Postgraduate Research Students: Useful Careers Resources

Career Planning
VITAE [www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers]

Vitae provides tailored information and resources for postgraduate researchers and research staff who want to pursue an academic career or use their skills elsewhere.

Sub-sections include:

- Pursuing an academic career
  - Applying for academic jobs
  - Creating an effective academic CV
  - Writing a statement of academic research interest
  - Research funding

- Researcher career stories
  - Features over 100 profiles

- Career management for researchers
  - Understanding yourself
  - Understanding career opportunities
  - Improving employment opportunities
  - What do researchers do?
  - What do research staff do next?

- Example CVs
  - 18 fictional CVs based on a range of styles appropriate for different career roles

- Professional development
  - Effective CVs and covering letters
  - Researcher development framework planner
  - Creating an action plan for your career development
University of Manchester Careers Service

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk

The website has a number of useful resources:

- **Useful series of ‘How to…’ guides:**
  www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduates/howtoguides/  
  **Sections include:**
  - Explore your strengths and add to them, Explore postgraduate career options online, Find jobs for postgraduates which are not advertised, Find academic jobs, Find adverts for PhD jobs outside academia **(NB: See extracts from the latter section in Appendix A).**
  - Find potential career contacts, Network without hassling your contacts.
  - Get your message across to different audiences, Influence others, communicate to academic and non-academic audiences.
  - Market your postgraduate degree to employers outside academia.

- **An academic career. Is an academic career for you? What do academics do? How do you become an academic?**:
  www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk/

**Jobs.ac.uk**

www.jobs.ac.uk

The leading international job board for careers in academic, research, science and related professions.

- **Careers Advice section** includes career tools, job-seeking tips, CV examples and templates, interview tips, careers articles and blogs, tips on improving your LinkedIn profile: www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/

- **Career ebooks** www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/resources/ebooks-and-toolkits

**Titles include:**

Career planning for PhDs  
A practical guide to planning an academic or research career  
10 career paths for PhDs  
How to apply for an academic job ebook  
Academic job interview toolkit
The essential career organisation toolkit
The 5 minute career action plan
Career development toolkit for researchers
The global academic careers guide
Career change toolkit.

The website also hosts a number of career videos, including ‘How to succeed at job interviews’:
www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/resources/careers-videos

**Prospects**
www.prospects.ac.uk
Leading careers site for UK undergraduates and postgraduates. Resources include:

- ‘Your PhD, what next?’ information leaflet:
  www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/phd-study/your-phd-what-next

- **Hundreds of graduate job profiles, many of which include the following information** ([www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm)):
  - Responsibilities
  - Salary
  - Qualifications
  - Skills
  - Work experience
  - Career prospects
  - Related jobs and courses

- **Information on different job sectors**: [www.prospects.ac.uk/sectors.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/sectors.htm)

**University of Surrey Employability & Careers Centre**
www.surrey.ac.uk/careers

- Careers information, including videos and information leaflets on relevant topics
- Online calendar of careers events held on campus
• Online jobs board
• Destination data of Surrey graduates and postgraduates
• Practice psychometric tests with feedback
• Online personality assessment test (similar to the Myers Briggs Type Indicator)

Other useful resources


• The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) published a report in 2014 titled ‘Getting the First Lecturing Job’ which reveals how doctoral researchers and PhDs manage the challenging and demanding transition from early careers researcher to the established academic position of lecturer: [www.agcas.org.uk/articles/840-Academic-career-journeys-new-research-published](http://www.agcas.org.uk/articles/840-Academic-career-journeys-new-research-published)

• Naturejobs run some interesting blogposts exploring research careers and an ‘Ask the expert’ series:
  - [http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/](http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/)

• There is a group on LinkedIn called ‘PhDs outside academia’:
  - [www.linkedin.com/grps/PhD-Careers-Outside-Academia-1844342/about](http://www.linkedin.com/grps/PhD-Careers-Outside-Academia-1844342/about)

• [http://beyondthephd.co.uk/](http://beyondthephd.co.uk/) Offers personal and professional insights into life after a PhD. Developed as a resource for arts and humanities PhD researchers by the UK Centre for Management Studies

• [www.mydocpro.org/en](http://www.mydocpro.org/en) Online skills portfolio for PhDs that was developed by both academic and industrial sectors
University of Surrey Researcher Development Programme

- Details of the range of personal skills training, help and support offered to postgraduate research students:
  [http://www.surrey.ac.uk/library/research/researcherdevelopment/PGR/for_postgraduate_researchers.htm](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/library/research/researcherdevelopment/PGR/for_postgraduate_researchers.htm)

Research Councils UK

- Hosts an online suite of stories providing an insight about life as a researcher and the different career paths which researchers take:
  [www.rcuk.ac.uk/skills/percase/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/skills/percase/)

Windmills Programme

- Peter Hawkins' on-line virtual career coach for help with managing career development: [www.windmillsonline.co.uk/](http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/)

Information on Doctoral Graduates’ Destinations

- What do researchers do?

- What do researchers do? First destinations of doctoral graduates by subject (CRAC, 2009):

- The impact of doctoral careers: [www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impactdoctoral/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impactdoctoral/)
  Survey of PhDs and employers 7 and a half years after graduation, includes discipline specific leaflets.
Job Applications

‘Getting the first lecturing job’. (AGCAS) [AGCAS](www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/749-getting-the-first-lecturing-job)
Research from academics to identify the key areas they would look for when recruiting for a new lecturer in their discipline; the findings also give practical advice for those preparing for successful application for this academic role.

[http://jobsontoast.com](http://jobsontoast.com)
A blog written to help postgraduates and PhD students weigh up their non-academic career options, and learn how to market themselves for a mainstream job.

Job vacancies

- [Find a Post Doc.com](http://findaposdoc.com)
- Research Gate
- [Research is Cool](http://researchiscool.com)

Job vacancies overseas

- [Academic 360](http://academic360.com)
- [Academic Careers Online](http://academiccareersonline.com)
- [Academic Jobs EU](http://academicjobs.eu)
- Careerledu
- [Computeroxy](http://computeroxy.com)
- [EURAXESS Researchers in motion](http://euraxessתקפר.chem.english.com)
- [INOMICS](http://inomics.com)
- [Psychoneuroxy.com](http://psychoneuroxy.com)
- [Science Careers](http://sciencecareers.com)
Appendix A

Adverts for PhD jobs outside academia:

www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/postgraduates/howto-guides/find-adverts-for-phd-jobs-outside-academia/

Extracts from this link:

If you’re looking for adverts for jobs for PhDs, they are likely to fall into one of four categories:

- PhD entry-level programmes
- One-off PhD specific specialist jobs
- Experienced hire jobs
- Graduate jobs – the UK job market for graduates

PhD entry-level programmes

There are a small number of PhD entry programmes which recruit on an annual basis. These include some (but not all):

- management consultancies – eg McKinsey, Boston Consulting Group
- major industrial research organisations – eg BP, Astra Zenica, BP, Microsoft Research, GSK
- banks and others working in quantitative finance – eg. Bank of England, investment banks such as JP Morgan

These programmes are normally advertised once a year and are fiercely contested. As long as you have excellent evidence of your achievements both academic and non-academic, it’s worth considering them.

One-off PhD-specific specialist job sites

There have been several attempts over the years to set up non-academic job sites specifically for PhDs. In the main, they have struggled to survive (LinkHigher, PhDJobs.com) – employers probably saw little benefit in advertising on a site only
aimed at PhDs when they could also attract experienced candidates or good undergraduates/Masters in the sites they used already.

**Jobs sites with a special interest in PhDs**

However, job sites where non-academic posts requiring a PhD are often advertised, include:

- [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) although this is the prime UK site for academic jobs, they also advertise jobs outside academia. You can see the non-academic employers currently advertising at their ‘Browse employers by type’ page.
- [www.Phds.org](http://www.Phds.org) mainly US academic jobs but some non-US non-academic posts
- [www.ecmselection.co.uk](http://www.ecmselection.co.uk) Cambridge-based high tech recruitment consultants, including a page for PhDs
- [www.findapostdoc.com](http://www.findapostdoc.com) UK-based jobs board, mixture of academic and non-academic posts
- [www.Quantfinancejobs.com](http://www.Quantfinancejobs.com) an international jobs board for quantitative finance, with a page for PhDs
- [www.researchgate.net/jobs](http://www.researchgate.net/jobs) jobs board for a scientific researcher community site (they do keep encouraging you to sign up to their network, but you don’t need to do that to access the jobs they advertise)

**Targeted job searches**

Targeted searches of jobs sites can give you an idea not only of current jobs, but also which organisations might recruit PhDs in your discipline for future roles.

Job sites which do a combined search of online ads from agencies, jobs boards and jobs pages on employers’ own websites can be useful. Examples include:

- [www.careerjet.co.uk](http://www.careerjet.co.uk)
- [www.indeed.co.uk/](http://www.indeed.co.uk/)
- [www.simplyhired.co.uk/](http://www.simplyhired.co.uk/)

As an illustration, if you use 'PhD, economics' in the keyword search, with the location 'UK', in a targeted search on careerjet, this is likely to show hundreds of
jobs, including research associates and lecturers, health economists, management consultants in the oil sector and quantitative finance roles (these were all included in a total of 385 jobs in March 2013). However, for less vocational disciplines this approach may result in finding only academic posts.

**Experienced hire jobs**

A job advert may not ask for a PhD, but that doesn’t mean you can't apply. If you can argue that you have the skills and knowledge required for a job, it’s probably worth a try. If you have professional work experience gained before or during a PhD, you should definitely be looking at experienced hire jobs.

**An advert is often an idealised shopping list**

If the recruiter receives applications from candidates with the ideal experience, skills, knowledge and qualifications, you may struggle if you don't have experience.

However, you may not satisfy all of the criteria but could still be seen as the best choice - greater potential, less experience = less expensive, or they might just like you!

**Graduate jobs – the job market for graduates**

You may feel you’ve gone beyond new graduate jobs, but if you are not directly using the content of your PhD, UK employers may see you as a career changer, with no more work experience than a new graduate – galling as that may be.

In particular, if you have no relevant experience, you may well be paid the same as other first degree graduates, at least initially.
Graduate schemes vs graduate jobs

- 'Graduate schemes' - one or two year training programmes, often with large employers, often the fast track into management
- 'Graduate jobs' - jobs where they want someone of graduate level, but there's no formal long-term training programme (though jobs are likely to involve some initial training) and the entrants have a specific job to do from day one.

There are many, many more 'graduate jobs' than 'graduate schemes'. You should probably consider both.

Here are some reasons why:

You have the skills to compete

- With graduate schemes and some graduate jobs, you are normally being assessed on your potential and transferable skills, rather than relevant work experience.
- You have the opportunity to 'sell' the skills you gain as a natural part of your PhD e.g being able to use your initiative, self-motivation, analytical and communication skills.
- Any PhD has the ability to deal with a mass of sometimes conflicting information, identify what is important, construct a cogent argument and communicate and defend that argument – which employer wouldn’t want that?

Graduate schemes are not always filled by new graduates

- Graduate schemes with large employers are generally prestigious, competitive roles, and often the quickest route into a fast-track career.
- Graduates who are successful in getting on to these schemes sometimes have experience in one or even two jobs before gaining entry to these programmes. Therefore you may not be much older (and possibly be less experienced) than other successful candidates.
You may not stay as a 'new graduate' for very long

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that PhDs who enter either graduate schemes or graduate jobs may progress much more quickly than other graduates, once the employer realises what you are capable of achieving.
- However, it is critical to demonstrate that you are happy to join at the level of a new graduate and that you don’t think you are 'above' any other graduates recruited at the same time.

This may be the only realistic way of entering your chosen profession or employer without relevant experience

- Many big name recruiters only have one professional entry point for those without experience. This includes some major consultancies such as Accenture, the UK Civil Service Fast Stream, the NHS Scientific Training Programme and more.
- Even employers who take lots of PhDs may expect all graduates and postgraduates to experience their graduate training programme.
- If you really want to join a big name employer which operates this sort of programme, the only alternative may be to get professional experience with another employer through a direct hire route, and then switch employers once you have experience.

When are graduate schemes and jobs advertised?

- Big employer graduate schemes often recruit once a year, in the early autumn for entry the following autumn. If you miss their early deadlines you may have to wait for another year.
- Jobs with smaller employers, or one-off graduate jobs with any employer can occur at any time of year, although there is generally a peak in May and June (for a start date in summer/early autumn) – just in time for the new crop of graduates in June.

Where are graduate schemes and jobs advertised?

- Graduate schemes and graduate jobs are often advertised through general graduate job sites, such as www.targetjobs.co.uk, www.prospects.ac.uk and
www.milkround.com as well as via the Employability & Careers Centre’s online jobs board www.surrey.ac.uk/careers

- Graduate schemes are often promoted through glossy graduate directories, available at the Employability and Careers Centre from September each year.
- Graduate jobs can commonly be found on a wide range of general jobs website.