



Airports to aeroplanes, luxury cruise liners to riverboat restaurants, universities to schools, railway stations to express trains, takeaways to top restaurants, city centre hotels to bed and breakfast. Wherever we are, whether in a department store, leisure centre or pub, or simply strolling in the park, there is normally a hospitality enterprise providing for our accommodation and dining needs.

The hospitality industry (loosely defined as hotels and a myriad of leisure and catering operations of different kinds) accounting for 70% of employment in the wider tourism industry offers unparalleled opportunities for truly international management careers.

These excellent job prospects are reflected in the demand for graduates.

Clearly, the hospitality industry offers excellent opportunities for ambitious graduates. In addition to management positions, self-employment is also a real possibility for experienced managers.

What has been stated thus far is justifiably upbeat, but it is also necessary to sound a note of caution. In order to succeed in this industry, it is useful to possess good interpersonal skills, and advancement will often fall to those that take on extra responsibility, and work under pressure. Also, in some sectors managers need to cope with working unsocial hours. Therefore, as with any other vocation, it is necessary to consider carefully the pluses and the minuses. Although, the extraordinary variety of opportunity means that most managers find they are in fact rather spoilt for choice.

TIPS ON CHOOSING A COURSE

There are a large number of centres offering Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and degrees in hospitality management.

Prospective students should try to get an idea from the college or university as to the number of years it has been running hospitality higher education programmes. For example, established centres, because of their long experience in the field, offer excellent resources and learning opportunities.

INDUSTRIAL PLACEMENTS

Many employers are attracted to graduates that have gained work experience whilst on their course. Established colleges and universities will normally arrange these placements for the students, but the level of support varies, and it is worth asking some searching questions about this before choosing your place of study. The range of placements is also an important factor.

CHOICE OF PROGRAMME

Those wishing to study full-time choose between an HND or a degree. HND programmes are often two or three years in duration, and an honours degree will take up to four years to complete. The HND will usually have a six month work experience placement, and of the four year degree course, one year will be spent at work.

It is important to establish with the centre that one can progress easily from the HND to the degree. For example, some of our students prefer to do an HND (two years) and then 'top-up' to a degree (a further one or two years). Another thing to look into is the range of degree titles on offer.

Programmes are often developed to allow students to choose a particular specialism to study in addition to the hospitality core. Specialism pathways include such areas as: Leisure, Conference Management, Marketing, Facilities Management, Business Studies, Tourism and Human Resource Management. The strength of this system allows graduates not only to gain specialist knowledge of a particular branch of management, but also to be able to convey this expertise clearly to prospective employers.

If deciding on a career in hospitality management, you can be assured of an interesting career with excellent opportunities for advancement, and for those that want it, the ability to have a truly international career. More and more, however, employers are seeking well qualified people to fill their management positions. It is necessary, therefore, to choose a higher education course that, reflects the particular branches of the industry that you wish to follow.

