

# SECTOR: Oil & Gas

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## About the industry

As populations continue to expand at an ever increasing pace, so the world's need for energy continues to grow. The world's reliance on energy is growing rather than diminishing as we rely on it for everything from heating the geyser and boiling the kettle to running our cars and switching on our computers.

The oil and gas sector offers numerous career options. As fuel prices continue to rise, thereby threatening profits, many oil companies have started to diversify their operations. In South Africa, for example, Engen has developed retail partnerships with companies such as Wimpy, Steers, Nandos, Woolworths and Ster-Kinekor. BP has introduced Wild Bean Café outlets while Shell operates Shell Select convenience stores.

With dwindling fuel reserves left in the world, most fuel companies are turning their attention to researching and developing alternative and biofuels which offers graduates additional career options. In addition to its focus on oil and natural gas products, Shell, for example, is increasingly engaged in the research and development of alternative, renewable or 'green' energy sources including wind, solar power, biofuels and hydrogen.

Most oil companies are large multinationals which offer attractive remuneration packages, good benefits and ongoing skills development which make them attractive career prospects for graduates.

According to Duncan Clarke, the author of *The Battle for Barrels and Empires of Oil* and *Crude Continent: The Struggle for Africa's Oil Prize*, Africa is a continent of great promise and good prospects regarding crude oil. He adds that there are approximately 15 African countries with indigenous independent oil companies while state-owned oil companies have proliferated in recent years across the continent with the largest being in Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Libya and Nigeria.

### FACT:

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### Organisations in the oil and gas sector in Careers SA:

- Sasol
- Shell South Africa Marketing (Pty) Ltd see p20 and p117
- Total South Africa see p125

Due to a global skills shortage and a crisis in energy supply worldwide, job prospects within the oil and gas sector are very good and look set to continue being good for the foreseeable future.

## Qualifications

Most oil and gas companies offer both commercial and technical positions. On the commercial side, positions include procurement and contracting, commercial midstream and upstream, finance, human resources, information technology, logistics, sales and marketing, supply and distribution trading, legal affairs, communication and business strategy, amongst others.

On the technical side positions include various engineering positions, geology and geophysics, petrophysics, process engineering, product and process research and production technology, amongst others.

There is a significant shortage of engineers in the sector and a Bachelor of Engineering in any of the engineering disciplines including civil, chemical, electrical, industrial, mechanical, metallurgical and mining are all sought after in the sector. However, while engineering graduates constitute the bulk of the graduates employed by the sector, it also employs B.Sc and B.Com graduates to fulfill its business needs.

## Personality traits

People who do well in the oil and gas sector are typically those who get a buzz out of a tough challenge. As most of the fuel companies are international companies, the scope of the work is vast. That means that if you're working in finance you will be working with large numbers, in procurement you will be responsible for big spending and in technical and specialist roles you will be working with some of the best brains around as you innovate and think out of the box. >>

To do well in this sector graduates need to be able to absorb information, analyse problems, make objective decisions and be highly innovative. They should be solutions driven and be logical thinkers. In addition, they need to be willing to learn on the job and be able to multi-task. They need to have drive, confidence and resilience as well as be good team workers. Finally, dedicated and hard workers tend to succeed in this sector. ■

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[www.shell.com](http://www.shell.com)

[www.engen.com](http://www.engen.com)

[www.caltex.co.za](http://www.caltex.co.za)

[www.total.co.za](http://www.total.co.za)

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### Pros and cons

- + On the plus side most oil and gas companies offer excellent career opportunities with good remuneration and skills development programmes on offer.
- + As most of them are multinational, there are opportunities to gain international experience.
- + Many oil companies, including Sasol, Total, Shell and BP award bursaries to students while they are still studying and then place them on graduate development programmes with the company on completion of their studies. Graduates who have participated in these programmes report a significant amount of career growth in a relatively short space of time as they get to work on large projects from the outset.
- On the negative side, sky-rocketing oil prices and the global recession are having an impact on oil and gas companies. Some oil companies have put the brakes on new appointments.

