

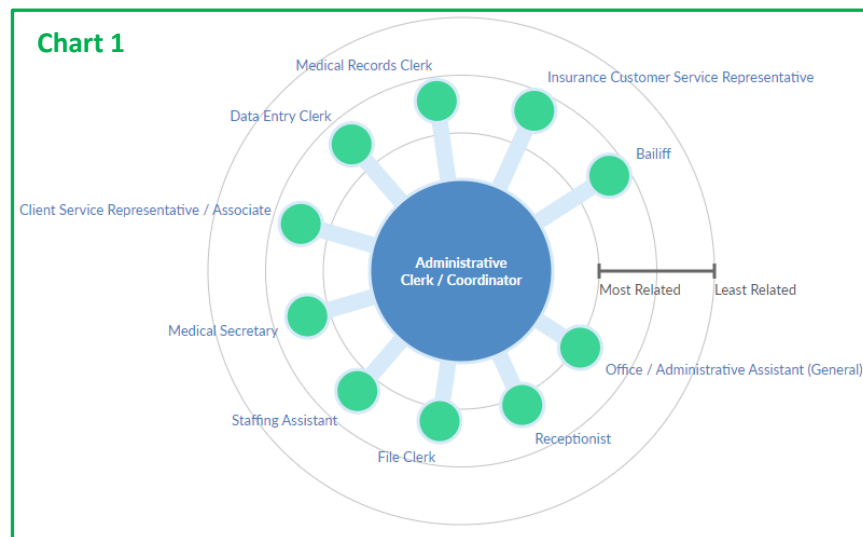
Administrative and clerical work:

Administrative and clerical staff keep all sorts of organisations and offices running smoothly. They deal with communications, finances, records and systems. For entry to certain jobs you will need at least some GCSEs at good grades.

Where are the jobs?

Sales, finance, marketing and human resources departments (to name but a few) all need people to be responsible for the day-to-day administration of their department. Administrative and clerical jobs are found in the offices of just about every organisation you can think of - banks, shops, manufacturers, the utilities, universities, schools and hospitals. There are also opportunities in the Civil Service and local council offices, in departments ranging from social services, to those that license tattoo artists! Job titles differ - they include administrative assistant, administrator, clerical assistant and office clerk – and levels of responsibility vary. Some clerical positions have a financial focus - for example, bookkeepers or financial assistants.

See Chart 1 below highlighting different roles in Administration:



What it takes:

For most jobs in administration and clerical work you need to be:

- Well organised
- Happy doing routine tasks (at least some of the time)
- Skilled in ICT. Methodical, accurate and conscientious
- Able to work as part of a team, but also independently in some roles
- Good at communicating with others
- Numerate (especially important for jobs in finance/accounts)

Administrative and clerical assistants:

Administrative and clerical assistants are often junior-level staff, who work under supervision. Jobs may involve repetitive and routine duties, or they can be more varied, depending upon the sort of organisation (or the department within the organisation) in which you are employed. Administrative and clerical assistants may:

- Open and sort incoming post/emails and prepare outgoing mail for collection
- Photocopy items
- Complete forms, work out and record figures, and keep simple accounts
- Input and update records on computer databases, file documents and search for information
- Write straight forward letters, perhaps using existing templates, and address envelopes
- Answer the phone, take messages and possibly operate a switchboard
- Answer enquiries/act as a receptionist and process word process documents
- Check records, such as employee time sheets or expenses claims.

Administrators:

The work of office administrators may include duties with more responsibility than those listed for administrative and clerical assistants. They may:

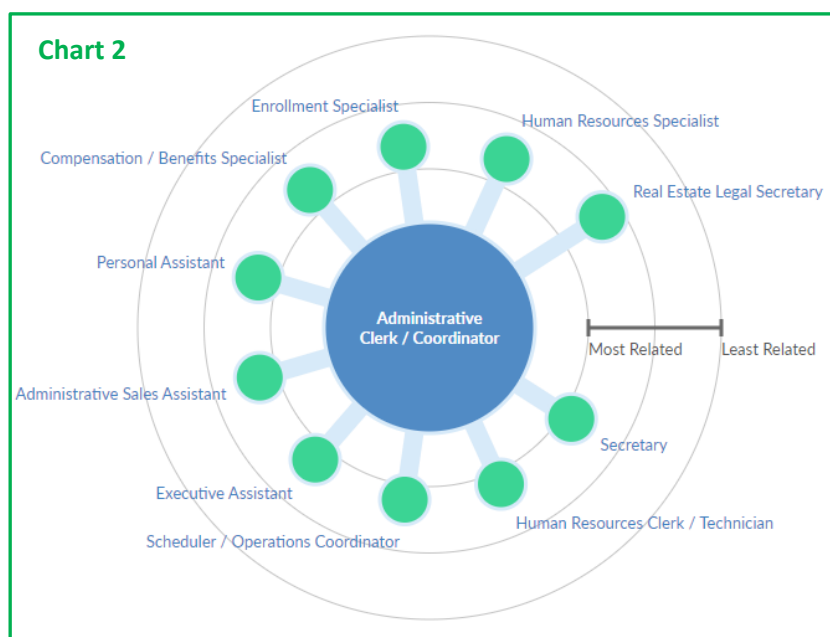
- Plan work schedules and gather data to prepare reports
- Check that tasks are done correctly and on time, and possibly supervise clerical staff
- Maintain databases, and sometimes be involved in setting up new information systems
- Arrange meetings, prepare agendas and possibly take minutes
- Liaise with other departments, organisations and the general public
- Compose and produce letters and other documents.

Clerical work in finance and accounting:

Every organisation, large or small, needs to keep track of its finances. Some of the more obvious opportunities for work with figures are in accountancy and financial services firms such as banks, building societies and insurance companies. However, there are also openings for clerical and administrative staff to work in accounts/payroll within manufacturing companies, local government and the Civil Service, as well as with small, local firms, such as printers or builders. Job titles include accounts clerk, sales or purchase ledger clerk, finance assistant, accounts administrator and bookkeeper. The work may involve:

- Preparing invoices and financial statements
- Sending out accounts to customers and recording payments
- Processing incoming invoices for payment
- Keeping up-to-date records of expenditure
- Processing salary payments and expenses for employees, and ensuring that they are paid
- Preparing accounts for official purposes, e.g. tax, VAT and audits
- Inputting and updating financial information on spreadsheets/databases
- Doing statistical calculations and compiling reports using computer accounting packages
- Stock control and purchasing.

See Chart 2 demonstrating progression opportunities when working in Administration:



Entry, training and qualifications:

If you start straight from school or have no relevant experience your first post would probably be at assistant level. There are no set entry requirements for such roles, but employers may expect applicants to have a few GCSEs at grades 9-4 or A*-C (or equivalent) including maths and English; subjects such as business or computer science would also be relevant. Keyboarding and ICT skills will be required.

If you have A level or equivalent qualifications (or a higher education qualification) you may be able to start in a position with more responsibility, such as administrator or trainee office manager. New entrants to administrative or clerical work receive training on the job, possibly through an Apprenticeship (see below). You may have the opportunity (or be expected) to gain relevant work-related qualifications through day release, an evening class or distance learning. Certain qualifications can be achieved mainly through the assessment of your competence in the workplace. If you have the necessary entry requirements, it may be possible to take a higher education course appropriate to your role, or you may be encouraged to gain specialist qualifications offered by professional bodies, such as the Institute of Administrative Management.

In preparation for working in an administrative or clerical role you could take a full-time course. With GCSEs or equivalent, there are programmes leading to BTEC Level 3 National or OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical qualifications in business, for instance. Some schools and colleges in England offer the T level in management and administration. Alternatively, there are some business administration college courses that cover more practical office skills. A higher education qualification - e.g. a degree, HNC/D or foundation degree - in a subject such as business can also provide preparation for a career in administration.

For entry to a higher education course you need A level or equivalent qualifications. Courses are available on a full-time, part-time and distance-learning basis; some sandwich programmes are available - these provide valuable work experience. You can find out more about qualifications in business, in the leaflet on Working in business. Some graduates start in an administrative-level role in the hope that they will be able to work their way in to other careers within their chosen sector.

Training for roles in finance or accountancy:

Employers, including financial services companies, may offer opportunities for school - or college-leavers with GCSEs or A levels (or equivalent). Such organisations may run their own training schemes, supplemented by part-time attendance at college. Employers may also offer relevant Apprenticeships (see below). You can gain nationally recognised qualifications in finance either as preparation for clerical work in finance or accounting, or you may be able to work towards these whilst in employment. There are also more specialised qualifications available, such as those in bookkeeping, accounting software or payroll. The AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) offers qualifications in accounting from levels 2-4 and in book keeping at levels 1-3; these can be gained on a full-time, part-time, distance-learning or blended-learning basis. Different types and levels of AAT membership are available and it's possible to achieve AAT Bookkeeper status (AATQB).

The IAB (International Association of Bookkeepers) also offers a range of regulated qualifications, including those in bookkeeping, payroll and accounting. These are available through online learning, classroom study or self-study. Once qualified with the IAB you may be eligible to become a professional Member and benefit from the IAB's ongoing support.

Apprenticeships:

Apprenticeships offer structured training with an employer. In England, relevant Apprenticeships include those at level 2 for Accounts/ Finance assistants, at level 3 for business administrators, payroll administrators and financial services administrators, and at level 4 for professional accounting/taxation technicians (which are suitable for training in bookkeeping).

For information on Apprenticeships, www.apprenticeships.gov.uk

Finding work, prospects and pay:

Vacancies may be found in the local press, through recruitment agencies and websites, the Jobcentre Plus and the Find a job service: www.gov.uk/find-a-job. In large organisations there may be the opportunity for promotion to more senior positions; if working in a smaller organisation you may need to move to a different employer. Gaining additional qualifications will help when applying for higher-level positions. Pay varies widely depending on the nature of the employer, the location and the exact job role and level. Starting pay for assistant-level roles may not be much over the National Minimum/Living Wage, but salaries can reach up to £25,000 or higher for those in administrative jobs with more responsibility.

