

# Careers involving French



Language skills can lead directly into a career in translating, interpreting or teaching, and are also in demand in areas such as hospitality, law, publishing and business services. Modern languages degrees typically involve spending a year abroad and this can be an opportunity to find work in a field that interests you and gain relevant experience.

Many big graduate employers are multinational organisations and are keen to recruit candidates who are willing to work overseas and can liaise effectively with international colleagues. Studying modern languages is likely to develop interpersonal and communication skills that graduate recruiters value, as well as other key strengths. This guide will help you identify the skills you have to offer and explore a range of graduate career options, as well as setting out the careers modern languages students aspire to and the areas they find work in after graduation

The most obvious career opportunities for languages students and graduates are working as interpreters or translators. Careers in the diplomatic service and telecommunications also often require an aptitude for languages.

Language students' interest in their degree subject often goes beyond a simple desire to understand the language and includes a passion for foreign cultures as well. This could be a great advantage in the business world. Many blue-chip multinational recruiters want employees who have a global outlook and are sensitive to cultural differences.

The following job roles would enable you to draw on the communication and problem solving skills developed during your studies. Further qualifications or training are likely to be required. Some of these careers would make direct use of your language skills:

- charities administrator
- commissioning editor
- consultant
- human resources officer
- interpreter
- investment analyst
- journalist
- logistics/distribution manager
- management accountant
- marketing manager (social media)
- public relations officer
- secondary school teacher
- solicitor
- tourism officer
- tourist information manager
- translator

Media and advertising was the most popular career choice for students of languages, literature and classics identified by a 2018 survey of more than 60,000 undergraduates carried out by Trendence UK, a partner of TARGETjobs' parent company GTI. More than a tenth (**11.0%**) of students of languages, literature and classics who participated in the survey said they were interested in this area. The most popular careers for students of languages, literature and classics were as follows:

| Career                                | Percentage                |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Media and advertising                 | 11% expressed an interest |
| Public sector                         | 7.8                       |
| Charity and not-for-profit            | 6.8                       |
| Hospitality, leisure and tourism      | 6.7                       |
| Logistics, transport and supply chain | 6.4                       |

*Source: Trendence UK Graduate Survey 2018*

#### Work experience

Many modern language degree programmes offer a year abroad. If you choose to undertake a work placement during this year, try and find one in a career

that you are interested in and take the opportunity to develop skills specific to that job, as well as your language skills.

Some graduates wanting a long-term career using a language choose to take on a short-term role, such as teaching English, while living abroad and perfecting their language skills. Other temporary jobs that take you abroad may be helpful, such as those in tourism.

If you wish to move into translating or interpreting, you may want to carry out some work on a voluntary basis to build up a portfolio of the experience you have. Joining an agency may be a good idea.

Experience in areas such as administration and IT will also be useful for many jobs that use language skills.

Search for placements and find out more about [work experience and internships](#) and [self-employment](#).

### Typical employers

Some modern language graduates work on a self-employed basis as interpreters or translators. However, many others choose careers not directly related to their subject but where there is the opportunity to use their language skills, for example working for companies who trade or offer services internationally or to non-English speaking customers and suppliers.

This means that language graduates work for a huge variety of employers and sectors, including:

- business services
- charity work
- engineering
- media
- museums and libraries
- public administration
- teaching
- tourism
- transport and logistics.

### What are languages?

Language degrees are the study of a chosen language in order to improve proficiency and understanding. Most universities will offer a number of different languages including French, Spanish, Italian, German and Russian

among others. This list is not exhaustive and most universities will offer degree programs across a number of commonly spoken and less commonly spoken languages.

It is possible to study more than one language as part of a joint honours degree or to study a language alongside another subject altogether. The languages offered will vary across universities, as well as the combinations of joint honours degrees, so it is important to check this with your institution of choice before applying.

What do you learn with a languages degree?

The composition of language degrees will vary between different languages and different institutions. In essence most language degrees will focus on improving fluency and the ability to read, write and speak in another language. Most degrees will also cover the history, politics, literature and film of the country associated with the chosen language. Again this will vary between courses and modules can be selected based on the interests of the individual students.

One of the biggest draws of a language degree is the year abroad. Students will travel to the country where their language of study is spoken natively to immerse themselves in the culture and develop their language skills further. Students can either work while abroad or continue their studies at a local university; this will usually be dependent on what their university offers. The year abroad is crucial to cultivating a stronger grasp of the language, developing independence and strengthening interpersonal skills, all of which will be attractive to prospective employers.

Due to this most language degrees will span four years in order to accommodate the year abroad. If more than one language is being studied then the year will be split across the different countries that are being studied.

What should I study at high school if I want to do a languages degree?

Typically, it would be advised that you study the language of your choice up to an advanced level at school to progress to studying a language (or two or three) at degree level. However, it is worth contacting your university of choice for entry options if this is not the case. Some universities will allow students to study a language ab-initio or take beginners modules in a new language. This

will be supported through seminars, regular assessments, encouraged independent study and presentations.

Other subjects that could complement a languages degree are other humanities and arts subjects such as English Literature or Language, History or Politics. However, there is no definitive list of subjects that could be studied alongside languages.

What do people who studied languages do after graduation?

Those who study languages are able to move into a number of different sectors due to the transferable skills acquired. One of the more popular careers is teaching, whether this is teaching your chosen language or teaching English as a second language. Another common career path that language graduates will follow is translation and interpretation.

However, these are not the only career options open to those who study languages. Other industries that welcome language graduates are the media, PR, finance, banking, tourism, consulting or working internationally with a charity or as part of a business that trades internationally. The communication skills acquired during a languages degree are highly sought after by many employers and can be applied across many sectors.

Some graduates will also choose to pursue further education to improve their fluency with their chosen language or will choose to study or work abroad.