

What do employers want?

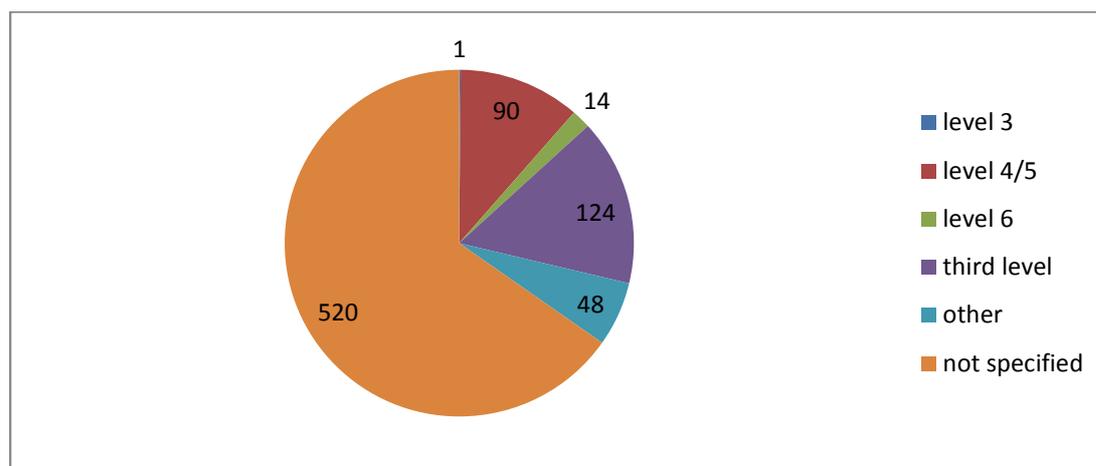
An analysis of job specifications in job advertisements in the Clare Champion newspaper

This report analyses the job specifications listed in advertisements in the Clare Champion newspaper over the last 3 years. The dataset comprised all jobs recorded between 1st January 2011 and 20th January 2014. Data was recorded for 1393 advertisements over this period. Any advertisements which did not contain some form of person specification were discarded. This left a sample of 797 advertisements which could be analysed in terms of the requirements employers were looking for in potential employees. A primary analysis was conducted over three categories: Qualifications, Work Experience and Knowledge, Skills & Abilities of Employees.

Qualifications

Table 1 Minimum Qualifications Required by Employers (n=797)

Level 3	Level 4/5	Level 6 (FETAC)	Third Level	Other	Not Specified
1	90	14	124	48	520



Of the 797 advertisements which contained some type of person specification 520 did not specify a minimum qualification. When you consider that a further 596 job advertisements did not contain any person specification it means that only 20% of job advertisements in the Clare Champion over the last 3 years specifically mentioned a minimum required qualification. In some cases the qualification level can be inferred even if not specifically mentioned for example the specifications for registered general nurses require a third level qualification due to regulatory requirements of the Nursing Board.

Qualifications listed under the other category in the diagram above include

- Financial Sector: Qualified Financial Advisor (QFA), Accredited Product Adviser (APA), Professional Diploma in Insurance (CIP), Accountancy Qualifications (e.g. CPA, ACCA, CIMA)

- Engineering/Manufacturing: APCIS
- Leisure, Sport and Tourism: Lifeguarding, Water Safety, National Certificate in Exercise and Fitness (NCEF), Coaching
- Retail, Sales and Customer Service: Qualified Pharmacy Technician, Microsoft Office, ECDL
- Administration and Business: Microsoft Office, Accounts, Payroll, Secretarial, Human Resources and Personnel (CIPD)
- Catering and Hospitality: Hygiene (e.g. HACCP)

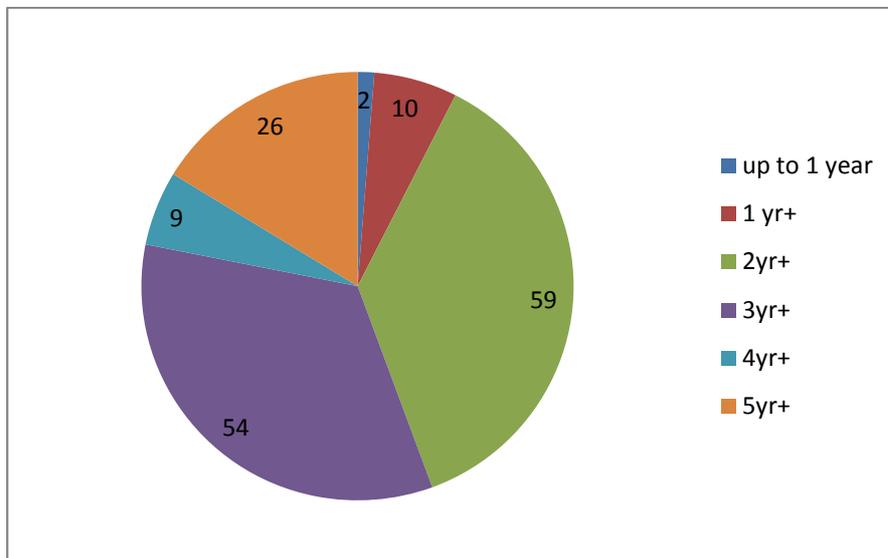
Work Experience

Table 2 Previous Work Experience (n=797)

Previous Work Experience Required	Previous Work Experience Desirable but not Required	Previous Work Experience not mentioned or not required
59.1% (471 jobs)	7.8% (62 jobs)	33.1% (264 jobs)

Previous work experience was listed as a requirement in almost 60% of the job ads which included some level of person specification. Most of these did not specify how much work experience was required. In only 160 ads was the amount of previous work experience required specified and the diagram below shows how these broke down.

Diagram 3 Minimum length of work experience required (n=160)



Knowledge Skills and Abilities (KSA's)

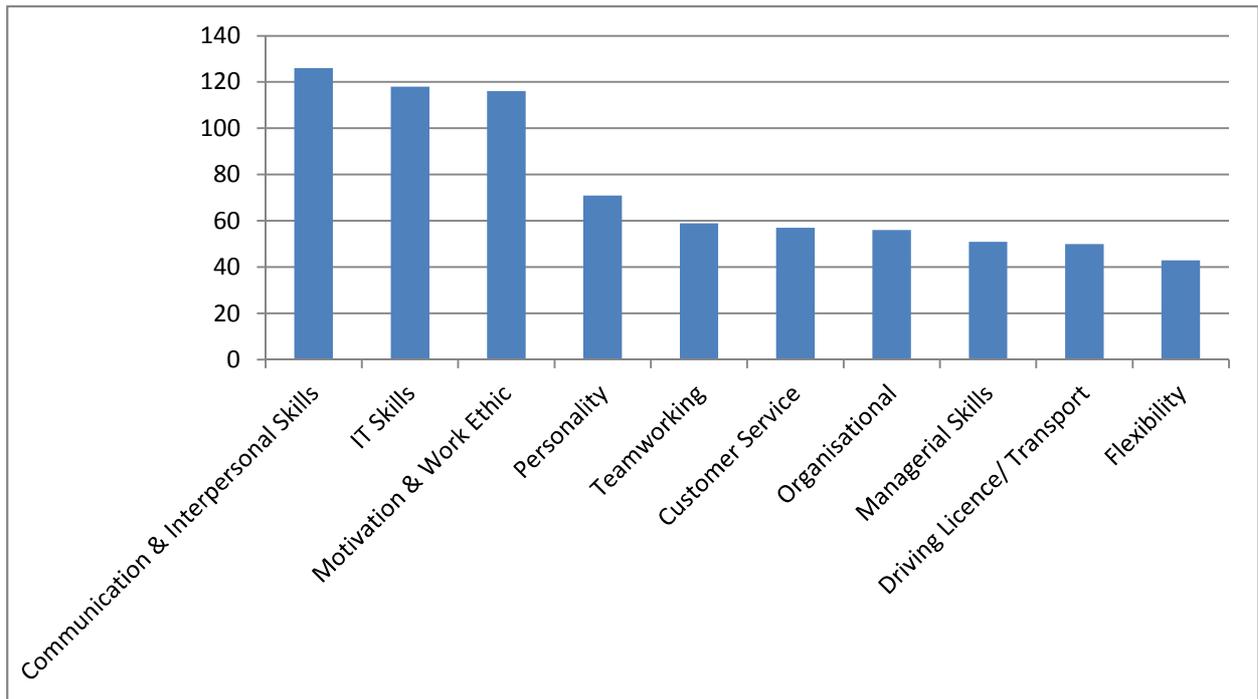
There was a wide range of knowledge, skills and abilities required by employers. A content analysis of the notes section in the jobs database was carried out for all jobs recorded between 01/01/2011 and 20/01/2014. This involved identifying clusters of similar descriptive words and grouping them together under common headings.

Table 4 Knowledge, Skills and Attributes identified from content analysis of Clare Champion job advertisements.

KSA's	Descriptors
Communications and Interpersonal Skills	Communication skills, Interpersonal Skills, People Skills, Able to build relationships, Able to transfer enthusiasm
Customer Service	Customer Service Skills, Customer Focused, Customer Oriented, Customer Care Skills
Flexibility	Flexible, Available at short notice
IT Skills	Computer Literate, Familiar with Microsoft Office, Familiarity with various other software packages, Programming, Web Maintenance, Social Media
Management Skills	Team Management Skills, Ability to Lead, Inspire, Motivate, Supervise, Ability to coach employees, Influencing
Motivation and Work Ethic	Self-Motivated, Self-Starter, Possessing drive, Working on own initiative, Strong work ethic, Possessing Energy, Diligent, Reliable, Punctual.
Organisational Skills	Organised, Organisational Skills, Time Management Skills, Attention to Detail
Personality	Enthusiastic, Friendly, Outgoing, Confident, Pleasant, People Oriented, Willing to Learn, Mature, Tactful, Courteous, Confidential, Caring.
Team Working Skills	Team worker, Team Player, Willing to Work as part of team

The above is a subjective classification and not based on any particular schemata. It is possible to come up with different headings or key words or combinations thereof but it was felt that the above list best fitted the data available. One category that is noticeable by its absence is Problem Solving/ Critical Thinking etc. These skills are rarely listed as requirements by employers advertising in the Clare Champion.

Table 5 Top 10 KSA's required by employers advertising in the Clare Champion per number of jobs



The above table shows the top 10 knowledge, skills and abilities ranked in order of most commonly specified to least commonly specified. Communications & Interpersonal Skills, IT skills and Motivation & Work Ethic were requested considerably more often than the others.

The type of IT skills required were in general not particularly high level. The most common package referred to by far was Microsoft Office. Also mentioned were accounts and payroll packages (Sage, Sage 50, Micropay, Megapay). Programming languages were not much required perhaps reflecting the low numbers of IT jobs advertised in the Clare Champion. Where programming languages were specified it was mostly C+ and C++.

Other criteria identified by employers but which weren't in list of the top 10 were English language fluency and possession of a European language (French and German the most common).

The above is based on an analysis of job advertisements across all employment sectors. Given that more than half of the vacancies in the Clare Champion over the last 3 years have been across just 3 sectors (Catering, Healthcare and Retail) it was decided to look at these on their own.

Catering

Qualifications: Relatively few employers in catering sector specified a required qualification in their staff. The exception was for those looking for qualified chefs something which would usually require a third level qualification. The other qualifications mentioned were food safety and HACCP.

Work Experience: Previous work experience is important for employers in the catering sector. 88% of jobs advertised in the catering sector that contained a person specification requested experienced staff. In general the amount of experience required was not specified just that the applicant had some experience.

Knowledge, Skills and Competencies: Employers recruiting for catering workers in the Clare Champion tended not to specify desirable knowledge, skills and competencies in their workers. The exception to this was English language fluency which was specified more often than average. Of the 10 KSAs in Table 5 on the previous page, all with the exception of customer service were less likely to be listed in an advertisement for the catering sector than they were on average, some far less so e.g IT skills. Knowledge of the HACCP system was important for some vacancies.

Retail, Sales and Customer Service

Qualifications: Much like employers in the catering sector those in the Sales sector rarely specified any type of minimum educational qualification.

Work Experience: Work experience was important to employers in this sector, 70% of advertisements that contained a person specification were looking for experienced staff.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities : In contrast to catering advertisements, advertisements for posts in the retail, sales and customer sector were much more likely to contain a piece relating to knowledge, skills and abilities. KSAs which were important than average for working in this sector were Motivation and Work Ethic, Customer Service, Flexibility, Personality and IT skills.

Healthcare

Qualifications: In contrast to Catering and Retail, Sales and Customer Service employers in the Healthcare sector were much more likely to specify a minimum qualification. This can be due to regulatory reasons e.g. for nurses. Many employers in this sector also expect candidates for carer roles to have FETAC level 5 qualifications.

Work Experience : Work experience was mentioned less often than average in Healthcare advertisements. This may be because it is not required or it may be that for some vacancies there is an assumption by the employer that candidates will have it.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities: KSAs that were more important than average in the healthcare sector were Driving Licence/Transport, Communication and Interpersonal Skills and Personality.

Table 6: Comparison of percentage of advertisements specifying particular KSAs in selected sectors with the average values for advertisements in all sectors.

	Communications	IT	Motivation	Personality	Team Working	Customer Service	Organisational Skills	Managerial Skills	Driving Licence	Flexibility
All advertisements(n=797)	15.8%	14.8%	14.5%	8.9%	7.4%	7.15%	7%	6.4%	6.3%	5.4%
Catering (n=142)	7%	3.5%	11.4%	5.6%	6.3%	7%	5.6%	4.2%	0.7%	4.2%
Retail, Sales & Customer Service (n=141)	13.4%	16.3%	27%	12.70%	6.4%	17.7%	6.4%	4.25%	4.25%	10%
Healthcare (n=108)	18.5%	5.50%	13%	11.1%	3.7%	1%	1.8%	11.1%	15.7%	7.5%

Table 7: Comparison of percentage of advertisements specifying Work Experience and Qualifications in selected sectors with the average values for advertisements in all sectors

	Work Experience Specified	Qualifications Specified
Average across all advertisements (n=797)	59.1%	35%
Catering (n=142)	88%	7.7%
Retail, Sales & Customer Service (n=141)	70%	7%
Healthcare (n=108)	46.3%	77.8%

Some Conclusions

- Just over half the jobs (57%) advertised in the Clare Champion over the last 3 years contained a person specification in the advertisement.
- 35% of advertisements that contained a person specification mentioned a minimum required qualification. Most of the employers that did specify a minimum qualification wanted either a level 4/5 qualification or a third level qualification.
- Almost 60% of advertisements that contained a person specification required the applicant to have work experience. Most of these did not specify the amount of work experience required. Those advertisements that did specify the amount typically wanted a minimum of 2 or 3 years previous experience.
- The most requested knowledge, skills and abilities in advertisements in the Clare Champion over the last 3 years were Communication and Interpersonal Skills, IT skills and qualities relating to Motivation and Work Ethic.
- There are significant differences evident in employer requirements from sector to sector.
- Employers in the Catering sector want candidates who have some previous work experience. They are much less likely on average to ask for a qualification and somewhat less likely to ask for particular knowledge, skills or abilities.
- Employers in the Retail, Sales and Customer Service sector are also relatively unconcerned with candidate's previous qualifications but are interested in candidates with work experience. They are also more likely than average to want candidates with the following KSAs: Motivation and Work Ethic, Customer Service, Flexibility, Personality and IT skills.
- Employers in the Healthcare sector need qualified candidates. They are less likely than average to specify work experience as a requirement for a job. Frequently listed KSAs in these job advertisements were driving licence/transport, Communication and Interpersonal Skills, Personality and Managerial Skills.