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Graduate Job Searching Handout

Whether you are already working, planning on doing a Masters/PhD, or going on a gap year – for most of you, sooner or later, it will involve finding – and getting – a job, and hopefully a good one!

Before you start

Job hunting can be **very labour intensive and emotionally draining**.

It requires you to be:

- **Resourceful** – it is true that a large percentage of jobs (about 80%) are never advertised, so you often have to dig deep to find opportunities.
- **Efficient** – you only have a finite amount of time, energy, money and motivation, so spend them all well.
- **Resilient** – you will face rejection, but don't give up! You can recover, adapt and thrive.

The good news is that as students/graduates, you have a lot of expertise in information gathering/researching, planning and being assessed. The game may change but the elements are pretty similar:

- Job hunting involves **research and planning, information gathering, critical analysis**.
- Applications require you to **understand the brief and present accurate and insightful written work**.
- Interviews require you to be **articulate and well presented**.

Getting Started

The first rule of job hunting is, **no matter how anxious/keen you are to get a job after graduation, resist the temptation to blanket-apply for everything and anything**. Employers can spot a blanket application a mile away. Job hunting this way is exhausting for you, and you are on a fast track to lots of rejection which will quickly eat away at your confidence. You also run the risk of bouncing from job to job that you do not really want, and damaging your professional reputation/CV.

What to Do

1. Ask as many people as you can for their advice and experiences – especially graduates of 5 years or less wherever possible.
2. No-one can tell you what you should be applying for – only you know what you need, and what you want, but at the very least, put together two lists:

<u>What I need</u>	<u>What I want</u>
e.g. minimum earnings location commute time job security flexible hours inclusive workplace	<i>Not just your ideal job, but your working environment – think about the type of person you are, your personality, your qualities and your skills – this might help you form a picture of the kind of work you find satisfying.</i>

There will be things you are willing to compromise on (long hours/low wages/security) for the right job/opportunity, and other things you can't compromise on that may limit you (family responsibilities, dependence on public transport) – so maybe put together a third 'Compromises/Limitations' list if they do not sit well in your 'need/want' list.

From then on you can put together a plan based on your circumstances – if you are restricted to a geographical area, you can start researching employers in this catchment area, or if you are flexible, start from your ideal job (and employers) and work your way out from there.

When to start looking: A quick note about the graduate recruitment year

Obviously, you will find jobs advertised all year round, but there are traditionally two seasonal peaks – from May-July, and again Sept-Nov.

If you are keen to start looking, the recruitment process takes a minimum of 4-6 weeks, but if you see something interesting now, there is no harm in contacting the organisation and explaining when you will be available. As a rule of thumb, unless it is a graduate scheme application, wait until around April.

Graduate schemes

Many leading UK employers across all sectors run graduate schemes. Graduate scheme deadlines are often between the end of November and January; you will need to plan ahead to apply for a place on one of these highly-competitive training programmes.

Some organisations have an all-year round application window, whereas others will close early when sufficient applications have been received. You will need to keep checking and plan accordingly from your second year of study if you want to land a place. Think beyond your degree too; many schemes accept degrees of a certain grade in any subject, so a Humanities graduate for example may forge a career through a local council or NHS scheme.

To begin your search for a scheme that suits you, take a look at the Prospects website:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job/graduate-schemes>

Graduate schemes are mainly advertised on graduate recruitment websites such as Target Jobs <https://targetjobs.co.uk/>, or on the company websites directly, such as Aldi: <https://www.aldirecruitment.co.uk/>. Check organisational pages on social media too – recruiters often use LinkedIn.

Graduate scheme selection processes are tough. Candidates are whittled down via application forms, online tests, filmed interviews, and assessment centres. You will need to thoroughly prepare at each stage to remain in the process. Although a lot of work, the reward is substantial. Successful candidates earn a good starting salary and usually within two years will work on managerial level, have gained a qualification, or both.

Where to Look

You do not have to stick to graduate jobs in your academic discipline:

Employers are looking for graduates from all backgrounds, but your discipline does matter – for example, science based graduates are generally highly methodical, great at critical analysis and forecasting; similarly, a humanities graduate is likely to have strong writing skills and the ability to distil large quantities of information. **Your modules and assignments have been specifically designed to develop your higher level skills and competencies which make you employable as well as to develop your subject knowledge.** Your academic discipline gives you a unique point of view, so use this to your advantage and do not think you have to restrict yourself to a narrow range of sectors!

Some Graduate Jobs websites:

Prospects <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>

Target Connect <https://targetconnect.bangor.ac.uk/home.html>

Target Jobs <https://targetjobs.co.uk/>

Gradjobs <https://www.gradjobs.co.uk/>

Inside Careers <https://www.insidecareers.co.uk/>

Graduate Recruitment Bureau <https://www.grb.uk.com/>

Milkround www.milkround.com

The Guardian <https://jobs.theguardian.com>

Diversity Dashboard <https://diversitydashboard.co.uk/>

Give a Grad a Go <https://www.giveagradago.com/>

Graduate Fog <https://graduatefog.co.uk/>

My PLUS Strudents' Club <https://myplusstudentsclub.com/>

The handout entitled **Directory of Useful Links** provides more extensive suggestions of possible websites.

Social Media

Social media's influence on recruitment methods is ever-growing. It is a low-cost and wide-ranging tool that employers use to advertise posts. Being savvy with your social media and using it as a research tool when making job and speculative applications (for example, you hear that an organisation is expanding, has just won a big contract, or funding etc.) can put you at a substantial advantage.

Follow the recruiters that you are interested in to keep track of any openings. You can also post on your accounts that you are looking for work so your network can inform you if they see any suitable jobs. More and more businesses also post their vacancies on groups as opposed to paying for press adverts; join local groups such as 'For Sale in Bangor' or 'Jobs in North Wales' and search for jobs and vacancies within the groups. There are Twitter feeds dedicated to jobs too: Job Centre Plus in North West Wales - @JCPinNNWales – share local jobs all day!

Don't forget to follow us: @BUEmployability – we regularly share job opportunities!

LinkedIn: Ensure you work on your profile before you start networking and job searching. You must have a professional profile picture your headline must be purposeful and concise. e.g. "Business graduate seeking opportunities in Financial Marketing". Think about your close and wider networks and keep an open mind with searching. Use LinkedIn Groups to expand your knowledge of sectors to help to prepare for interviews.

Graduate Jobs Fairs

These take place throughout the year regionally, although there is a big fair in Manchester in October. Also look out for Grad Jobs Live in October/November in London & Birmingham. You can easily search 'graduate careers fairs' online for a list of upcoming events.

The representatives attending rarely have hiring power, but chatting to them means you can find out all sorts of information you can simply not get anywhere else (certainly not on their website) so you can find out when they hire, what is on the horizon, what they look for, what they mean by 'experience required', and mistakes to avoid. It also helps immensely with building confidence when talking to practitioners / professionals / employers.

Other places to look:

Professional Bodies / Learned Societies

Some organisations will advertise vacancies this way if they are looking to attract niche candidates/graduates who are genuinely interested and committed to working in a particular sector.

Recruitment Agencies

You might already have used your local recruitment agency to find summer work / temp work, but if you are open about what work you would ideally like to get into, the staff will keep their ears and eyes open for you, especially if you are proving your worth as a reliable temp. If keep your aspirations to yourself, no-one can help you!

Check out the agencies first before you sign up, agencies which join the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) agree to abide by their Code of Professional Practice and pass a compliance test every two years to continue being members. REC has a membership directory of recruitment agencies – you can search by sector or location:

<https://www.rec.uk.com/membership/member-directory>

Local Universities

Did you know that you can access our Service for three years after graduation? If you aren't staying in North Wales, you can contact the university closest to you as they may This comes in very handy if you want some application / CV / interview advice, or you relocate and you want to know what graduate employers are in the area.

Approaching Employers – Asking for a job

Not all job vacancies are advertised, as it's very expensive – also, widely advertised vacancies mean lots of poor quality blanket applications for employers to sift through.

There's definitely some worth in sending speculative letters to a select number of employers, so long as you do your homework first!

1. Know about the company

Find out a key contact – a named person who has the authority to potentially offer you something, or even if it's just a heads up to future hiring plans. It also demonstrates your attention to detail!

2. Be clear about what you want but don't beg!

Try not to suggest 'I would like to apply for any vacancies'. What are you realistically hoping for? An entry level position? An opportunity to gain some experience? The more you know about the company, the more you'll know what's potentially possible.

3. Be positive and specific about what you can offer / how you can contribute

This is where you sell yourself – demonstrate that you are a good fit for the organisation, and that you are keen to contribute to their success.

4. Convey attitude and enthusiasm

You could have all the qualifications and experience in the world, but if you don't have a positive attitude and enthusiasm, then it's difficult for an employer to be convinced that you can put your knowledge and skills to good use.

5. Follow up with a phone call

If you do not receive a reply after two weeks, don't be afraid to follow up with a phone call. The worst that can happen is that they politely thank you for your interest, and tell you they aren't currently hiring. But you will have shown that you are keen and can take initiative, which is hard to come by in candidates, so you have the opportunity to leave a positive impression and brownie points when they do start hiring.

The 'work experience required' paradox

It is a frustrating reality that employers will often require you to have experience, but you cannot get the experience if you do not get the job – you can often feel stuck between a rock and a hard place.

You are encouraged to get as much experience as possible during university, in order to explore your career options, develop your skills and improve your confidence. Employers want graduates with some experience so that they can be sure they understand the realities of the profession/sector (e.g. long hours, working outdoors in all weathers, lots of boring paperwork) and not be phased by the demands of the job.

If you are finding it difficult to get into the work you want to do without the requisite experience, you might want to reconsider getting a foot in at a lower level, or accruing experience through volunteering or an unpaid placement / work experience arrangement.

Can you afford it?

If you do not have to earn right away, then use the time to get as much relevant experience as possible – you can use the above websites to find volunteering / placement opportunities. However, the chances are that you will have to earn at least some money, so you could look into working part time or flexible hours, and putting a day / weekend / evening aside for work experience. 1 day a week for 6 months might be enough to convince a potential employer that you are serious and committed.

Strike a Balance

Even if you are 'working for free', this will still use up an organisation's resources, making sure you are insured, shown the ropes, trained and supervised (if required). However, be clear about what experience you are hoping to accrue – you might find that you are making cups of tea or data inputting with no change on the horizon. If you take on an unpaid placement or volunteer, make sure you both know what's expected upfront. You should also not be working for any significant length of time without being paid (unless it is a well-defined volunteer role) - ultimately it is your choice but make sure you get out what you put in.

Taking an interim job

Chances are you will find yourself in an interim 'for now' job in an office, retail or hospitality, worrying that you will be stuck there forever. Try not to be dismissive about any job you do - you can embrace everything an interim job can offer you without letting it define you.

- **You are building your professional reputation** – reliability, punctuality, willingness to help, teamwork, communication – the essential building blocks of ALL professions.
- **Get involved in as much as possible** – training, assisting others, helping out in another department – they are all opportunities to add to your CV and widen your experience.
- **Be honest* about what you want** – your supervisor may give you opportunities, and colleagues can be unexpected leads/contacts
- **Don't give up!** All roads lead to Rome!

**you can be honest about your dream of being a zookeeper without sending an 'I'm too good for this job' message!*

For example, if you take an office job with a small company, there tends to be an 'all hands on deck' approach to things, with opportunities for you to learn about running and growing a business, promotion and events, and strategic planning to name a few.

If you take a job in a large company you might have the opportunity to move around departments helping out, learning about how the different functions of an organisation fit together.

Wherever you work, you will meet people who may have family and friends who work in, or have knowledge of your dream profession – so keep an open mind and leave a positive footprint wherever you go!

And last but not least . . .

Social Capital – social capital has a huge influence on graduate career success - 16.5% of 2017 graduates found jobs through personal contacts. If you have family or friends with connections and who can give you specific advice and guidance, then great – if you don't, then acquiring contacts through social media, volunteering, attending events, supporting initiatives and being open about your aspirations is a very important way of nurturing your graduate career.

Good Luck! Remember you can book an appointment online to see an Employability Adviser:

<https://targetconnect.bangor.ac.uk/home.html>

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