taxation, consulting, risk management, and legal compliance.

Alongside the Big Four are mid-tier accounting firms, which primarily service privately owned businesses, not-for-profit organisations, listed companies, government agencies, and high-net-worth individuals. They offer graduate programs across many of the same disciplines as the Big Four while typically providing a more personalised working environment. Some of Australia's leading mid-tier firms include: Grant Thornton, Pitcher Partners, William Buck

## Service Lines

Although service offerings vary between firms, most accounting and professional services firms are organised into several core service lines.

### Audit and Assurance

Audit and Assurance professionals work in a more structured and timely manner. They examine financial statements and internal controls to ensure organisations are reliable and comply with accounting standards and regulatory requirements.

### Consulting

Consultants help organisations solve complex business problems by analysing operations, identifying opportunities for improvement, and developing practical strategies. These professionals work in a project-based environment in areas such as strategy, operations and human resources.

### Financial Advisory

Financial Advisory teams support organisations with significant financial decisions such as mergers and acquisitions, business valuations, restructuring, transaction support, and corporate finance.

### Tax and Legal

Tax professionals have more detail-oriented tasks, advising clients on taxation obligations, regulatory compliance, and tax planning strategies. They help businesses navigate Australian and international tax legislation while identifying opportunities to improve tax efficiency.

### Finance

Finance professionals provide advice on capital management, investments, banking, budgeting, forecasting, and financial planning. Their work helps organisations achieve long-term financial stability and growth.

### Risk and Compliance

Risk and Compliance teams assist organisations in identifying, assessing, and managing operational, financial, technological, and regulatory risks. They also help ensure businesses comply with relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards while strengthening governance and internal controls





# Identifying your field of Interest

Figuring out what career you want to pursue can feel overwhelming, especially when there are so many pathways across accounting, finance, consulting, banking, analytics and beyond. You don't need to have it all figured out yet, identifying your interests is a process of learning more about yourself and exploring what's out there.

## **Identify**

Start by thinking about the things you genuinely enjoy. Consider the units, assignments, jobs or extracurricular activities that have interested you most. Do you enjoy analysing numbers and data, solving complex problems, communicating with people or understanding how businesses operate? Recognising what you enjoy and what you're good at can help point you towards fields worth exploring.

## **Investigate**

Once you have a few areas in mind, take some time to investigate them. Look beyond job titles and learn what professionals actually do day-to-day. Attend career fairs, industry panels and networking events, speak with students and professionals, and explore graduate and internship opportunities. You might discover career paths you didn't even know existed!

## **Experience**

Sometimes the best way to know whether a field suits you is to experience it yourself. Internships, part-time jobs, case competitions, volunteering and student societies can all give you valuable exposure to different industries. Even discovering that a particular field isn't for you is useful as it helps narrow down what you're looking for.

### ***Remember***

*Your interests can change as you gain new experiences, so don't feel pressured to choose the "perfect" career immediately. Stay curious, explore different opportunities and reflect on what you learn along the way. Finding your field of interest isn't about having everything figured out. It's about taking small steps towards understanding where you want to go.*

# Career Progression

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Career progression can feel like a mystery but most graduate careers regardless of industry, follow a surprisingly similar shape. It is important to keep in mind that there is no 'one size fits all' approach, and this is only a rough guide:

## The General Pattern

Most professional pathways move through four broad stages:

1. **Entry-level (Years 0–2)** – Graduate, Associate, or Analyst. This stage involves learning the tools of the trade, building technical skills, and taking on smaller, well-defined tasks under supervision. Many firms have 1-2 year rotation programs for Graduates where you will get a taste of different teams.
2. **Early career (Years 2–5)** – Senior Associate, Senior Analyst, or Consultant. You start owning pieces of work, mentoring newer grads, and building direct relationships with clients or stakeholders.
3. **Management (Years 5–10)** – Manager or Senior Manager. The focus shifts from doing the work to overseeing it — managing teams, budgets, and client relationships, and being accountable for outcomes rather than tasks.
4. **Leadership (10+ years)** – Director, Partner, or Executive. Fewer people reach this tier, and progression here depends less on technical skill and more on business development, strategic thinking, and leadership.

## What Actually Drives Promotion

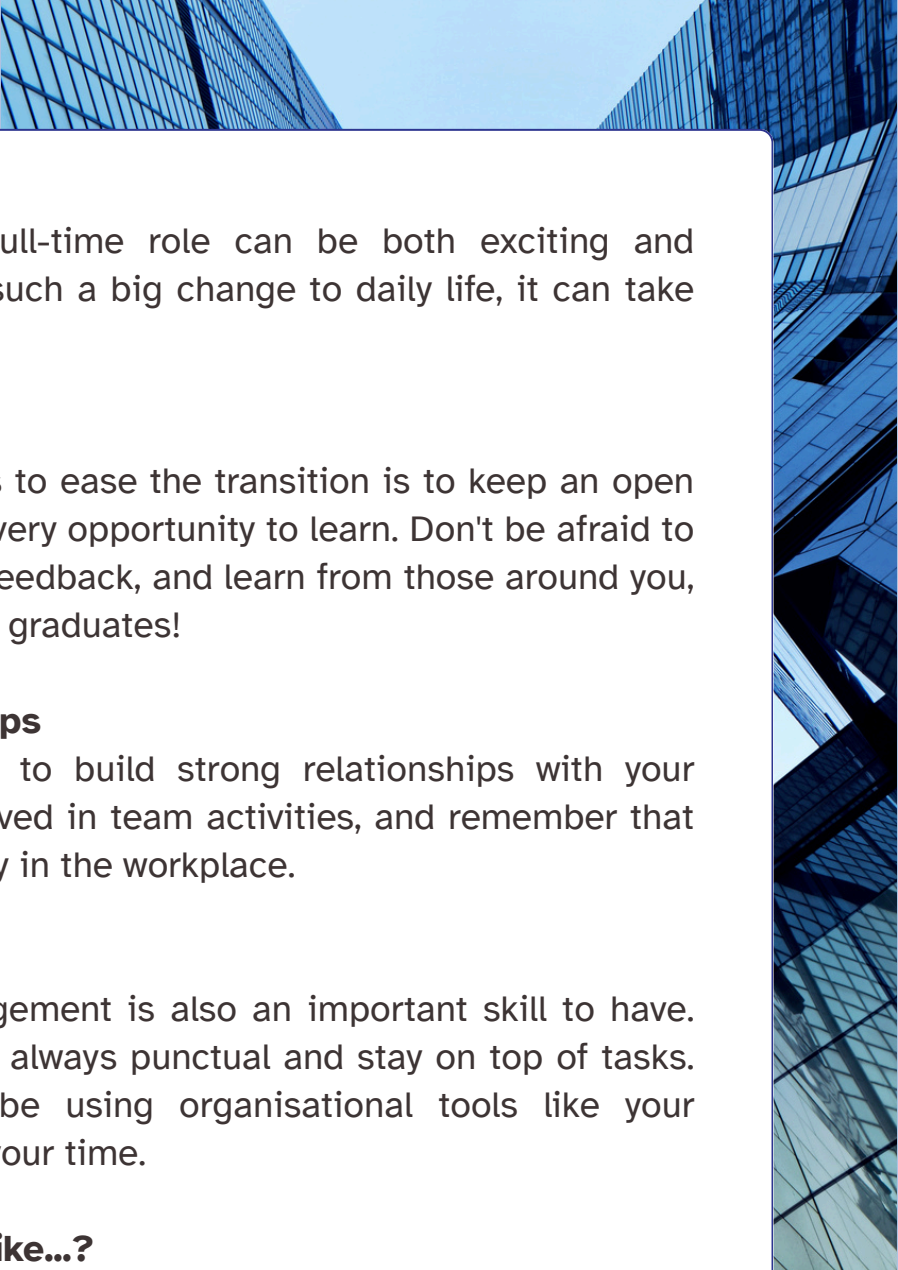
Early progression tends to track fairly predictably with performance reviews, time-in-role, and (in professional services) completing a qualification like a CA, CPA, or CFA. Later progression becomes more competitive — it's less about ticking boxes and more about the impact and leadership you demonstrate.

## Why This Matters Now

You don't need to have it all figured out now. But understanding the shape of the ladder helps you ask better questions in interviews, spot the right opportunities (like rotations, secondments, or mentoring programs), and set realistic expectations for how fast and how far a graduate role can take you.



# Transitioning into Full-time Work



Starting your first full-time role can be both exciting and overwhelming. With such a big change to daily life, it can take time to adjust!

## **Learning**

One of the best ways to ease the transition is to keep an open mind and embrace every opportunity to learn. Don't be afraid to ask questions, seek feedback, and learn from those around you, especially your fellow graduates!

## **Building relationships**

It is also important to build strong relationships with your colleagues. Get involved in team activities, and remember that communication is key in the workplace.

## **Time Management**

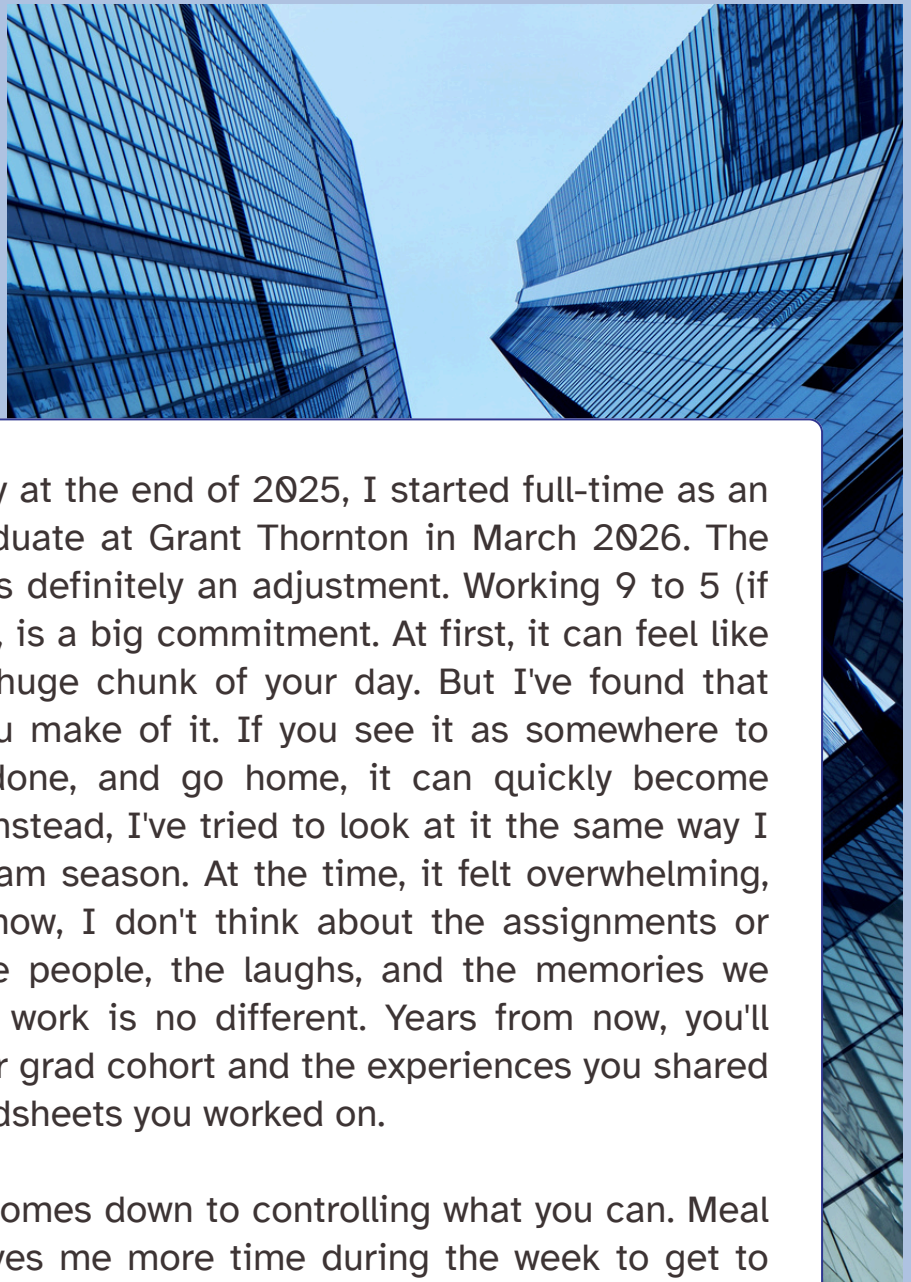
Effective time management is also an important skill to have. This ensures you are always punctual and stay on top of tasks. An example could be using organisational tools like your calendar to allocate your time.

## **So what's it really like...?**

*But if you're wondering what it's really like to start your first full-time job, keep reading for some unfiltered advice and insights from Wasura Abeywardana, a 2025 graduate and previous MASA marketing officer, on making the transition to full-time work!*

# Wasura Abeywardana

## Graduate, Grant Thornton



After finishing university at the end of 2025, I started full-time as an Audit & Assurance Graduate at Grant Thornton in March 2026. The jump to full-time work is definitely an adjustment. Working 9 to 5 (if you're lucky), plus travel, is a big commitment. At first, it can feel like you've suddenly lost a huge chunk of your day. But I've found that work is largely what you make of it. If you see it as somewhere to clock in, get the job done, and go home, it can quickly become something you dread. Instead, I've tried to look at it the same way I looked at uni during exam season. At the time, it felt overwhelming, but when I look back now, I don't think about the assignments or exams. I remember the people, the laughs, and the memories we made together. I think work is no different. Years from now, you'll probably remember your grad cohort and the experiences you shared far more than the spreadsheets you worked on.

Work-life balance also comes down to controlling what you can. Meal prepping on Sunday gives me more time during the week to get to the gym, play basketball, or just unwind. I don't mind sacrificing a little sleep for basketball on Wednesday and Sunday nights because having something to look forward to in the middle of the week makes a huge difference. And let's be honest, not every late night has to be productive. Sometimes it's worth staying up a little later just to get your RPM (Reels Per Minute) up after a long day. Friday nights have become my favourite time to catch up with family and friends, with Saturday to "recover" after a beer or two... or three... or four. Then Sunday is all about resetting, meal prepping, and getting ready for the week ahead. Before long, full-time work becomes your new normal, and you'll also have things to look forward to like working from home, annual leave, and firm social events.





# Navigating International Student Struggles

*Studying accounting in Australia as an international student comes with an extra layer most domestic students don't have to think about: visas. It's not something to panic about, but it does need a plan — and the earlier you start, the more options you keep open.*

## **The Core Challenge**

Most graduate programs run on permanent-resident/citizen-friendly timelines, and not every firm sponsors visas for every role. Accounting is consistently in demand, but "in demand" doesn't mean automatic — you still need to be strategic about your visa pathway and your job search at the same time.

## **Your Post-study Visa**

The Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485) is the standard next step after finishing your degree. It lets you live and work in Australia temporarily, with the length depending on your qualification level — longer for postgrad. Think of it as runway to a sponsored role, so start job-hunting early rather than treating it as time off.

## **From 485 to sponsorship**

Many accounting graduates move onto an employer-sponsored 482, then toward PR via the 186. Accounting occupations appear regularly on skilled occupation lists, which helps — but sponsorship is ultimately the employer's call. Three things worth doing:

- Start the search well before your 485 nears expiry.
- Ask firms directly at interviews and info nights whether they sponsor. It's a normal question.
- Consider regional roles — they can open faster or additional sponsorship and PR pathways.

### ***Remember***

*Not every classmate will land a sponsored graduate role in their first application round, and that's not a reflection of ability — the market shifts year to year. Give yourself a number of pathways: apply broadly, keep building experience through internships or part-time work, and don't be afraid to ask alumni how they navigated it. MASA's network exists exactly for this — reach out, we've been there too.*

# Making and Maintaining Connections

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## **Making Connections**

Building professional connections is a great way to learn about different career paths, discover job opportunities, and gain advice from people already working in the industry! LinkedIn is one of the most useful platforms for creating and maintaining these connections. It is helpful to start by building a profile that outlines your education, work experience, skills and achievement. A professional profile photo and brief summary can also help make your profile more credible and stand out to potential recruiters.

University is the perfect place to begin growing your professional network. Make the most of opportunities right now to connect with classmates, lecturers, tutors and industry professionals through classes, networking events, coffee chats and student societies.

*Tip: read more about how to coffee chat in our article below*

## **Maintaining Connections**

Maintaining connections is just as important as making them! This can be done by congratulating peers on new roles, commenting thoughtfully on relevant posts or occasionally checking in. These small interactions help keep the relationship active without making communication feel forced.

## **Making use of LinkedIn**

When sending a LinkedIn connection request, aim to do so within the next day of meeting someone. If you're reaching out for an opportunity, it may help to include a short personalised message reminding them where you met, or explaining why you reached out. A thoughtful message helps make a positive first impression and increases the likelihood they'll accept your request.

LinkedIn can also be used to research employers, follow professional services firms, explore graduate roles, and learn about the career paths of previous students. By maintaining consistent use, you can gradually build a network that supports your career development and provides access to valuable insights and opportunities.

# The Application Process

Graduate role applications are generally similar to internship applications (check out our [Internship guide](#) on the MASA website!). However, graduate applications tend to be more competitive due to fewer openings and broader competition. Hence, these applications may have higher scrutiny on overall competencies.

Every application follows a similar shape — get comfortable with it early, and it'll feel far less daunting by the time deadlines roll around.

## The Process, Step by Step

1. *Application form* – typically requires a combination of a CV, cover letter, and short-answer questions (usually "why this firm", "why this role", "why you"). Make sure to tailor every application to the specific role firm and practice area.
2. *Online psychometric testing* – numerical, verbal, and situational judgement tests.
3. *Video/phone interview* – often pre-recorded; assessed on motivation, communication, and fit.
4. *Assessment centre* – group tasks, case studies, or technical exercises.
5. *Final interview* – usually with a senior leader, focused on culture fit and career goals.

## Resume Tips

- Keep it to *one page*. Recruiters skim CVs in seconds — use a standard font, clean layout, and make every line meaningful.
- Lead with *impact*, not duties. E.g. Instead of "helped organise club events," write "coordinated a 200-person networking event, securing 5 industry sponsors."
- *Quantify* wherever possible. Numbers (dollars raised, hours volunteered, % improvement) make achievements concrete and memorable.
- *Tailor it* every time. Mirror the language in the job ad as many firms use automated screening that scans for keywords.
- List relevant *extracurriculars and clubs*. Extracurriculars show initiative when your work experience is still thin.

*Tip: Monash Careers & Employability offers free resume reviews — book one before your first application, not after your first rejection. Also check out our [Internship Guide](#) for more detailed tips!*





# Career Counselling at Monash

You don't need to have your career figured out to book a session with Monash Careers & Employability — that's genuinely what they're there for, and it's free.

## **What's actually on offer**

- Resume and cover letter reviews
- Mock interviews
- Career planning appointments
- Career and Internships Studio drop ins
- Workshops

## **Why it's worth your time**

A careers advisor reads hundreds of resumes and interviews for a living — they'll catch things you and your friends won't, like a CV that buries your best achievement in the third bullet point, or answers that are technically correct but don't actually land in an interview. It's also a low-stakes way to practice: getting feedback from a stranger before a real recruiter does is far better than finding out live.

## **How to make the most of it**

1. Book early in the semester, not the week applications open.
2. Bring a draft, not a blank page. Sessions are far more useful when there's something concrete to react to.
3. Ask for firm-specific advice if you can. Advisors won't know every firm's culture, but they can help you tailor language and structure to what a specific application is asking for.
4. Use the drop-in studio for quick wins — a five-minute sanity check on a cover letter doesn't need a full appointment.

*Tip: Book your first resume review before you need one for a real application. Going in without deadline pressure means you'll actually absorb the feedback instead of just rushing to submit.*

# Coffee Chat 101

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Coffee chats provide a valuable opportunity to learn about someone's career journey, understand what their work actually involves and gain insights that may be difficult to find through company websites or job descriptions.

## **Reaching out**

One of the hardest parts of a coffee chat can simply be reaching out. LinkedIn, university events, career fairs, student societies and existing personal connections are all great places to find people to speak with. When sending a message, introduce yourself briefly, explain what interests you about their background and politely ask whether they would be willing to have a short 15–20 minute conversation. Personalising your message can make a big difference. Mention something specific about their career journey, current role or organisation that made you want to speak with them. Most importantly, approach the conversation as an opportunity to learn rather than immediately asking for a job, internship or referral.

## **Preparation**

Preparation can help you get much more out of the conversation. Before the coffee chat, spend some time researching the person's background, their organisation and the type of work they do. Prepare a few questions that can't easily be answered through a quick online search. You could ask how they entered their field, what their typical day looks like, what they enjoy most about their role, challenges they have experienced or which skills they believe are most valuable in the industry. If you're interested in following a similar pathway, asking what they would have done differently as a university student can also lead to some useful advice.

## **Conversation, not an interview**

During the coffee chat, remember that it should feel like a conversation rather than an interview. Listen carefully to their answers and don't be afraid to ask follow up questions when something interests you. While having questions prepared is useful, you don't need to work through them like a checklist. Let the conversation flow naturally and be respectful of the time they have given you. You can also briefly share your own interests and experiences when relevant, helping the other person understand where you are in your career journey.

## **Stay connected**

The conversation doesn't have to end when the coffee chat does. Afterwards, send a short message thanking them for their time and, where possible, mention a piece of advice or insight that you found particularly valuable. You can also stay connected through LinkedIn and occasionally engage with their professional updates. If you later act on advice they gave you, sending a quick update can be a great way to reconnect and demonstrate that you valued their guidance.

Ultimately, coffee chats are about curiosity and building genuine professional relationships. Not every conversation will lead directly to a job opportunity, and that shouldn't be the expectation. Instead, each conversation can help you better understand an industry, expand your network and become more confident speaking with professionals.

# International Opportunities

*One of the biggest perks of joining a globally connected firm is the ability to work overseas without needing to resign and start over somewhere new.*



## **What Is a Secondment?**

A secondment is a temporary placement in another office, often lasting 6 months to 2 years, where you keep your employment with your home firm but work embedded in an overseas team. It has become increasingly common for newly qualified accountants to line up international secondments when they graduate, thanks to the global reach of the Big 4 and top 20 accountancy firms.\_

## **Why It's Worth Pursuing**

Secondments let you mix travel as a personal milestone with career progression that adds real professional value to your CV, and give you the chance to use your qualifications in an international context and potentially fast-track your seniority within some of the world's largest companies. Many arrangements also come with flexible contracts and near-guaranteed placement back home when you return.\_

## **How It Works Practically**

Full relocation and sponsorship costs for secondments are typically paid for by your employer, and you may be flown to the destination office for interviews as part of the process. Secondments usually open up once you've qualified and hit Senior Associate/Senior Consultant level — it's rarely a graduate-year opportunity, but it's worth flagging your interest to your coach or manager early.

*Tip: If working abroad is a long-term goal, ask about secondment pathways during your grad program interviews — firms love candidates who are already thinking two steps ahead.*





**Monash Accounting Students'  
Association**

<https://www.masamonash.com/>