

# What's Next After Graduation?

Whether you are a final year student, have just started university or are doing postgraduate study, take some time to think about your next step and how to make it happen.

## Getting started

A lot of us can feel overwhelmed when we think about future career paths. Some will want to plan every step, whereas others might choose to take some exploratory steps and see where they lead.

Either way, take some time to explore what is out there and what interests you. You won't be tied to any decisions you make now – in fact, a single career path for life is rare. See your next step as a chance to develop the skills, experience and contacts that could lead to your next opportunity.

There are probably a number of different job roles that you would enjoy, so don't put yourself under pressure to find that one perfect match. Keep an open mind, as you could discover potential job roles and employers that you had not considered before.

## Knowing what's out there

Find out as much as you can about different career sectors. What skills or qualifications do they look for? What is the working culture like? Take a look at the following tips for researching different options:

### Job websites

You can get some basic information about different industries and job roles from websites like:

- [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)
- [www.targetjobs.co.uk](http://www.targetjobs.co.uk)

They also provide links to more information, including vacancies.

Browse job sites for vacancies that sound interesting. Look at the details given, as well as the requirements. Is this kind of job something to explore further? If you are interested in a position you find, try to think about how you might get there.

## Talk to employers

Attending virtual or face-to-face employer events is a great way to ask questions about what it is really like to work in a particular job or organisation. Prepare for them in advance, thinking about what you want to find out and what you want to say to prospective employers about yourself.

## Social media

LinkedIn is really useful for finding out what other graduates from your course have gone on to do. Make connections with alumni, ask questions, buy them a coffee and chat about their work. Or is there someone you already know who has an interesting-sounding job? What is it about that job which appeals to you? Can you find out more?

Twitter can be another valuable tool for building networks, asking questions, and keeping up to date with developments in the industry. See our Networking and LinkedIn titles for further information.

## Case studies

Another way to explore careers is to hear from people working in them. Browse case study videos on websites like <https://icould.com>. Think about the following questions while you watch: What sparks an interest? What makes you think 'NO WAY'? Why do you have these responses?

Use your research to help you narrow down your options and contact your careers service to talk them through with someone.

## Giving things a try

Don't underestimate the value of getting involved in opportunities outside of your degree, whether that's work experience, volunteering, or being active in a society. These activities are a great way to enhance your skills. For example, part time work will help you develop time management skills as you organise your work and study.

These will make a big difference in future job applications. In fact, there are few jobs which do not involve communication, teamwork and negotiating skills, not to mention commercial awareness and understanding of the workplace. These are all transferable to graduate work, and employers will be interested in evidence of your competencies.

Involving yourself in additional activities also demonstrates a proactive mindset.

Be prepared to seize opportunities that present themselves - you can gain valuable skills and experience from almost anything. Even better if you seek out experiences that will build skills and insight directly relevant to the sector/s that interest you.

Remember, it could be that part-time job or volunteering position that introduces you to useful industry contacts or ignites a new passion.

## Thinking about your values and interests

Finding something that interests you and fits with your values will help contribute to a fulfilling career. You might know what you respond to, or you might feel unsure; either way, these tips below can help you figure out where to direct your energy.

### Work out your personal priorities

Are you the suited, booted corporate type? Creative and alternative, wanting a quirky environment? Passionate about making a difference, and need to be with like-minded people?

## Reflect on your strengths

What kind of tasks energise you? What tasks are you capable of doing, but tend always to postpone? Look for jobs which involve more of the former than the latter but remember all jobs will have some less enjoyable aspects.

Consider online career matching tools like Prospects Planner: [www.prospects.ac.uk/planner](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/planner). Even if you aren't convinced by the results, they can be useful for generating ideas and helping you think about why they weren't right for you.

## Final words of advice

### Be curious

Keep an open mind and keep asking questions. Take an interest in what other people do and how they got there. Be open to new ideas - an ideal role could be something you have never heard of before.

### Be flexible

Be aware of placing unnecessary limitations on your choices. If you rule too many things out in the search for perfection, don't be surprised if you're left with no options at all.

Consider a next step that will help you move in the right direction, even if it's not the position you had dreamed of. It could be working for an organisation that really interests you, even if the role isn't perfect. It could be a role that appeals to you but within an organisation that would not be your first choice.

Either can be an important stepping stone towards finding an option that's right for you.

### Be persistent (and positive)

The reality is we will all face rejection from employers at some point or try a job that we discover isn't ideal for us. The important thing is to learn from the experience and use it to help you make your next decision. Many people find that what they thought would be their ideal job is not right for them at all.

**This resource is available in alternative formats.**

Please contact your careers service or email [careersgroup@careers.lon.ac.uk](mailto:careersgroup@careers.lon.ac.uk)