

Nick MOON, Managing Director, GfK NOP Social Research

Social research and public sector

(Political opinion polls, Social research, Local government research, Research methodology)



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Joined NOP as a graduate trainee with a degree in history in 1977. Training scheme involved field interviewing (a lot!), plus coding, despatch, dp etc. I worked in a commercial research division for a year before moving to the social research team.

There are now 30 researchers in our Social Research team. We used to have an all-purpose graduate intake, with trainees having a short induction period, during which they devised and conducted a small survey (with telephone interviewing and focus groups) and reported on it to a real pro bono client, who then press-released it. They then went to spend time in two or more research teams before getting a final placement.

Most training is on the job, supplemented by a comprehensive programme of training courses open to the whole company, including some tailored to the grads. For various, mainly practical, reasons we have now switched to a system whereby each division recruits grads during the year as and when they are needed, not all at once, and teams recruit grads they see as suitable for their own needs, so there is no more planned rotation between teams.

For this reason we in Social Research will now be looking much more for people with relevant interests/qualifications. Under the new system we will look at recent CVS when we have a vacancy and select a few for interview. I imagine we will continue to use the short tests we used to give graduate applicants en masse, but the interview will almost certainly remain the main factor. Although there is no longer a graduate induction programme, people joining as a graduate trainee will still have access to the whole of the GfK NOP Training programme, and those who want to take the MRS diploma will continue to receive study leave and advice along the way, plus having their exam fees paid. There is also a mentoring scheme within GfK NOP.

There is an established career progression from trainee to research executive, to SRE, research manager, associate director and then research director. Promotion is almost entirely based on individual merit, with no fixed time limits, though you would have to be pretty exceptional to get promoted every year! If people are unhappy in their work but good we will try to place them in another division rather than see them leave the company, and I have several people in my team acquired in this way.