

**INDUSTRY SECTOR:** Science & Technology

**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Virtual Recruitment

**BUSINESS NAME:** Standard Life Aberdeen

**TARGET AUDIENCE:** Employers

## ONBOARDING AND INDUCTING EARLY CAREERS TALENT VIRTUALLY

At Standard Life Aberdeen, our early careers programs form a vital part of our talent strategy, bringing fresh thinking and new skills to our business as well as helping us build the next generation of leaders. This autumn we were delighted to welcome 29 new graduates and 22 new trainees across all many functions within the SLA business.

While the pandemic disrupted the usual model of office life and in-person interaction, we were fortunate in being able to quickly switch to a hybrid model of recruitment, assessment and development all being carried out virtually. In fact, SLA's new trainees have been through the cycle of interviews, training and placements, so often predicated on face-to-face engagement, entirely online.



Onboarding new talent to work remotely in the middle of a global pandemic was never going to be easy and the Early Careers team has had to find creative ways to introduce and connect the new joiners.

### BEFORE THEY JOINED

Each week in the month before they joined the business, our graduates and trainees received a **'getting ready to join'** email taking them to a short infographic – each with links to additional resources to help them prepare for joining virtually. Topics included [Welcome to SLA](#), [Making the most of remote working](#), [Hitting the ground running](#) and [Career development in SLA](#). These are simple but powerful resources and we've provided links in case you're interested in having a look.

We also ensured that each new start was set up with a buddy before they joined so that they had a point of contact for any "silly questions" and to help them understand what to expect when they joined. The buddies along with line managers and Early Careers team have all been on hand to support new starts.

We also wanted to ensure managers felt prepared for supporting their new trainees and graduates. To make sure they knew what to expect we ran hour long sessions with these managers to confirm principles of the programme they are supporting, our expectations of managers and a helpful checklist of what to do for someone new joining virtually.

### INDUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION

We usually provide out new early careers talent with an induction programme lasting 5-8 days that allows them to learn about the organisation, meet senior leaders, get to know their cohort and build skills needed for their role. Whilst this works face to face, we realised early on to just do the same programme virtually would risk zoom fatigue and not get high levels of engagement from our audience. Instead, we adapted the programme of sessions to be bite-size and spread across their first month in the business.

Building a strong network with others in the graduate or trainee cohort is an essential way for our new starts to learn about the business. With this in mind we used break out functions on Zoom to create networking opportunities in smaller groups and planned out what groups graduates and trainees would work in to make sure they spent some time during induction with everyone in their cohort. Whilst this took some planning it meant they got a good level of exposure to others on the programme who are in different streams, to give a broader insight to other business areas.

## JOINING THE TEAM

Whilst working at home and being new to a job we knew it was vital for our new starts to be clear on what their role and purpose is within the organisation. With support from their managers all of our graduates and trainees set clear goals on what they are working towards during their placement. They have also been encouraged to proactively request feedback from those they are working with which helps them to understand their strengths and areas for development. Having these regular sessions with their managers ensures if there are any tricky tasks, difficulties.

In addition to support they received from buddies, managers and Early Careers, our new starts were encouraged to begin meeting people through our Employee Networks. We ran a virtual network fair helping to connect our graduate and trainees to the networks and giving them insight into upcoming events, socials and activities they can get involved with. This has been a great way of helping them to create connections and to provides another way for them to interact from home.

## HINTS AND TIPS

Having moved to this new way of onboarding and inducting talent to our early careers programmes brought equal parts challenge and opportunity. Some of the key learns we have made are:

- Providing information and buddy support before they join helps to put them at ease and manage their expectations
- Bite-size sessions has helped ensure that learning is being embedded and helps avoid information overload, try and limit the number of full days in training and where possible spread these out
- Managers play an essential role is supporting new talent, it's important to ensure they know what support is available to them as well as their new start
- When hosting sessions, using platforms that includes functionality for creating breakout rooms, running quick polls and raise hand functions can help ensure more interaction from your audience
- Collect feedback on how the onboarding and induction experience has gone from managers and new starts to know what works well and what may need to be adjusted for future

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