

# Administrative Assistant/Administrator

## What is the work like?

An administrative assistant/administrator is responsible for providing administrative support for an office or department.

There are various types of administrative assistants working in areas such as finance, human resources (HR) and marketing. Their role varies, depending on the business function they are supporting and the size of the organisation for which they work.

An administrative assistant's responsibilities may include:

- dealing with internal and external correspondence, including distributing and franking post
- word processing letters, memos, agendas, presentations and reports
- monitoring stationery supplies and reordering when necessary
- the maintenance of office equipment, such as printers, computers, scanners and photocopiers
- answering the telephone and providing switchboard cover
- setting up and maintaining filing systems
- updating databases
- looking after visitors
- taking minutes at meetings
- overseeing the upkeep of the building
- photocopying documentation
- basic IT support
- looking after a reception area
- health and safety at work.

## Hours and environment

Administrative assistants/administrators normally work from 9.00am to 5.00 or 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

There may be part-time and job share opportunities. Temping jobs are common and often lead to permanent employment. Depending on the nature of the work, it may be possible to work from home.

The role is office based, and administrators spend a considerable amount of time sitting at workstations, working on computers. Smart casual or business dress is normally expected.

## Salary and other benefits

These figures are only a guide, as actual rates of pay may vary, depending on the employer and where people live.

- Salaries start from around £15,000 a year.
- With experience, administrators may earn around £20,000.
- For senior positions, salaries may be over £25,000 a year.

## Skills and personal qualities

An administrative assistant should:

- have good interpersonal and communication skills
- be able to work to tight deadlines
- be able to manage several projects at any one time and prioritise their workload
- work well with personnel from all levels
- be a team player
- be flexible and adaptable
- be able to use their initiative
- be able to work with numbers
- have technical skills and be computer literate
- have an understanding of health and safety at work.

## Interests

It helps to have an interest in:

- business and commerce
- working with people.

## Getting in

Around 4.7 million people are employed within business administration. There are jobs throughout the UK, in both the private and public sector. This includes local and central government, the financial sector, construction, retail and the media.

Employment trends are stable and long-term prospects are good. There continues to be a number of job opportunities at entry level.

Vacancies are advertised in the local and national press, and through recruitment agencies.

### Entry routes

There are no formal entry requirements, although employers are likely to ask for four or five GCSEs (A\*-C), including English and maths, or equivalent. Work experience in an office environment is useful.

The Diploma in business, administration and finance is designed to equip young people aged 14 to 19 for careers in this sector. The Diploma in public services (due to start from

September 2010) may also be relevant to this field of work.

An increasing number of candidates continue their education to A level or foundation degree/degree level before looking for work.

A typical full-time foundation degree takes two years. Students who have completed a foundation degree may be able to progress on to the final year of a related honours degree course.

Degree courses usually last three or four years full time. As a guide, minimum requirements for entry onto a foundation degree course are normally one A level and four GCSEs (A\*-C), or equivalent; for a degree course the minimum requirements are normally two A levels and five GCSEs (A\*-C), usually to include English and maths, or equivalent.

Entry requirements vary, so candidates should check with individual colleges or universities. Adults may prepare for entry to a degree by taking an Access course.

An Apprenticeship and Advanced Apprenticeship in business and administration are also available. These are managed by the Council for Administration (CfA). There are no fixed entry requirements, though employers may set their own standards.

Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships provide structured training with an employer and pay at least £95 per week from August 2009. A recent survey found that the average wage for apprentices was £170 a week. Entry to Employment (e2e) can help to prepare those who are not yet ready for an Apprenticeship. In addition, Young Apprenticeships may be available for 14- to 16-year-olds. More information is available on the Apprenticeship page on this website, from a Connexions personal adviser or at [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

## Training

Training is usually on the job under the supervision of experienced colleagues. Some organisations provide in-house and external courses to develop skills. Areas covered may include:

- word processing software
- customer service standards
- database applications.

There are NVQs in business and administration at Levels 1 to 4.

The Apprenticeship in business and administration takes at least six months (a year for the Advanced Apprenticeship). Apprentices complete core units as well as choosing other subjects, which usually include at least one IT-related unit. They study towards NVQ Level 2 in business and administration (Level 3 for Advanced Apprenticeships) as well as key skills and technical qualifications, such as OCR or City & Guilds.

Administrative assistants may also study for a foundation degree in business administration. Flexible study options are available and courses can be taken on a part-time or distance-learning basis.

## Getting on

An administrative assistant's skills are highly transferable, and opportunities for progression include:

- taking responsibility for a small administration team
- moving into general management
- moving to work for a larger organisation
- specialising, for example in marketing or HR.

Qualifications usually increase the chances of promotion.

## Further information

Council for Administration (CfA), 6 Graphite Square, Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5EE. 020 7091 9620. Websites: [www.cfa.uk.com](http://www.cfa.uk.com) and [www.breakinto.biz](http://www.breakinto.biz)

## Further reading

Real Life Guides: Business & administration - Trotman

Working in performing arts - VT Lifeskills

Working in schools & colleges - VT Lifeskills

[www.lgcareers.com](http://www.lgcareers.com) - local government careers website

## Magazines/journals

Executary News

(Some may be priced)

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