

CAREER PLANNING GUIDE FOR RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES

Academic careers – and beyond



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been written for all PhD and other postgraduate research students, contract researchers and postgraduates who have recently completed a research degree at the University of Kent. Its aim is to help postgraduates to achieve their career aims by providing information on opportunities for postgraduates, advice on job-seeking and details of the help and resources available to you – at the University of Kent and beyond.

A doctoral degree is the highest-level academic qualification, and represents a significant achievement, but it is being attained by more and more students.

Despite this growth, job prospects for graduates from research degrees are still good, although competition for postdoctoral research posts and other junior academic positions is fierce. For this reason, it is important to be flexible and look at alternative careers. Fortunately, many other employers value the knowledge and skills that PhD students develop during the course of their studies.

This booklet looks at career opportunities for postgraduates and at the skills and knowledge which they can bring to a large number of jobs – not just those directly related to their study or research.

The booklet can only offer a general introduction and you should follow it up by using the various information resources to which it will point you or by discussing your own personal queries and issues with a careers adviser.



CHOOSING A CAREER

Start by thinking about what motivates you. A love of research and an enthusiasm for your subject may have kept you going through several years of PhD study but try and consider other things that you enjoy doing or that bring you satisfaction. Think too about what you can offer employers in addition to your degree, and what else is important to you in life.

You can break these issues down into topics such as:

- **Your interests**
- **Your values**
- **Your skills**
- **Your opportunities** – the job market for your area of interest
- **Other criteria** – such as location, salary or work-life balance

Further information about career decision making include:

- *Choosing a Career* CES booklet www.kent.ac.uk/ces/publications.html
- Postgraduate students www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/postgraduate.html
- Work in www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/workin



The above two programs involve answering questions that will create a profile of you – your interests, skills and values – and match it against a database of graduate careers. Neither will tell you your ‘perfect job’ but they are a useful starting point.

- **Vitae: Exploring Career Opportunities for Researchers** www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/career-management-for-researchers/exploring-career-opportunities-for-researchers-1 Includes ‘career stories’ from over 100 individuals with a research background.

- **What Can I Do with my PhD?**
 - Academic jobs <http://targetpostgrad.com/advice/what-can-i-do-my-phd-academic-jobs>
 - Jobs outside academia <http://targetpostgrad.com/advice/what-can-i-do-my-phd-jobs-outside-academia>
- **‘What can I do with my degree in..?’** www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/degree Information on the destinations of Kent graduates and postgraduates plus links to related employers and career areas.

SKILLS DEVELOPED THROUGH POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

Employers want postgraduates to be able to offer more than their academic subject knowledge. They also look for a range of skills: transferable skills such as teamworking, business awareness and communication skills plus, depending on the employer, more practical skills such as languages, numeracy, laboratory techniques and quantitative methods. These skills are just as important for academic posts as for jobs in business and other areas and you will need to show them on your job applications.

The transferable skills most often sought by employers of postgraduates are:

- **Written communication skills**
The ability to use the English language effectively in order to express your ideas clearly and at a level appropriate for your audience.
- **Verbal communication skills**
Again, using language effectively but with the additional ability to speak confidently and clearly and to pitch what you say in a way that will have the desired impact on your listeners.



- **Analytical ability**
Considering differing ideas, information and theories; picking out key points and details in order to construct or support your arguments; following complex reasoning; applying logic.
- **Critical thinking**
Ability to question and not to take things at face value. Interpreting information and arguments; considering their validity in the light of issues such as their source, the evidence provided to support them and other material on the topic. Constructing a reasoned argument for your own point of view.
- **Planning and organising**
Approaching tasks and projects systematically; managing time; setting targets; monitoring progress; delegating; ability to handle a number of different tasks simultaneously.
- **Research/Investigative skills**
Use of a variety of sources; constructing research proposals; testing different theories; using specialist techniques such as statistical packages or laboratory equipment.
- **Innovation**
Ability to take a fresh approach, think laterally, be original and creative, willing to try new things and adapt to new environments.

SKILLS DEVELOPED THROUGH POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (CONT)

- **Problem solving**

Taking a systematic approach to problems; being flexible in finding solutions; looking at different angles and approaches; identifying the most appropriate solution for the situation.

- **Maturity and confidence**

Wide experience of life generally and specifically of working with other people; belief in yourself; credibility with employers and clients.

- **Self-motivation**

Ability to work independently without the need for constant direction or feedback.

Anticipating what needs to be done; setting your own goals and working towards them. Being positive and professional. Taking responsibility for your own work and personal development.

- **Commercial awareness**

An awareness of the environment in which an organisation operates (public sector and charitable organisations face commercial and financial pressures too!). A focus on the purpose of the organisation and its clients and/or stakeholders.

- **Co-operation**

The ability to work with other people, inside and outside your own department or organisation. Working together to achieve a common goal. Allocating and sharing responsibilities and tasks.

Many of these skills are developed to a high level through postgraduate research. Others can be demonstrated through other aspects of your experience, such as teaching, employment outside academia and extra-curricular activities.

Analysing your skills

The sites listed below offer various resources to help you identify the skills you have developed through your studies and those you wish to develop further:

- The **Vitae** website www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/career-management-for-researchers/understanding-yourself
- **CES Employability Skills** pages www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/skills.html

Once you have worked through one or two of these resources you may wish to talk over the results with a careers adviser – see the back cover of this booklet for contact details



“During the PhD, I developed a number of key skills vital to my current role: organisational skills, people skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, administrative skills, willingness to work long hours and team working skills.”

www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/working-in-higher-education/1877/from-phd-to-first-post-in-academia

USING SKILLS IN JOBS

Below are a few examples of jobs that may be entered after postgraduate study, and the key skills that are needed to succeed in them:

Academics obviously need good research, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as written communication to produce books and journal articles. Verbal communication is not only needed for lectures and conference presentations – academics may be interviewed for TV or radio programmes and also need to advise students individually. Planning and organising skills are needed to help manage administrative tasks such as organising exams, producing reading lists and marking as well as combining these tasks with teaching and research.

Commercial awareness is needed in helping to attract students to the department, write bids for research funding, etc. Finally, academics have a considerable amount of flexibility in managing their own work which demands self-motivation.

Research scientists must be able to plan and organise projects and experiments, solve problems that occur during their research activities and analyse the results. They must be competent in writing to produce reports about their work and also to bid for research funds, where innovation may be a requirement. They usually work in teams and therefore need to co-operate with other people. They have to give presentations to managers and other non-scientists, which demands good verbal communication skills.

University administrators need good verbal communication and co-operation skills to build relationships with academic and support staff, students and external contacts. They need commercial awareness to manage budgets and to appreciate the needs of their university, which also demand good problem solving skills. Planning and organising are needed to meet the changing demands on staff and services. They need the ability to work well under pressure, prioritise tasks and should be self-motivated and able to use initiative.

Clinical psychologists need strong critical thinking, analytical, and verbal communication skills to assess and help clients. They may need to devise innovative approaches to solve problems when working with clients. They have to co-operate with colleagues from other disciplines and agencies, such as medical practitioners and social workers, using written communication skills to produce reports. Clinical psychologists are often involved in research and, as their career develops, may work on a self-employed basis, requiring self-motivation and commercial awareness.



ACADEMIC CAREERS

An academic position is the main career goal for many postgraduate students but, even after a PhD, this is not an easy option. The academic job market is highly competitive, particularly in humanities and social sciences, with only small numbers of all PhDs continue into postdoctoral research.

Even for those who do succeed in entering an academic career, life is not easy. Academia is far from being an ivory tower: it can be stressful, with long hours, and insecure. The vast majority of researchers are employed on short-term contracts and, increasingly, so are early-career academics. Many academics work over 50 hours a week and there is constant pressure: pressure to produce high-quality research that can contribute to the University's position in league tables and, for those engaged in teaching, pressure in terms of large class sizes, student expectations and greater teaching or tutoring workloads.

Having completed a PhD does not automatically mean that an academic career is the right option for you and you should carefully consider:

- What do you want out of a career and is that a good match for a career as an academic?
 - Do you enjoy teaching as well as research?
 - How important to you are salary and job security?
 - Are you prepared to take on administrative responsibilities?
 - Does your career need to fit in with that of your partner or family?
 - Have you looked at all the possible career options, or do you want to stay in academia because you don't know what else you could do?

- Have you got what it takes to make it in the competitive world of academia?
 - Do you have the confidence to flourish in a high-pressure environment?
 - Do you still have a passion for your research? Have you the motivation to publish it and to present it at conferences?
 - Are you good with people and a good networker?
 - Are you resilient? Can you multi-task and work under pressure? Can you cope with criticism and rejection?
 - Are you flexible and able to cope with change?
 - Can you be proactive in seeking out opportunities to develop your career (including bidding for funding)?



A useful site for help with deciding on an academic career is www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk. This site is for anybody interested in becoming an academic and provides information on what academics really do and how people typically enter academic careers. While it does not gloss over the challenges involved in an academic career, it also gives you lots of suggestions for how you could improve your chances.

Academic career paths

It is rare for a postgraduate to obtain a position as a lecturer immediately after completing their PhD. More typically they will start out in a role such as Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant or Postdoctoral Fellow. These will generally be temporary contracts lasting one to three years and may lead on to a permanent academic post, although there is no guarantee of this.

What do academic employers look for?

Universities will look at more than just the quality of your research: candidates for academic posts should be able to offer all of the following:

- **Publications** – You should be able to demonstrate that you have begun to disseminate your work to the wider academic community through published journal articles or books and/or presenting papers at conferences.
- **Teaching experience** – Teaching at undergraduate level is obviously also an essential part of an academic career and you should therefore take advantage of any opportunities to gain teaching experience during your postgraduate studies. Departments frequently require, or strongly encourage, their research students to do this but, if your own department does not offer any teaching opportunities, you may be able to obtain part-time teaching in further and adult education.
- **Administrative skills** – Academic staff also have a number of administrative responsibilities (such as convening courses, managing exams, sitting on committees, quality assessment, etc) so any experience of people or project management would be helpful here.
- **General transferable skills** such as those set out on pages 3-4
- Computer proficiency in standard packages;
- Effective presentation skills;
- An ability to relate well to students and to appreciate and react to the needs of individual students and their circumstances;
- Organisation and administration skills;
- Commitment to working with diversity;
- Ability to engage the interest and enthusiasm of students and inspire them to learn;
- Research experience at postgraduate level;
- PhD or equivalent.

Desirable:

- Teaching experience at degree level;
- Publications in peer-reviewed journals;
- An ability to attract research funding.

Finding jobs

Academic posts, both in the UK and abroad, are normally advertised in the Guardian, Times Higher Education and on www.jobs.ac.uk – see page 11 for a full list of links.

The academic job market is highly international with lecturers and postdoctoral researchers moving between countries to find employment and develop their career.

A typical Person Specification for a junior lectureship:

Essential:

- Breadth or depth of specialist knowledge in the discipline to work within established teaching and research programmes;
- An ability to lecture and conduct seminars clearly and effectively;
- Skills in research relevant to the subject area;
- Effective oral and written communication skills;

MAKING APPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC POSTS

When applying for research posts or lectureships, make sure you have a good understanding of the department, the position and the broad area of teaching and/or research.

All this may seem self-evident, but candidates for academic posts are often too focused on their own specific research and don't think about what the job actually involves or what they can contribute to the department through their skills or experience. So, before you start to apply, put your research skills into practice to find out all that you can about the department, its staff and students (any contacts that you have built up through networking will be invaluable here). This will help you to focus your application and to demonstrate clearly what you can offer them that distinguishes you from the other candidates.

Academic CVs follow a different format from a 'normal' CV, most notably in the content and the length. They are generally longer than the 'standard' two-side CV, often running to five or six pages, as they need to include information such as:

- A detailed **synopsis of your PhD** and any other research;
- **Publications** – books, articles, reviews, conference proceedings;
- **Conferences** attended (especially if you have presented papers);
- **Membership** of relevant professional bodies;
- **Teaching experience** – running seminars, helping with practicals;
- **Awards** – such as funded studentships, academic prizes or travel grants;
- **Details of relevant scientific or specialist packages/techniques** you are familiar with such as SPSS, LexisNexis, NMR or chromatography;
- **Evidence of skills** such as IT, time management, project management and report writing;
- **Work experience** – only list experience relevant to your application, such as teaching, 'university ambassador' roles, exam invigilation, industrial placements and internships;
- **References.** Usually three academic references (one or more from your postgraduate degree plus one from your first degree) and possibly one from an employer or another individual who can comment about your personal qualities as opposed to your academic performance.

In your covering letter or personal statement, you should outline your skills and strengths, show real enthusiasm for your subject, evidence of a wider knowledge of the area beyond your specialised field of research and awareness of recent developments.

For further information and advice see www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/cv-templates/2069/academic-cv-guidelines



INTERVIEWS FOR ACADEMIC JOBS



Interviews for academic, research or postdoctoral posts are no longer relaxed, informal chats: there is fierce competition for these posts and you need to prepare well, show enthusiasm and ask appropriate questions.

Before the interview:

- Research the university and the department carefully;
- Check out the research interests of the current academic staff;
- Try to speak to current students in the department and look at notice boards, social networking sites, etc;

- Read over your application again. Try and put yourself in the interviewers' shoes and think of questions they may want to ask you;
- Think of questions you want to ask.

At the interview:

An academic interview is likely to be carried out by a panel made up of a number of members of staff, from the faculty or school, the academic department and the human resources department. Remember that, unlike HR staff, academics may not be trained interviewers, so be aware that you may occasionally have to take the initiative.

The questions

You can expect to be asked about:

- Your research: research already carried out, work in progress, your future direction;
- Studentships, research grants and other funding achieved;
- Teaching experience – what you have taught; to whom; teaching and assessment techniques;
- Any relevant specialist technical expertise;
- Any other ways in which you have contributed to University life, such as administration experience, involvement in open days and student recruitment.

INTERVIEWS FOR ACADEMIC JOBS (CONT)

The interviewers will also want to find out about you as an individual – will you fit in to the department? Are you a good team member?

Many questions at academic interviews demand a fairly detailed response but make sure that you don't go into too much detail! Watch the panel for signs of impatience and pause occasionally, giving them the chance either to encourage you to continue or to move on to another question.

Remember that the interview panel will be looking at your ability to think for yourself; your capacity for independent and original thought and your ability to communicate and reason. Be polite, but don't be afraid to enter into discussion and to stand your ground. Some interviewers will deliberately challenge your replies to see if you can stand up for yourself and argue your point effectively.

They will also be looking for evidence of strong interest in your subject, as well as enthusiasm for the subject. Do you keep up to date with developments? Do you genuinely seem to enjoy talking about the subject?

Make sure that you ask questions of the panel, as this demonstrates your enthusiasm and interest.

Interviews for academic posts frequently require candidates to give a short presentation – usually on an aspect of your research. This allows the panel to assess not only your teaching skills but also your ability to plan, research, analyse and present information. You can also expect to be asked questions, and how you respond to these will also form part of the assessment. Presentations need to be pitched at the right level – at a well-informed and knowledgeable audience who may nonetheless not be familiar with the detailed nuances of your specialised area of research. Alternatively, you may be asked to prepare a presentation of the sort that would be delivered in an undergraduate lecture.

There may also be a social side to the interview, such as a lunch to which all members of the department will be invited. While this will not be assessed, remember that people who are not on the actual interview panel may also be asked for their opinions of the candidates, so don't get involved in any heated debates or inappropriate topics of conversation.

Further advice

For further advice on academic interviews, including presentations, commonly-asked questions and questions you could ask the interviewer, see:

- **Vitae** www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/pursuing-an-academic-career/applying-for-academic-jobs/academic-job-interviews
- **Jobs.ac.uk** www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/interview-tips
- **An Academic Career** www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk/interviews/academic-questionbank

OTHER CAREERS IN UNIVERSITIES

As well as academic roles, universities employ staff in a variety of academic-related management and support roles.

These include:

- **Administration**, including student registration and admissions, central services administration, departmental co-ordination;
- **Library and information services**;
- **Scientific support**, e.g. laboratory technicians;
- **Careers, employability and enterprise**;
- **Human resource management**, including staff development/training;
- **IT and systems support**;
- **Public relations and marketing** posts, promoting universities to prospective students (in the UK and overseas), alumni, businesses and the community;
- **Student welfare and support**: counselling and advice services, disability support, international student support;
- **Accommodation, catering and conference services**;
- **Arts, music and events**;
- **Financial management**;
- **Health and safety**.

Vacancies in these areas may be advertised at national level on the same sites as academic posts but, at entry-level grades, may only be advertised on the individual university's website.

Finding a job in the higher education sector

- **www.jobs.ac.uk**
- **www.PhDjobs.com**
- **The Guardian**
<http://jobs.guardian.co.uk/jobs/education/higher>
- **Times Higher Education**
<http://jobs.timeshighereducation.com>
- **Academic Jobs EU**
www.academicjobseu.com

Most of these sites list jobs covering a range of academic, research, managerial and support roles in higher education plus vacancies in other public and private sector bodies that are appropriate for postgraduates and researchers.

There may also be specialist listings for particular subjects or job roles, such as Inomics (www.inomics.com) for Economics or LIS JobNet (www.lisjobnet.com/jobs/jobs) for library work – check with academics or careers advisers to find out the best sources for your subject area.



CAREERS IN TEACHING: OUTSIDE UNIVERSITIES



Teaching adult learners in further education (FE) is a popular option among postgraduate students.

The FE sector includes further education colleges, sixth-form colleges, community colleges, adult education centres and prisons.

While no formal academic qualification is required for to teach in FE, it is an advantage to hold a professional teaching qualification focused on the FE sector.

If you intend to teach in schools, you should have some work experience with the relevant age-range. Most providers expect you to have at least two weeks' classroom experience before you begin teacher training.

For further information on teaching careers, teaching qualifications and entry requirements see:

- <http://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk>
- www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/workin/siteteach.html
- <http://targetjobs.co.uk/career-sectors/teaching-and-education>
- Researchers in Schools programme
<https://researchersinschools.org>

CAREERS IN RESEARCH: OUTSIDE UNIVERSITIES

Humanities

Outside education, jobs which make direct use of a research degree in the humanities are unlikely to be more numerous at postgraduate level than they were after your BA. Areas such as the media, publishing and the heritage industry are highly competitive and, although your degree should be able to help you demonstrate an advanced level of skills and knowledge, employers will usually be seeking practical and transferable skills rather than purely academic expertise.

However, there are plenty of opportunities for using research skills beyond your immediate degree subject.

Humanities PhDs have entered roles in areas such as policy research in public sector and voluntary organisations, consultancy and market research.

Social Sciences

You may be particularly interested in the field of social research – working for central or local government bodies, think-tanks and consultancies. Our pages on political and social research careers www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/workin/politics.html give more information about these employers.

Commercial organisations, such as market research and advertising agencies, also make use of social research techniques and skills.

Subjects such as law, business and economics can also be applied with commercial employers specialising in these fields.

Science and technology

Research and development scientists are employed in many organisations including manufacturing companies (cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, defence, etc), energy and utility companies, Government laboratories, charities and Research Councils.



OTHER CAREERS

Many students completing their PhD will have been engaged in full-time study for around twenty years, from first starting school, through a Bachelor's and possibly a Master's degree followed by three or more years of research. Your experience of employment outside education may be limited to casual part-time student jobs that offer no inspiration for alternative careers and this may make the job market outside academia seem unattractive and daunting.

However, for the significant numbers of doctoral graduates who do not wish, or who find themselves unable, to stay in higher education a change in career direction is certainly possible at this stage. This may be through entering employment immediately or may require professional training.

When you start to research the job market, you may only find a limited number of opportunities that specifically request a postgraduate degree. You may find yourself applying for jobs and graduate schemes that are equally open to undergraduates.

There is no disgrace in this and, as a doctoral graduate, you have considerably more to offer these employers than you did at the end of your first degree.

At the most basic level, you have an extra few years' experience, which makes you more mature and focused. Undertaking a degree at this level demonstrates commitment, initiative and motivation. This, along with the skills developed through any further experience such as teaching, can help you to stand out when competing with Bachelor's and Master's degree graduates.

See pages 3-4 for an outline of the employability skills developed through postgraduate study and research.

You may instinctively start by looking at 'graduate recruitment schemes'. These are typically offered by larger employers in business, finance, IT, law, technology, engineering and the public sector. In general, these are open to graduates at all levels and, while employers are happy to recruit postgraduates onto their graduate schemes, these graduates apply through the same route as undergraduates and are not treated any differently in the recruitment process or when they start work. A recent (small-scale) survey of ten of the largest graduate recruiters found that only four even mentioned postgraduate qualifications and that only two of these had some specific roles where a postgraduate degree might be an advantage.

These roles are not just in science, technology and engineering, there are also opportunities in finance and business.

However, graduate training schemes are not the only route into a successful career: on average, only a quarter of graduates will join these schemes every year. Outside these schemes, there are plenty of opportunities where a postgraduate degree will be a requirement or an advantage and employers will value the specialist knowledge or practical skills gained through your studies. This is particularly true in scientific and social research, economics and international organisations, as well as education. Some of these employers may have an annual graduate intake, but many more will only recruit on an ad hoc basis, as and when they need somebody with a particular knowledge base or skill set.

FINDING A JOB – VACANCY SOURCES



If you are looking for employers who run large-scale graduate recruitment schemes, you can find details on sites such as:

- **Prospects**
www.prospects.ac.uk/graduate-jobs
- **TARGET Jobs**
http://targetjobs.co.uk
- **The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers**
www.top100graduateemployers.com
- **Milkround** www.milkround.com

These are national resources which chiefly focus on large corporate and public sector recruiters. Many of these employers will begin recruiting in September for graduates to start work the following autumn, so apply in good time.

APPLYING FOR JOBS OUTSIDE ACADEMIA

While your postgraduate study and research will have equipped you with a large number of the skills that employers want for graduates, if you are applying for posts outside the academic or research field you will need to convince employers of two things:

- that the skills you have gained can be useful in a non-academic setting;
- that you are motivated and enthusiastic about the position that you are applying for.

In other words, you not only need to convince prospective employers that you **can** do the job, but also that you **want to** do the job. This is particularly important for research postgraduates who may otherwise run the risk of being viewed by employers as 'over-qualified' or as 'frustrated academics'.

Your CV should therefore be more similar to an 'undergraduate' CV, using your postgraduate study alongside work experience and other activities as evidence of the skills and personal qualities required in that particular position. In general, these CVs will be shorter than academic CVs – not more than two sides of A4 when printed out – and should include:

- **A brief outline** of your research or course;
- **Work experience** – here, any type of experience may be relevant: part-time and vacation work, voluntary work, work shadowing, etc.;
- **Extra-curricular activities and interests** – these do not just help to demonstrate your skills but also show that you have a life outside your studies!
- **Evidence of skills** such as IT, time management, project management and report writing;
- **References.** Usually just two references, one academic and one employer or character reference. The CV itself can just say 'references available on request'.

One of the best PhD CVs I have seen treated the candidate's PhD as a project which they had managed through to a successful conclusion and included it under their work experience. The following example is based on this model, but you may prefer to use a format which puts the emphasis on your skills rather than your career history. Which you choose is up to you and depends on what you feel is best suited to you and the job for which you are applying.

The Vitae website includes examples of PhD students' CVs in different styles www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/researcher-cv-examples/list-of-vitae-cv-examples.



Eleanor Estraven

121 Darkness Way, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8NE
Tel 01227 764521 Email eje999@kent.ac.uk

Career aim

A Humanities researcher with project management experience that demonstrates my adaptability, dependability and determination to get a job done as effectively as possible. I am seeking a graduate position in consultancy which will utilise my research, organisational, numeracy and analytical skills

Career history

PhD Researcher, University of Kent, 2016-2020

- Carried out a self-directed research project which analysed and compared the language of Charles Dickens with that used in contemporary court reports;
- Secured funding and managed an £11000 per annum budget and expenses;
- Undertook qualitative and quantitative research and analysed evidence to find solutions;
- Created and interrogated databases;
- Carried out statistical and linguistic analyses;
- Communicated findings through written papers and conference presentations;
- Successfully completed a 100,000 word thesis on schedule.

Museum Assistant, British Museum, 2015-2016

- Worked independently to catalogue artefacts and display exhibits and enter their details on databases. Accurate and speedy work was essential.

General Assistant, University of Warwick Students' Union, 2013-2015

- Part-time assistant available at short notice for a range of Hospitality and Student Union activities.

Education and qualifications

2016-2020 University of Kent

PhD English Literature

2012-2016 University of Warwick

BA English and Drama First Class Honours

2008-2012 Shriftgrethor Technology School, Swansea

A-levels English (A), History (A), French (B)

9 GCSEs at grades A-C including English and Mathematics

Interests and activities

- Chair of Postgraduate Students' Society, University of Kent
- Played for women's football team at Kent and Warwick

Skills

- Good knowledge of all MS Office packages
- English mother tongue; fluent Welsh, competent French and German.

References

Available on request

INTERVIEWS

The format of these, and the questions asked, will naturally vary according to the employer and the type of job but in most cases will be different from academic interviews. You will usually be interviewed by one or two people rather than a panel and the questions are likely to focus as much on your skills and competencies as on your studies and research.

As with academic interviews, thorough preparation is the key to success. This will help you to appear confident at interview (however nervous you feel inside!) and provide evidence of your motivation and enthusiasm by showing that you have taken the trouble to research the career area and the employer to which you are applying.

As part of this preparation, you should:

- Think about why you want the job – what motivates you? – and what you have to offer that will help you to do the job – relevant experience, skills and/or competencies;
- Prepare examples that demonstrate these skills;
- Anticipate questions that you might be asked during the interview.

Demonstrating your motivation and competencies will be doubly important if you are applying for a position that has little or no direct relevance to your studies. While employers may find your academic qualifications impressive some, particularly in smaller organisations, may be intimidated by them. They may also have concerns about the relevance of these qualifications, your practical and people skills and your commitment to a career outside academia.

A survey of employer attitudes to postgraduate researchers found that the following concerns and negative perceptions were most often raised by employers outside academia:

- Lack of commercial awareness
- Difficulty in adapting to the working culture outside university
- Over-specialisation and lack of adaptability
- Unrealistic expectations – of, for example, salary and levels of responsibility

While many employers in this survey were enthusiastic about recruiting PhDs, you should be aware of these issues and think about how you can counter them. Using all aspects of your experience, including part-time work and extra-curricular activities, rather than just focusing on your studies, is a helpful tactic.

Questions about the relevance of your postgraduate degree, and your reasons for changing career direction and applying for a particular position, can easily be seen by the candidate as hostile but are a legitimate way for the interviewer to test your motivation and enthusiasm, so don't let yourself get flustered.

The questions

You can expect to be asked questions such as:

- Why did you choose to take a postgraduate degree?
- What did your research actually involve?
- How might your degree be useful to us?
- What do you know about this organisation?
- Why are you applying for this job?
- What do you expect to be doing in this job?
- Apart from your degree, what can you bring to the job?
- What other jobs have you applied for?
- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
- You have a research Master's degree – have you thought about carrying on into a PhD?
- You have a PhD – don't you want to be a university lecturer?

These questions are designed to assess your motivation – do you **want** the job? Other questions will aim to assess your competencies – can you **do** the job?

Competency-based questions will follow the format 'Give me an example of a time when you have ...':

- had to convince a person or group to do something that they were initially reluctant to do;
- had to analyse detailed information to extract the essential points;
- had to manage a heavy workload or a number of conflicting priorities;
- had to organise your time to achieve a specific aim;
- worked with a group of other people to achieve a common goal;
- taken a major decision;
- succeeded in a challenging task in difficult circumstances;
- solved a problem in a creative way;
- acted to improve a process or make a system work better;
- had to explain something in detail to a person or group who knew little about the subject;
- begun a task and then had to change your approach and do something in a different way.

Your studies will have given you material to use in answering many of these questions, but it is a good idea to provide a number of examples from outside academia as well – this will reassure the interviewer that you have experience beyond university and have gained skills from 'real life' as well as from study and research.

For more advice on competency-based interviews, and further example questions, see www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/competency.html

Useful sources of information and help

- **Careers and Employability Service web pages** on interviews: www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/interviews.html. These include hints on the questions you might be asked, and how to handle them, questions you might ask the interviewer and advice on preparing for interview.
- **The Careers and Employability Service booklet, *Interview Skills***, covers the same topics in a

handy pocket-sized booklet. Pick up a copy from the Careers and Employability Service building or download it from www.kent.ac.uk/ces/publications.html

- The CES runs regular talks and workshops to give advice on interview preparation and the chance to practise your interview skills – see our events pages www.kent.ac.uk/ces/events for details.
- If you have an interview coming up you are welcome to talk to a careers adviser about it: we can go through your application with you and suggest questions that you may expect to come up.



WHAT DOES THE CES OFFER POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS?

Postgraduate students and researchers can access all of the general facilities and services offered by the CES, such as:

Careers advice and information

- A quick query advice service for preliminary careers advice, help with CVs and application forms and to answer quick queries;
- Individual guidance interviews to provide in-depth advice and help with your career choice and planning;
- An extensive website www.kent.ac.uk/ces;
- Booklets to help with career planning and preparation.

Employer information

- Employer directories, such as PROSPECTS and Times 100;
- Vacancy database of jobs, internships and research opportunities;
- Help with applications, interviews and psychometric tests;
- Employer presentations
- Annual Employability Festival and Careers Fair.

Services and support specifically for you

Since all postgraduates are individuals, and the nature of their research also varies widely, web-based and print resources can only be of partial help in making career decisions and putting them into

practice. We hope that this booklet will be a useful starting point for all postgraduates in their career planning, but do follow it up by making use of the one-to-one information, advice and guidance that the Careers & Employability Service can offer you from an early stage of your degree. It is not a good idea to put off any thoughts about careers until the day that you submit your thesis!



LINKS AND RESOURCES



- **Vitae** www.vitae.ac.uk – a national organisation supporting the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes. The site includes careers pages tailored to researchers.
- **Jobs.ac.uk** offers many ebooks and other useful resources covering topics such as 'Career Planning for PhDs', '10 Career paths for PhDs' and 'A Practical Guide to Planning an Academic or Research Career' as well as advice on applications and interviews for academic jobs www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/resources/ebooks-and-toolkits

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Library reading list:

<https://rl.talis.com/3/kent/lists/FF0C2BED-2CEA-9ACC-C12F-4E2E65662E62.html?login=1>