

Career Planning

What are your options?

Knowing about the different career options available to you as a graduate is essential if you are to ensure that you have not missed an alternative that might suit you. It is sometimes helpful to start with your degree subject, particularly if you are studying a more vocational degree such as Engineering or Law, since there may be options that link closely to this.

Remember, however, that many careers for graduates (at least 40%) are open to people regardless of degree discipline, so merely thinking about options that link with your degree subject may only reveal part of the picture. This is especially true if you have studied a less vocational subject, such as English or History, where the directly related career options are comparatively fewer.

Most of us have some career ideas. This is another good place to start - investigate those ideas but try to identify what it is that attracts you. Sometimes our enthusiasm is based on an image that the career conveys (think of the media or government) or a particular aspect that we find attractive (the opportunity to travel, for example, or to help people). Try to get beyond that superficial reason and investigate other aspects of the career. Think about the typical job tasks, skills required, typical work environment, what motivates people within the career, qualifications and training necessary and the financial and other rewards.

Analysing your ideas in this way should help you to be clearer about how they match with any other factors that you think are important. You should also be prepared to go off at a tangent and investigate other ideas that you encounter along the way - sometimes the best suggestions and ideas occur seemingly by chance. Don't rule out the role of luck in this process!

Some careers may attract you but involve getting more experience first. A short period of relevant work experience might be valuable to help you do this. Alternatively, further study - either a short skills-based course or a longer postgraduate course - could be the best next step.

Strengths and skills

Knowing about yourself is one of the key factors in effective career choice and planning.

We are all individuals and have different balances of skills, interests and motivations that will influence our career choice. You need to start by identifying

the most important of these for you and considering the impact they will have on your career choice.

Some may be crucial; for example you might decide that your skills in listening effectively to others is of greatest importance and will influence your career choice accordingly. Alternatively, other factors may be less so. For example, you might decide that your strong interest in English Literature is a passion that you pursue outside your career.

What am I looking for in a career?

Answering this question will be easier if you can identify the following:

- **Your interests** - how you would like to behave; how you would like to interact with others; and the problems you would like to work on.
- **Your motivations** - the things you consider worthwhile in a job and that will contribute to your job satisfaction.
- **Your skills** - the things you are good at and how you would like to make use of these in a job.

A good starting point might be to brainstorm the main factors under the headings given above and then to put them into order of importance to you. Remember when listing your interests, motivations and skills, to consider all your experience including academic study, previous employment, student activities, voluntary work and interests. All of these might have some part to play in influencing your career direction.

Try to focus on the positive aspects to begin with; that is, what you are good at, what you enjoy and what satisfies you. It is very tempting to start with negatives, for example 'I don't want to work in an office', but this can easily lead to a set of factors you wish to avoid rather than any positive ideas. Beginning with the positive allows you to consider a larger range of possible careers; you can narrow down these options later.

Remember also that your outlook may change over time depending on your particular circumstances and what else may be happening in other parts of your life. Career decisions that you make now will not last forever and will need revisiting from time to time.

How to decide

Once you have identified a number of realistic options, approach this stage by listing the pros and cons of each. Think about the following issues:

- Qualifications necessary
- Hours of work

- Opportunity to travel
- Experience needed
- Training provided
- Promotion prospects
- Competition for entry
- Working culture
- Flexible working practices
- Geographical availability
- Salary and other rewards
- Mobility requirements

The above list is just a start; there may be other factors important to you not included. However, it is crucial that you have some way of prioritising the different options that you have so that you can begin the next stage with a sense of confidence and order.

It is likely that you will be considering several related career areas at once. This is fine - we do not fit neatly into one little box labelled 'career'. But if you have a sense of what you would prefer and why, then you will feel more in control of the whole process, and are likely to come across as a more realistic and credible candidate when making applications.

You may need some help doing this, however. It might be useful to talk to your friends and family about your ideas. You could also talk to employers about whether you are approaching things in the right way and whether they have any useful advice or contacts that you could follow up. Talking to a careers adviser can also help you to sort out your ideas and to plan your next steps.

I would now like to:

- Test out my career ideas in practice
Find out how work experience can help you decide on career direction
- Get advice directly from employers about my career ideas
Discover how you can contact employers for advice and information
- Find out about employers and the career opportunities they provide
Discover where to look for information about employers and their opportunities
- Talk directly to employers about what different careers involve
Find out which employers are visiting Leicester this year to give presentations
- Check out my career ideas with others
Find out how to access advice and guidance from others including careers advisers
- Use other career planning resources
Other career planning resources including specific career plans for different student groups, careers timeline, Prospects Planner, and analysis of the Graduate Employment Market.

Non-academic careers

You could use your knowledge and skills to enter a career outside the academic environment.

This could be something directly related to your subject or alternatively, you might consider entering a career unconnected with your subject but which uses the skills you gained, for example, your problem solving and analytical skills, or your communication and teamwork ability.

Many employers value the intellectual rigour that graduates bring to their work regardless of the exact subject discipline.

- Research options related to your subject
- Research specific job sectors and occupations
- Generate some career ideas using Prospects Planner
- Research vacancy information to see what is going on in the job market
- Read some of our frequently asked questions about career planning
- View career plan guides specific to you.
- Use other career planning resources - such as information about the Graduate Employment Market

Academic careers

Many people use their PhD as a starting point for an academic career and the natural progression is into postdoctoral research contracts during which you will build up greater experience and relevant skills.

Postdoctoral research contracts

These contracts will typically last between one and three years and may be undertaken at one or several institutions depending on your research discipline and your mobility. Such contracts may involve teaching as well as research; indeed, you may have had teaching responsibilities whilst doing your PhD. However, this is a very competitive job market and you will need to be highly motivated. Only about 20% of research assistants are likely to progress into long-term academic posts.

The earning potential in academia is not as high as many careers outside. Having said this, many research students do persevere and establish an academic career because they are fascinated by their subject and keen to learn more and pass on this knowledge to others and because job satisfaction is more important than high earnings.

So if you are still keen to proceed, consider the following tips:

Secure your first post:

This could possibly be as a research assistant or teaching assistant on a temporary contract. Try the obvious routes, for example:

- THES www.timeshighereducation.co.uk
- Jobs.ac.uk www.jobs.ac.uk
- PhD Jobs www.phdjobs.com

and also try networking and speculative applications. Make sure your academic CV is up to scratch.

Get published:

- Aim for journals with recognised national or international status in your field.
- Make sure that you attend development courses on writing and related areas
- Seek advice from more experienced researchers in your field.

Secure research and project funding:

- A good record in doing this will help your career. Again, seek training and advice in this from your institution and other staff, or assist others in the background preparation of bids for funding.

Get teaching experience:

- Most long-term contracts are in teaching rather than research so this experience will be useful.
- If you are not required to do this by your department, then volunteer or explore options within local colleges or the Open University.

Manage a project:

- This could be an undergraduate project or another task within the department, particularly one with a budget attached.

Get involved in assessment:

- This might be an internal institutional audit or an external audit conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency. Volunteering shows commitment and interest and will give you an insight into the way in which the department conducts its teaching and research and seeks feedback on this.

Keep up-to-date and network:

- Read widely about higher education and your institution so that you are better informed on both your subject area and more general issues.

- Attend conferences and volunteer for activities that bring you into contact with others in your own or related fields.
- Talk to staff in your own department about their career development and any tips they can give you.

Career Planning Resources

Prospects Planner

Prospects Planner is a computer-based careers guidance tool that can help you identify career ideas and much more

What is Prospects Planner?

Prospects Planner is a computer-based careers guidance tool designed to match your skills, interests and motivations to relevant occupations.

Prospects can help you generate career ideas, investigate them and plan your job seeking and applications strategy.

At the heart of the system is a database of over 400 graduate level occupations that have been investigated in depth and analysed for particular factors. Using Prospects Planner gives you access to this information in a systematic way so that you can plan your career realistically.

What help can I get from Prospects Planner?

- explore your skills, interests and motivations to generate a list of possible occupations to investigate;
- research what different occupations involve and how they compare with each other;
- investigate your chances of success by evaluating your career ideas against particular criteria;
- learn how to answer some of the challenging questions that are commonly asked on application forms and how to put together a CV that markets your skills and experience effectively.

You can use Prospects Planner to examine any or all of the above easily at your own pace, but don't expect to do everything at once! Depending on how you intend to use the system, you need to set aside about an hour for an initial session followed by subsequent visits.

Discuss your results

After you have explored the system, you might wish to discuss your results with a careers adviser.

Where can I find Prospects Planner?

Prospects Planner is available on the Prospects website (www.prospects.ac.uk/links/54) which will allow you to explore your skills, interests and motivations, generate career ideas and investigate them.

Career Planning - first year undergraduates

Careers guides to career planning - first year undergraduate students

There are many ways to develop your employability and personal skills during your time at University. Such skills are highly valued by employers and course admissions tutors who look for more than academic achievement alone. Please note that the action points in this guide are not necessarily in order of importance. Read through the whole plan and pick out the parts that are relevant to you.

1. Get involved in University life

Get involved in clubs, societies or with the Students' Union. All of these activities will help develop your personal skills. For example, if you have been involved in activities which help to develop your communication skills, organisational skills and team working skills, this will greatly enhance your CV. For further information please visit the Students' Union website at www.leicesterstudent.org.

2. Work experience

There are various opportunities available to get work experience through the University and other organisations. This experience will help you to increase your employability skills and will impress employers. It will also help you to gain an insight into a career you may be interested in and help you to make decisions about career choice. Investigate the following ways of finding out about work experience.

- Visit [JOBSONline](#) on the Student Development website for summer vacation work experience vacancies.

3. Find out about yourself

The more you understand about your own strengths and skills, the easier it should become to decide on a career area and think through your career aims. The points below suggest ways you may do this.

- Participate in Personal Development Planning (PDP). PDP is designed to help you to record, reflect on and develop your skills and is a useful way to build up your career profile
- Find out how to identify your [strengths and skills](#) and how to apply them to your career planning.

- Use Prospects Planner, a computer-aided guidance tool, to help you generate career ideas, investigate them and plan your strategy. It will help you explore what you are good at, what interests you and what motivates you; use this information to produce a list of possible occupations to investigate. This is available at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Pplanner.

4. Research possible careers

Start to plan ahead now; it will make it easier for you to gain relevant experience and skills over the next couple of years and to help you decide what career areas you are interested in.

- Look at Options with your subject leaflets to find out what you can do with your degree - also available at www.prospects.ac.uk
- Visit the [occupations](#) page in the Plan your future section to generate career ideas.
- Visit the Explore types of job section of the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.
- Discuss your plans and ideas with an adviser; you can do this even if your ideas are still fairly vague.

5. Consider the module choices for your second year

Consider how your second year modules may relate to your career interests. If in doubt, check with your personal tutor or seek advice from your careers tutor or an adviser.

6. Develop computer and other skills

- ***Computer skills***
Students of all degree disciplines need to be computer literate and familiar with word-processing packages, email and the Internet. Other useful computer skills include knowledge of databases such as Access, knowledge of spreadsheets such as Excel, presentation skills such as Powerpoint and web design skills such as FrontPage, Dreamweaver, HTML etc.
- ***Language skills***
Languages are valued by many employers and demonstrating that you have these skills can enhance your CV when applying for graduate jobs.

8. Develop study skills

These include note-taking and report-writing which are important skills not only for your degree course but also in work.

9. Attend departmental career development talks

These talks are given by university careers advisers and usually held in your department. Please check with your department for details.

10. Careers related events aimed at first year undergraduates

There are occasionally some events aimed specifically at first year undergraduates. If Student Development is notified of these they are advertised on the [events](#) pages on our website.

11. Visit the Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair (LSGF)

Visit the Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair which is held in November. This is a good opportunity to find out about possible careers and to network with employers.

Career Planning - second year undergraduates

There are many ways to develop your employability and personal skills during your time at University. Such skills are highly valued by employers and course admissions tutors who look for more than academic achievement alone. This Career Development Guide suggests ways in which you may develop these skills. Please note that the action points in this guide are not necessarily in order of importance. Read through the whole plan and pick out the parts that are relevant to you.

1. Work experience

There are various opportunities available to get work experience through the University and other organisations. Many employers offer specific programmes for second/penultimate year students. This experience will help you to increase your employability skills and will impress employers. It will also help you to gain an insight into a career you may be interested in and help you to make decisions about career choice. Investigate how to find out about work experience; suggestions appear below.

- Visit [JOBSONline](#) on the Student Development our website for summer vacation work experience vacancies.
- Investigate the opportunities available through the Shell STEP programme; visit www.shellstep.org.uk for further information.
- If you are interested in teaching there are opportunities to work with children of various ages and a variety of settings.

2. Skills programmes and insight courses run by Student Development

- Enrol on the [Experience Employability](#) programme and gain recognition for the skills and experience you are developing alongside your studies.
- Book a place for [Tomorrow's Managers](#) and gain an insight into careers in management. This is a two-day residential course that aims to help you to understand the issues faced by modern business professionals.

3. Develop computer and other skills

Computer skills

Students of all degree disciplines need to be computer literate and familiar with word-processing packages, email and the Internet. Other useful computer skills

include knowledge of databases such as Access, knowledge of spreadsheets such as Excel, presentation skills such as Powerpoint and web design skills such as FrontPage, Dreamweaver, HTML etc.

Language skills

Languages are valued by many employers and demonstrating that you have these skills can enhance your CV when applying for graduate jobs. Languages at Leicester is a university-wide programme of courses, at a variety of levels, in a range of modern European and other languages. Visit the Languages at Leicester website at www.le.ac.uk/ml/lal/ for further information.

Part time courses

Visit the further study <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/plan/> pages on our website to find out about part-time, evening and distance learning courses in Leicester.

4. Find out about yourself

The more you understand about your own strengths and skills, the easier it should become to think through your career aims, decide on what you want to do immediately after graduation and then make applications. Investigate the following ideas.

- Participate in [Personal Development Planning](#) (PDP). PDP is designed to help you to record, reflect on and develop your skills and is a useful way to build up your careers profile.
- Find out how to identify your strengths and skills and how to apply them to your career planning. Visit the [strengths and skills](#) pages for further information.
- Use Prospects Planner, a computer-aided guidance tool, to help you generate career ideas, investigate them and plan your strategy. It will help you explore what you are good at, what interests you and what motivates you. Use this information to produce a list of possible occupations to investigate. This is available at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Pplanner.
- Book an appointment through Student Development to complete a personality questionnaire to find out more about your strengths and attributes.

5. Research your career ideas

Plan ahead to help you decide what career areas you are interested in. Some options appear below.

- Look at Options with your subject leaflets to find out what you can do with your degree - also available at www.prospects.ac.uk (go to Careers advice then choose Options with your subject).
- Look in more detail at the Explore types of job section of the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.

- Attend the [Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair](#) which is held in November. This is a good opportunity to find out about possible careers and to network with employers.
- Look out for details of [careers related events](#) aimed specifically at second/penultimate year undergraduates.
- Once you have done some research you may wish to discuss your plans and ideas with an adviser. You can do this even if your ideas are still fairly vague.

6. Identify possible industries and employers who have opportunities in your chosen career

You can do this by any of the following ways.

- Visit the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk which has profiles of employers recruiting graduates.
- Visit the Careers Group, University of London Online Careers Library at www.careers.lon.ac.uk (go to Develop your career then choose On-line careers library) which has useful links to job hunting information, including employer directories. There is also information on employment sectors with links to employer websites, professional bodies, etc.
- Visit the Hobsons website at www.get.hobsons.co.uk which contains an A-Z listing of employers.
- Visit the Target Jobs website at www.targetjobs.co.uk/graduate-jobs which has a searchable list of nearly 400 employers.

Tip: Make sure you can meet employers' requirements and note their closing dates - some are at the start of your final year.

7. Other options open to you after your course

You may want to investigate other alternatives to getting a job after your degree. There is information available on areas such as:

- [postgraduate study](#), <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/plan/further-study>
- [self-employment](#), <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/exp/enterprise>
- [taking a year out](#), <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/plan/>
- [working abroad](#), <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/plan/>

8. Consider the module choices for your final year

Consider how your final year modules may relate to your career interests. If in doubt, check with your personal tutor or seek advice from an adviser.

9. CV and covering letter

Create/update your CV and covering letter and include the skills and experience you are gaining.

10. Attend departmental Student Development talks

These talks are given by careers advisers and are held in university departments. Please check with your department for details.

Careers Planning - finalists

Careers guide to career planning for final year undergraduate students

This Career Development Guide is intended as an aide-memoire for finalist students. It gives a broad overview of careers events and activities that are taking place during the academic year together with an indication of deadlines and closing dates where these exist.

BEFORE CHRISTMAS

1. If you don't know what you want to do? Then...

Find out about yourself

The more you understand about your own strengths and skills, the easier it will be to think through your career aims, decide on what you want to do immediately after graduation, and then make applications.

- Participate in [Personal Development Planning](#) (PDP). PDP is designed to help you to record, reflect and develop your skills and is a useful way of helping to build up your careers profile.
- Visit the [Strengths and skills](#) page of our website to identify your strengths and skills and apply them to career planning.
- Use Prospects Planner, a computer-aided guidance tool, to help you generate career ideas, investigate them and plan your strategy. It will help you explore what you are good at, what interests you and what motivates you; use this to investigate possible occupations; visit www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Pplanner/.

Research your career ideas

- Visit the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk and look in Explore types of jobs.
- Once you have done some research you may wish to discuss your plans and ideas with an adviser; you can do this even if your ideas are still very vague.

2. Apply for jobs

Remember that some large recruiters have closing dates before Christmas, so make sure you start to look as soon as possible.

[JOBSONline](http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/vacancies/jobsonline) [http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/vacancies/jobsonline] has details of vacancies for finalists in a wide range of career areas.

Other websites with graduate opportunities are listed below.

- Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.

- Register with My Prospects at the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk for details about vacancies.
- Hobsons website at www.get.hobsons.co.uk.
- Target Jobs.co website at <http://targetjobs.co.uk/graduate-jobs>.

5. You may like to refer to the resources listed below.

Employer Directories

- Prospects Employer Directory.
- Hobsons GET Directory.
- The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers.

Vacancy bulletin for finalists

- Prospects Finalist - vacancies for when you graduate.

Career specific information

- Options with your subject leaflets - find out what you can do with your degree – also online at www.prospects.ac.uk (see Careers advice then Options with your subject).
- Specialist magazines on careers such as Law, Engineering, Teaching, Finance, etc.

Use other resources

- [Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education](#) (DLHE) information - find out what other graduates from your course have gone on to do.
- Visit www.prospects.ac.uk for information on specific industry sectors (see Jobs and work then Explore job sectors).
Plus, a wide range of other careers related resources relating to psychometric assessments, making applications, CVs, interviews, etc.

6. Attend careers fairs and events

Visit [Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair](#) (LSGF) in November
The Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair (LSGF), organised by Student Development at the University of Leicester and the Careers Service at De Montfort University, is Leicestershire's largest recruitment fair.

Attend employer presentations & workshops (autumn and spring)

Many graduate employers and professional organisations visit the campus during the autumn and spring terms to give presentations about their organisation or profession. If a company you are interested in is attending, ensure you attend to pick up some insider knowledge. Visit the [events](#) pages on our website for further information.

Attend careers workshops and practice aptitude test sessions

Look on the [events](#) [<http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/sd/careers/events>] pages on our website which has information relating to the following:

- careers fairs and events on campus;
 - careers fairs and events taking place around the country;
 - the Bulletin Board - careers related notices.
- Check early closing dates, for example, Civil Service Fast Stream applications at www.faststream.gov.uk.

7. Consider postgraduate study

Some occupations require a postgraduate qualification. For further information visit the [postgraduate study](#) pages on our website or the Postgraduate study section of the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.

9. Gain work experience

If you have not already secured some work experience, you may want to try and get some now to help improve your CV. Work experience is essential for some careers and postgraduate courses.

- Some employers provide Christmas vacation work experience schemes. For details of work placement vacancies check [JOBSONline](#) on our website.
 - You may wish to consider voluntary work to help break into the career you are interested in.
- If you are doing part-time or voluntary work you may be interested in obtaining accreditation for this through the [Experience Employability](#) programme.

AFTER CHRISTMAS

- Continue to apply for jobs using JOBSONline and other vacancy sources.
- Submit applications for further postgraduate study soon, as postgraduate funding applications deadlines fall from May onwards.
- Look out for summer placements, e.g. with legal firms - some have early closing dates.

TOWARDS THE END OF YOUR COURSE

- Continue to apply for jobs using JOBSONline and other vacancy sources.
- Find out about careers fairs at other institutions where different employers may be represented. These are listed on the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.
- Read Prospects Finalist for information on future vacancies and other careers fairs (published at the end of May).

Career Planning - graduates

1. Apply for jobs

Immediate Vacancies: Although many graduate vacancies are advertised during

the autumn term, a large number of employers advertise throughout the year. Graduate vacancies are advertised in various locations including those below.

- Immediate graduate vacancies are advertised on the Student Development website at [JOBSONline](#). More examples of websites with immediate graduate [vacancies](#) can be found on the Student Development the website.
- National newspapers advertise immediate graduate vacancies. Visit the [finding out about vacancies](#) page at our website for details of which days these are advertised.

Future Vacancies: These vacancies are open to finalists and graduates. Most start the following summer or early autumn.

- Future vacancies are advertised at [JOBSONline](#).
- Prospects Employer Directory has information about vacancies. Hard copies are usually available for reference at Student Development; the information is also available on the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.
- Register with My Prospects at the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk for details about vacancies.
- Hobsons GET Directory also has information about vacancies. Hard copies are usually available for reference at the Student Development Zone; the information is also available on the Hobsons website at www.get.hobsons.co.uk.
- The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers has information about vacancies; again, hard copies are usually available for reference in the Student Development Zone.
- Prospects Finalist - although written for finalists, most vacancies are suitable for people who have already graduated. Published five times per year, it is usually available at the Student Development Zone or online at www.prospects.ac.uk.

2. Look at career specific information

- Find out what you can do with your degree. Investigate what previous graduates from your course have gone into. Ask staff in your department.
- Look at specialist magazines about careers such as Law, Engineering, Teaching, Finance, etc.
- Visit www.prospects.ac.uk (see Jobs and work then Explore job sectors) to find information of specific industry sectors.

3. Attend careers fairs and events

As a graduate you are welcome to attend the following careers events organised by Student Development.

- Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair (LSGF) held in November is Leicestershire's largest recruitment fair.

- A number of graduate employers and professional organisations visit the campus during the autumn and spring to give a presentation about their organisation or profession.

5. Work experience

For certain career areas you may need to have some relevant work experience prior to entering a particular profession. Examples of ideas for getting work experience appear below.

- Getonwithgraduates is a regional graduate scheme for the East Midlands which gives recent graduates (up to three years) the opportunity to put into practice the skills they have gained during their years of study. The scheme offers a 12 month employed placement that may lead to permanent employment during which graduates will gain valuable commercial experience and the chance to apply their skills and knowledge within business. For further details visit www.getonwithgraduates.org.uk.
- Graduate Gateway is run by the Knowledge Transfer Team at Loughborough University and involves graduates from the East Midlands region working in local companies for 26 weeks on specific business improvement assignments. Visit www.lboro.ac.uk/business/collaborations/gateway_grads.html for further details.
- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships enable recently qualified graduates (known as KTP Associates) to work in companies managing challenging projects central to the development needs of participating companies. You can register for a postgraduate qualification at the same time. These projects usually last for two years. Further details at www.ktponline.org.uk/graduates.
- Voluntary work in the UK or abroad is another useful way of getting experience to break into a new career. Visit the [volunteering](#) pages on the Student Development website for details of working in the UK and abroad.

6. Postgraduate study

Visit the [further study](#) pages of our website if you are considering postgraduate study and would like further information about how and when to apply.

8. Haven't got a clue what you want to do? Then...

Find out about yourself: The more you understand about your own strengths and skills, the easier it should become to decide on a career area and think through your career aims.

- Use Prospects Planner at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Pplanner/ to help you generate career ideas, investigate them and plan your strategy. It will help you explore what you are good at, what interests you and what motivates you. Use this information to produce a list of possible occupations to investigate.

Research your career ideas: Once you have found out more about your strengths and skills, take the next step and research your career ideas.

- Visit www.prospects.ac.uk for an A - Z of UK Careers Services.
- Visit the Explore types of job section of the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.
- Once you have done some research you may wish to discuss your plans and ideas with an adviser (see point seven).

Career Planning - postgraduates

Careers guide to career planning for postgraduate students

There are many ways to develop your employability and personal skills during your time at University. Such skills are highly valued by employers who look for more than academic achievement alone. This Career Development Guide is intended as an aide-memoire for postgraduate students, particularly for those on a one-year course. It gives a broad overview of careers events and activities that are taking place during the academic year together with an indication of deadlines and closing dates where these exist.

When should career-planning start?

You will notice that more is happening in the autumn term than later in the year. This is partly because many large recruiters start recruiting at this time and their activities and publicity reflect this. It also reinforces the fact that, as a postgraduate student, you need to make effective plans for after your graduation. The following are examples of things you may want to think about.

- The beginning of your course is the time to start investigating career ideas if these are not yet clear.
- You might have career plans but feel that you need some relevant work experience to add to your postgraduate qualification. This can take some time to organise, so start thinking about this before Christmas.
- If you want to continue your study to PhD level, then early research into possible institutions and potential sources of funding will be required.

Be ahead of the game by beginning your planning as soon as you start studying!

BEFORE CHRISTMAS

1. Career choice

- Unsure what to do after your course? Use Prospects Planner, a computer-aided guidance tool, to help you generate career ideas, investigate them and plan your strategy. It will help you explore what you are good at, what interests you and what motivates you; use this information to produce a list of possible occupations to investigate. This is available at the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Pplanner.
- Investigate what previous graduates from your course have gone into. Look at the [first destination](#) information of previous postgraduates to find out what they went on to do after their graduation.

2. Employers and Vacancies

- Many large employers have early closing dates (some as early as November/December) for applications for future vacancies. Start your research early so that you do not miss these.
- Check early closing dates for Civil Service Fast Stream applications at www.faststream.gov.uk.
- Visit [JOBSONline](#) on the Student Development website for details of future vacancies.
- Read national newspapers - different types of vacancies appear on different days.
- Visit the [Leicestershire and Student Graduate Fair](#) (LSGF) in November - the county's largest recruitment fair.
- Refer to the Prospects Directory available online at www.prospects.ac.uk.
 - Register with My Prospects at the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.
- Find out what [careers fairs](#) and [events](#) are taking place on campus by visiting our website.
- Visit our web site for details of [other careers fairs](#) being held around the UK. Some focus on specific areas of work, e.g. finance and IT, whilst others are more generic.

3. Work Experience

- Some employers offer vacation work placements with early closing dates - for details of placements check [JOBSONline](#) at our website.

5. Study Skills

Improve your study and presentation skills. Further information is available at [develop your academic skills](#) on the Student Development Zone and the Student Development website.

AFTER CHRISTMAS

- Submit applications for further postgraduate study soon as postgraduate funding applications deadlines fall from May onwards.
- Look out for summer placements, e.g. with legal firms - some have early closing dates.
- Visit the [events](#) pages on the Student Development website at to check which employers are visiting the University of Leicester this term to give presentations.
- • Check early closing dates for Civil Service Fast Stream applications at www.faststream.gov.uk.

TOWARDS THE END OF YOUR COURSE

- Find out about careers fairs at other institutions where different employers may be represented. These are listed on the Prospects website at www.prospects.ac.uk.
- Read Prospects Finalist for information on future vacancies and other careers fairs (published at the end of May).

Career Timeline

Use the [interactive timeline](#) to help plan your career

This is me

This is taken from www.reading.ac.uk/thisisme. Thanks to the team at the University of Reading for allowing us to reproduce their guidance here.

This Is Me

Help your career to take off – let people find you on the web, and show them what you can do. We all know social networking can be a bit of fun – organising parties, uploading those awkward moments captured forever in photographic form, flirting, playing games or even organising the occasional study session. How about making sure your more credit-worthy efforts are available for recruiters or potential customers to find?

Privacy

Make sure you use the privacy settings in whatever online system you use (Facebook, Myspace etc.) to full effect. Decide who you want to see things, and make sure you set the permissions so that only they can see them – and not the rest of the world (including your Mum and Dad and that prudish boss you might want to work for in a couple of years time).

Showcase

Obviously, you rock. But you can't expect the rest of the world to know that, unless you tell them. Put up examples of your work, and make sure that they can be seen. Get people to give you feedback on them, and show that you can learn from the experience. You can create a blog or web pages for free on many different services.

Network

Don't be shy – get involved in conversations about your field of interest. It doesn't have to be terribly academic – if you are a sports fan and can offer insights, post them somewhere and start a conversation with people. If you can

spark discussion, and have civilized conversations with people, there is a good chance it will help build your reputation.

Think about using tools like Twitter to get involved in global conversations and build up a network of people who you can learn from, and who can let you know whether you come across well to potential employers.

Help yourself, help others

It can be hard to spot when other people mention you. Get friends to occasionally search for you online, and to let you know if they find things which reflect badly on you – and do the same for them. Don't just search on their names, either – nicknames and their interests can be useful ways of finding results you may miss otherwise.

Mitigate risks

There is always the chance – unless you lead the life of a saint – that something you do will find its way onto the internet. You might have a photo taken, and someone else might put a silly caption on it which can be misinterpreted, or you might actually be doing something daft and one of your friends might decide to share.

If it does happen, negotiate for it to be removed. If that fails, explain online why it really isn't as bad as it looks. Make sure someone looking for you online is more likely to find positive stuff than anything which might sneak in without you knowing about it.

Lock-down

Before you lock-down your social networking profile and become a virtual recluse – think about whether other people will assume you are just a very private person, or whether there is a hint that maybe you have something to hide.

Name yourself well

Email Ids, monikers and nicknames – all ways of saying something about yourself online. Many people find they start out using a pseudonym in order to be able to distance themselves from the discussion, or because the system asked them for a nickname and they used one their mates have been calling them for years. But, let's face it, iamalovegod may not impress an employer, and some people won't even see an email from fluffypinkbunnyknickers@aol.com because their spam filters might consider the message to be junk.

Whether you like it or not, anything you do has an effect on your 'personal brand', so you better make sure the brand has a good name to go with it.

The This Is Me project was sponsored by Eduserv to produce learning materials to help people discover the potential, and avoid the pitfalls, associated with their Digital Identity.

You can check out the website at www.reading.ac.uk/thisisme