



Career Histories of PhD Graduates

Faculty: Life Sciences

Note: Blue = academic role

PhD Subject or Department & Grad date	Current Job Title	Organisation & / or Job Sector	Previous Job (s)	PhD Essential for role?
Anatomy and Developmental Biology, 2006	Research Scientist	GlaxoSmithKline	Postdoctoral researcher, UCL	Yes
Anatomy and Developmental Biology, 2006	Postdoctoral Researcher	Medical Research Council	Not stated	Yes
Anatomy and Developmental Biology, 2006	Postdoctoral Researcher	Institute of Cancer Research	Not stated	Yes
Anatomy and Developmental Biology, 2007	Editor	Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists	Not stated	Not stated
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2005	Scientific Software Team Leader	Diamond Light Source, Harwell Science and Innovation Campus	Scientific Software Developer, unspecified research lab.	No
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2006	Science Policy Advisor	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	Not stated	Not stated
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2007	Research Technician	A Sheffield Hospital	Not stated	No
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2007	Project Manager in the Drug Development Office	Cancer Research UK	Research Manager, Cancer Research UK	Yes
Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2008	Contemporary Science Content Developer	Science Museum	Science Communications Officer, Breakthrough Breast Cancer	No
Biology, 2007	International Policy Executive	Carbon Capture and Storage Association	Not stated	Yes
Biology 2007	Programme Manager	Medical Research	Not stated	Not stated

		Council		
Biology, 2007	Building Technician	University of Oxford, Department of Pharmacology	Not stated	No
Centre for Mathematics and Physics in the Life Sciences and Experimental Biology	Postdoctoral Research Fellow	The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	Statistician, Department of Primary Care and Population Science, UCL	Desirable
Human Communications Science, 2006	Lecturer & Research Fellow	Language and Communications Department, UCL	Not stated	Yes
Human Communication Science, 2008	Post doctoral researcher	UCL	Not stated	Not stated
Life Sciences, 2008	Postdoctoral Researcher	National Institute for Medical Research	Postdoctoral Researcher, UCL	Yes
Pharmacology, 2005	Postdoctoral Researcher	Pharmacology, UCL	N/A	Yes
Pharmacology, 2008	Laboratory post	Cambridge University	Postdoctoral researcher at UCL Department of Pharmacology	Yes
Phonetics and Linguistics, 2005	Postdoctoral Researcher	University of Gent in Belgium	Postdoctoral researcher at UCL	Yes
Phonetics and Linguistics, 2006	Lecturer	UCL	Research Associate on an ESRC-funded grant at UCL	Yes
Psychology, 2006	Trainee Clinical Psychologist	Camden and Islington Primary Care Trust	N/A	Not stated
Psychology, 2006	Clinical Psychologist	North Essex Partnership NHS Trust	N/A	Yes
Psychology, 2006	Clinical Psychologist	The NHS	N/A	Yes
Psychology, 2007	Clinical Psychologist	The NHS	N/A	Yes
Psychology, 2007	Clinical Psychologist	The NHS	N/A	Yes
Psychology, 2007	Postdoctoral Researcher	Wellcome Trust Centre, Institute of Neurology	N/A	Yes
Psychology, 2007	Educational Psychologist	Local Authority	Not stated	Yes
Psychology, 2007	Research Fellow	UCL	N/A	Yes
Physiology, 2006	Science Portfolio Adviser	The Wellcome Trust	Not stated	Not stated
Physiology, 2007	Medical Student	Not stated	N/A	Not Stated
Physiology, 2007	Programme Manager	A Health Consultancy Group	Not stated	Yes

Career Case Studies: Further Details

A – PhD Anatomy and Developmental Biology, 2006

A. is currently a Research Scientist at GlaxoSmithKline and before this she was a post-doctoral researcher at UCL. Her PhD is essential for her current position and the key transferable skills she uses include scientific writing skills, communication, team work and computer programming. Although she faced no major challenges after graduation, finding a role took time. She found her current role in an email that was sent to Post-Docs at UCL. When she was at UCL she visited the Careers Service and had a face to face appointment with a careers consultant to talk about career options. She found this very useful. The key advice she would give to current students is to build up transferable skills such as writing and communication.

- *Specific courses attended: Careers Networking Event - Alternative Careers in Science.*

T. – PhD Anatomy and Development Biology, 2006

T. is currently a post-doctoral researcher for the Medical Research Council. He says that his PhD was essential in securing this role. T. said that he didn't encounter any major challenges when he started working as a postdoc. and that he uses most of the skills and subject knowledge gained from his PhD.

J. – PhD Anatomy and Development Biology, 2006

J is based in the Institute of Cancer Research and is currently a post-doctoral researcher. J.applied for this role after it was advertised in Nature Magazine. His PhD was essential for securing this position, in particular his subject knowledge. The key transferable skills he uses include communication, problem solving, team work, planning, presentation and reporting. The role requires you to work independently most of the time – this was one of the initial challenges J. faced. When looking for work he used his networks to find out about opportunities in the job market. His advice to current doctoral students is to plan ahead, do lots of research on your chosen career path and talk to people in your personal networks about forthcoming opportunities.

N. – PhD Anatomy and Development Biology, 2007

N. is an editor working for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. An understanding of developmental biology is important for the role as are skills in writing. However N. had to retrain in editing. The big challenges N. faced when she started work in her present position were; adapting her academic writing skills to the various house styles of the organisation, adapting to the different working styles of her colleagues and line managers, the office environment and dealing with office hierarchy. These issues were especially challenging as N. was used to working independently during her PhD. Much of her career planning was undertaken using The Guardian newspaper as a way to search for roles.

A. – PhD Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2005

A. found his current role through a job advertisement and is working as the Scientific Software Team Leader at Diamond Light Source (Diamond Light Source is a new scientific facility in South Oxfordshire on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. The facility supports research in the life, physical and environmental sciences). Prior to his current position A. was a scientific software developer for a Warrington based research lab. The main challenge A. faced after graduating was making the change from working independently to leading a team. Although his PhD is not essential for his current role, the background and subject knowledge developed have been beneficial. As A. is in charge of a team of nine science software developers the key transferable skills which he currently uses, gained from previous work experience (and not necessarily his PhD) include: team management, adaptability, results orientation, decision making, communication,

problem solving and IT. A. advises PhD students to focus on transferable skills namely IT and communications if they wish to pursue a career in Biochemistry.

H. – PhD Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2006

H. is self-employed and is a Science Policy Advisor for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. Her knowledge of general science, and in particular life science, is important for this role. Also key are communication skills such as scientific writing. After graduating, H. did not want to stay in academia. However, H. maintains that for the roles she applied for she was considered 'over-qualified'. At UCL she attended the Careers Service CV workshop, and signed up for one to one appointment sessions with a Careers Adviser to practice her interview technique. She was very happy with the service, and speaking to the career consultants about alternative careers.

M. – PhD Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2007

M. is a Research Technician for a Sheffield Hospital. She got this job after graduation. She believes that her PhD was not essential for the role, but it provided her with key transferable skills such as communication and a firm understanding of statistical analysis. She did not face any challenges entering employment for the first time.

- *Specific courses attended: Communicating Research on the Web*

C. – PhD Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2007

C. works for Cancer Research UK as a Project Manager in the Drug Development Office. Before this she was a Research Manager at the same organisation. Her PhD was funded by Cancer Research UK and essential to being promoted to Project Manager. Key skills and knowledge she gained from her PhD that she uses for her current role include managerial skills, understanding of practical scientific knowledge, time management, communications and presentations and interpretation. C. believes that the PhD gave her a strong grounding and implanted in her a willingness to learn. While at UCL C. attended the Graduate School PPMS residential course that developed many transferable skills she uses today. She also took part in other management courses. She thought the events and the service were extremely useful as it also gave alternative career choices and highlighted how to use and develop her transferable skills. C. says perseverance is important for any doctorate student.

- *Ceri had a mock interview with a Careers Adviser*

A. – PhD Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, 2008

A. is the Contemporary Science Content Developer for the Science Museum in London. Prior to this she was the Science Communications Officer at Breakthrough Breast Cancer. A. found both roles through recruitment email notification and updates that specialised in science communications. Having her PhD has added value to the work she is doing, although it is not essential for her current role. She uses some of her subject knowledge to an extent and the key transferable skills she uses include information gathering, presentation and communication skills i.e. for writing science documents. The immediate challenge A. faced when entering employment for the first time was to adapt from an academic environment to an office environment which included simple things like attending office meetings, writing minutes and understanding and using MS Outlook (which took a bit of time getting use to). Whilst at UCL, A. attended career day's specific for PhD students and found this very useful. She would advise current doctoral students to take part in such workshops to help them think of career options. She also advises students to plan ahead early especially if you do not wish to stay in research and find relevant work

experience in the new area of interest e.g. science communication. A., in addition to her PhD, did a diploma in science communication to prepare her for her chosen career path.

- *Specific courses attended: Career Planning Beyond Academia, Careers Networking Event - Alternative Careers in Science.*

L. – PhD Biology, 2007

L. is an International Policy Executive for the Carbon Capture and Storage Association. His PhD was essential for securing this role as well as his broad set of skills including research, the ability to write about complex scientific subjects and project management. L. described his role at first as a 'sharp learning curve' from academia to the business world, especially as he was working in a very specific area, where he would have to learn new theories and practices. Overall he felt that the PhD prepared him for this change in pace. When at UCL, L. used the Careers Service and met with a career consultant to discuss various career options. He also attended organised career talks which he found very useful.

T. – PhD Biology, 2007

T. is a programme manager working for The Medical Research Council. His background, skills and knowledge in neuroscience prepared him for this role. T. did not face any immediate challenges when he first started as he was able to pick up useful skills whilst carrying out his new job.

- *Courses attended: PhD Induction Programme for Biomedical Sciences and Life Sciences*

M. – PhD Biology, 2007

Currently, M. is a Building Technician at the University Of Oxford Department for Pharmacology. He does not feel that he is using his PhD subject knowledge in his work, but he does feel he is using his technical communication skills. The key challenge that M. states he faced after graduation when looking for work was 'old age'.

H. – PhD Centre for Mathematics and Physics in the Life Sciences and Experimental Biology

H. found his current role as a Research Fellow at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine through jobs.ac.uk, and his PhD was desirable in securing this position. Prior to this he worked as a Statistician at UCL's Department of Primary Care and Population Science. The Key transferable skills he uses include communication (for teaching) and independent research. After graduation H. feels that he did not face any challenges when finding employment. He would advise current PhD students who are considering a career in academia to find work in a variety of research institutes early on in their careers. This will give you an idea as to what is out there and to develop key skills and training.

S. – PhD Human Communications Science, 2006

S. works as a lecturer and holds a fellowship at UCL's Language and Communications Department. While he was doing his PhD S. worked for the same department part-time which became full-time once he graduated. He found the original position advertised in 2002 in a professional magazine. His PhD is essential for his role as lecturer and he considers his subject knowledge very important. Also key are his transferable skills in planning, independent research, communication and data analysis. S. states that he did not face any particular challenges finding work after his PhD as he was already part of the department he now works for and he felt very prepared. S's key advice to current doctorate students is to gain as much relevant work experience in their chosen field as possible, whether that be voluntary or paid. This will help when applying for roles in the future.

C. – PhD in Human Communication Science, 2008

C. is a postdoctoral researcher at UCL employed by the same research group that she worked in as a PhD student. The position came up whilst she was finishing her PhD and so she applied and the topics and most of the research methods that she used in her studentship are still being used. C. attended several training courses provided by the Graduate School including 'Introduction to Life Sciences', 'Introduction to post graduate studies', 'How to Write Up' and 'How to get Publishing'.

- *Other Specific courses attended (Graduate School) - InfoSource - MS PowerPoint, PhD Induction Programme for Biomedical Sciences and Life Sciences, Your PhD Part 1 - Reading for a PhD - The First Important Steps, Matlab for Cognitive Neuroscience.*

P. – PhD Life Sciences, 2008

P. is a Postdoctoral Researcher for the National Institute for Medical Research. Before this he was a postdoctoral researcher at UCL in the same department in which he did his PhD. He found the first role straight after graduation with little difficulty and sees it as a continuation of his study. His current role was found through personal networking. His PhD is essential for the present role as is his understanding of genetics and molecular biology. He sites communication, analytical, problem solving, decision making and a strong ability to check information as important transferable skills he uses on a day to day basis. P. advises current students to do thorough research on the area of future work they are interested in pursuing whilst still at UCL and to speak to their supervisors as much as possible.

P. – PhD Pharmacology, 2005

P. went straight from his PhD to a Postdoctoral Researcher role at UCL in the same department. Subject knowledge and skills learnt during his PhD are essential as well the following transferable skills: analysis, team work, communication, decision making, gathering information, planning and organisation and independent research. P. heard about this role whilst at UCL and through personal contacts within the department. As he was familiar with the department, P. did not face any challenges. His advice to current PhD students is to know and research what you want to do before you leave UCL.

S. – PhD Pharmacology, 2008

S. currently holds a laboratory post at Cambridge University. Before this he was a postdoctoral researcher at the UCL Department of Pharmacology. For both roles, S.'s PhD was essential. His subject knowledge is key as well as his research skills developed during his PhD which he considers the 'foundation' for his work. Other key transferable skills include analysis, communication, team work, planning and organising one's time and personal motivation. S. found his current role through a UCL email advertising postdoctoral roles in other educational establishments. He attended a Graduate School event looking at jobs for postdocs in science which he found useful. He would advise current science-based PhD students to do the same, and to look outside science to compare alternative career paths. Also develop personal networks to find out what opportunities there are out there and to find out more about the organisation. This is just as important as sending out CV's blindly to companies/organisations.

- *Specific courses attended: PhD Employers Forum - Economics, Engineering and Science.*

R. – PhD Phonetics and Linguistics, 2005

After graduation, R. became a postdoctoral researcher in the same department where she did her PhD until summer 2009. She has since moved and is now a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Gent in Belgium. Her PhD was essential for both roles. Her independent research

skills are vital, as are her communication (for teaching), planning and problem solving skills. R. did not face any problems in securing her first role as a researcher as it was a continuation of her studies in the same department and she was therefore familiar with the team and staff. She found her current job through personal networking and was headhunted by the University of Gent. While doing her PhD at UCL, R. attended some Graduate School activities. Her top tip for current PhD students is to plan your career early and to get your work published as much as possible – preferably while you are still at UCL and have access to your supervisors for advice and assistance.

- *Specific courses attended: Publishing your thesis, Career Planning and Job Searching, CVs and Applications.*

B. - PhD Phonetics and Linguistics, 2006

As a lecturer in Phonetics at UCL, B.'s PhD is essential for this work. Prior to this she was a Research Associate on an ESRC-funded grant at UCL. She did not face any challenges entering these roles and found the positions through personal networks. The key skills used in her job include: team-work, networking, planning and organization, working independently and decision making. Whilst at UCL B. took part in Careers Service activities which she found really helpful. B. says getting a permanent academic job is really tough. You need a bit of luck as well as a lot of hard work. Be prepared to be flexible, take all the opportunities you can to improve your CV, network and try to stick around for as long as you can. Once you've left academia it's hard to get back in.

- *Specific courses attended: Careers Forum - Getting into Academia in the UK*

R. – PhD Psychology, 2006

R. is a Trainee Clinical Psychologist for Camden and Islington Primary Care Trust and is studying at UCL. This was an open application which she applied for. Key to her securing this post were her subject knowledge of psychology and research skills. One of the key challenges she faced after graduating was her lack of practical experience.

S. – PhD Psychology, 2006

After doing her PhD, S. immediately took up a Clinical Psychology post at North Essex Partnership NHS Trust. Her PhD was considered an entry requirement and essential. Key skills and knowledge she uses include client interviewing, neuro-psychology, numeric, and research skills. She felt well prepared entering this role after graduation and highlights the practical elements of the PhD as beneficial, although she did also mention the lack of placements / work experience as a hurdle.. She advises current doctorate students to decide upon a specialised area early and build up the range of transferable skills. Do not undersell yourself and focus on gaining experience.

Z. – PhD Psychology, 2006

Z. is a Clinical Psychologist for the NHS. The PhD was very 'practical based' and the subject knowledge was essential for the role and prepared her well. One of the key challenges Z. faced after graduation was that the competition for clinical psychologist positions was extremely strong. Her connections and networks from classmates to teaching supervisors helped her in finding her current role. Z. was clear from the start of her PhD what she wanted to do. As far as career planning was concerned, whilst doing her PhD she felt that she received the right amount of support and advice from within her department.

C. – PhD Psychology, 2007

C. is a Clinical Psychologist for the NHS. Her PhD is essential for this and C. felt prepared after graduation and entering employment for the first time, although she mentioned that competition for places was extremely high.

R. – PhD Psychology, 2007

R. is a clinical psychologist for the NHS. All her PhD training, skills and knowledge have been essential. The course itself was structured towards vocational training and she felt very well prepared. As a result she did not face any challenges when entering employment.

N. – PhD in Psychology, 2007

N. is currently an Educational Psychologist for a local authority, a job she found advertised in a publication from the Association of Educational Psychologists. As well as using her psychology knowledge she also uses her research, presentation and communication skills developed during her PhD. Whilst at UCL she attended a number of courses, including 'Presentation Skills' and she was partly funded by the Graduate School to attend a conference at which she presented a paper. In relation to funding from the research council she said that 'I wouldn't have got the job I am now in without my PhD'.

- *Specific courses attended: Your PhD Part 2 - Management Skills for Researchers, Your PhD Part 1 - Reading for a PhD - The First Important Steps, Your PhD Part 3 - Managing and Producing Your Thesis and Reports, Careers Forum - Getting into Academia, Research Communication Workshop - Poster Design and Preparation.*

C. – PhD Psychology, 2007

C. is a Research Fellow at UCL funded by the ESRC. This is a role he went straight into after graduation. The job was advertised amongst people in his department and he applied for it online. A PhD is essential for this role as are the PhD's subject knowledge and computing (mat-lab specific) skills. Transferable skills used include communication and analytical skills and the ability to learn new skills is important. C. took part in Career Service activities including an individual consultation with a career consultant and training in presentation skills. The service was good and useful. C. advises current doctoral students to get their work published to distinguish themselves from the competition and to receive funding in the future.

- *Specific courses attended: Introduction to MATLAB, Matlab for Cognitive Neuroscience.*

C. – PhD Psychology, 2007

C. is carrying out her post-doctoral research for the Wellcome Trust Centre at the Institute of Neurology. As she is following up from her previous study, all her subject knowledge from her Psychology PhD is used in this role. She did not face any challenges securing the position as the PhD provided her with a strong research foundation.

L. – PhD in Physiology (2006)

L. is currently working for the Wellcome Trust as their Science Portfolio Adviser. L. finds that her skills in communication and time management are important for this role and her neuroscience background is essential. Whilst at UCL, L. attended Graduate School activities. Although she cannot recall the exact name of the activities, she remembers that they were useful for her career development after graduating.

J. – PhD Physiology, 2007

J. is training to be a doctor and will graduate next year in Medicine. He believes his scientific knowledge and presentation skills have helped him in his medical training. J. did not face any challenges returning to study to be a doctor. He did use the Careers Services whilst at UCL when he was contemplating going into financial management. He found the one-to-one useful, as well as the information he received regarding MBA.

T. – PhD Physiology, 2007

T. is a programme manager for a health consultancy group. His scientific knowledge and background were vital in securing the role as well as his writing and data interpretation skills. One of the key challenges T. faced after graduating was where to proceed with his career. He wanted to move out of academia but was undecided what to do next. T. secured his current role through a recruitment agency.