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Career Planning for PhDs ebook

**Activities & Advice to Help you
Explore your Options & Succeed in a
Competitive Job Market**

Introduction

Do you have a strategy in place to ensure a successful transition from PhD to build your career as an academic researcher? Have you explored alternative career paths? The PhD is increasingly opening doors to a whole range of opportunities, particularly if you develop the rounded experience, knowledge and skills required by employers.

The market for jobs in both academia and other sectors is competitive, and you therefore need to plan ahead, be strategic in your job search and look at ways to stand out from the crowd.

This ebook will help you to explore your options, read about the positive experience of other researchers and to consider what is required to succeed a competitive job market.

Activities at the end of the ebook will help you to reflect, develop a strategic approach to your career plan and take action.

Included in the ebook are the following sections:

- What to do after your PhD
- Careers in academia
- Getting a first post
- Going overseas in search of an academic career
- Non-academic career options
- The value of your PhD
- From PhD to business start up
- Actions you can take to open doors to your future career



What to do after your PhD

What does life hold after completing a PhD? Well, according to research conducted by Vitae, prospects are good according to their 2013 study, What Do Researchers Do?

What are my options?

Your specific career path upon graduation will depend on a number of factors, including the subject area in which you are studying, but the research shows that nearly half of doctoral graduates go on to work in higher education sector (44%).

However, many other employers value the knowledge and skills that PhD students develop during the course of their research, shown by the fact that the other half was divided between the worlds of finance, business and IT (11%); health and social work (13%); manufacturing (9%); R&D (7%); non-HE education (6%) and public administration (4%).

Research – academic and commercial

A common route into academic research is to gain a postdoctoral research post or fellowship after completing your PhD. These are generally contracted posts for a determined length of time and will either be an advertised post on an existing research programme or in the form of a fellowship award to fund your own research in a particular area. These posts are usually seen as stepping stones into a permanent post at a university or in industry.

A permanent academic post usually takes the form of a lectureship, which also involves teaching. Permanent research-only posts are rare in universities, but do also exist in research institutes or other organisations affiliated with universities.

Industry research positions for science graduates are found in sectors such as energy, technology, pharmaceutical and biological sciences and are advertised on jobs.ac.uk and in publications.

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Teaching

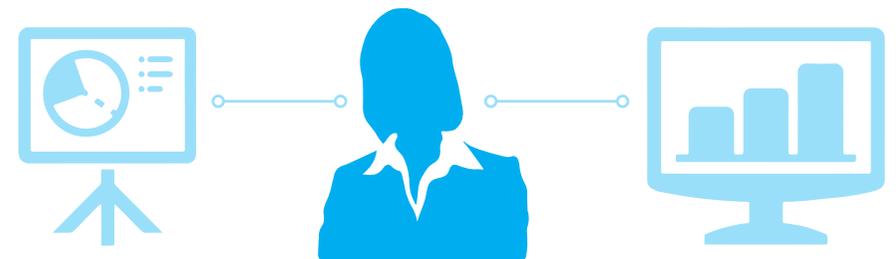
A postdoctoral research post is also a common route into a lectureship, and any teaching you get to do while studying for your PhD or in your postdoctoral posts will serve you well when applying. Be aware, however, that a lecturer is usually expected to undertake research in their specialist area. Their time is often split between teaching, research and publishing their findings in academic journals. A significant number of doctoral graduates go on to teach in schools. However, a postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) will still be a requirement for anyone considering teaching in a state school.

Interestingly, more than half of arts, humanities and social science graduates go into teaching, compared to less than 20% of science graduates.

Other roles

A career in business or finance is a popular option, particularly for science graduates who have developed strong numerical and analytical skills as part of their PhD. Public administration organisations, such as local authorities and the civil service, is also popular.

PhD graduates may find their specialist knowledge and writing skills useful in editorial positions on academic journals and magazines. Engineering graduates may fit the bill for product design/development roles in the manufacturing sector. And of course, across all sectors, progression to a management role is just as likely for doctoral graduates as it is for first degree graduates.



Author: Sara McDonnell

Careers in academia

This section focuses on steps you can take to make the transition from PhD to first post as an academic researcher or lecturer.

Teaching at your institution

If you have decided to stay in academia it can be challenging to make the transition from student to member of staff, but many scholars do find that their institution is able to offer them part time teaching while they find a more permanent academic position. It is a good option because you will be familiar with the department and the way things are done and perhaps will already have teaching experience there and so will have less to prepare initially. Because people there know you they are more likely to help you to make up a portfolio career, for example doing some teaching while working for a permanent member of staff as a research assistant.

On the down side staying at the same institution can be restrictive for your career. It will mean that your range of experience is narrower; you will only know how things work at that one institution and you will only have experience of teaching on a limited number of courses. It is also easy to get into a comfort zone, which is hard to get out of, because it is hard to break out of familiar territory and set off on something new.

If it doesn't look as though a more permanent and secure job is going to come up at your institution any time soon, it is worth making the break to move the next step up the career ladder.

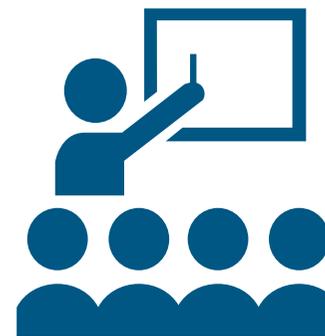


Part-time temporary teaching elsewhere

If there are no full-time, permanent positions around then it's worth looking for part time work in other universities. Your supervisor can help with this because academics often contact each other looking for temporary staff to help out for short periods of time, and often these positions are not advertised publicly if they are to be hourly paid. You may have responsibility for only one unit or class but it will still allow you to present a broader CV to future employers and you will learn a great deal from working with new colleagues and seeing how administrative and management matters work at a different institution.

Taking on roles such as this one can result in practical difficulties such as travelling to and from another institution, often at some distance from your home. It can seem as though you are spending a lot of money getting this job and earning very little, but it will pay off in the end in terms of career development even though financially it may not be hugely beneficial and may actually be somewhat challenging.

Further reading: [How to Develop a Portfolio Career in Academia](#)



Post-docs

Of course if you can get a postdoctoral research fellowship somewhere this is an ideal first job: it gives you the chance to boost the research and publications side of your CV while working alongside researchers at the top of their game. It also gives you some measure of financial security, for a few years at least.

However, post-doctoral fellowships are extremely competitive sometimes with hundreds of applicants from across the world applying for one position. Junior Research Fellowships (JRFs) at Oxford and Cambridge regularly come up but these are the most difficult to get as they are the most sought after.

If you had external funding for your PhD and have had a flawless record of submitting your PhD on time, and already have some publications to your name then you have more chance of being considered. If you and your supervisor have been experts at networking then you also might stand a good chance at this stage. If the researcher seeking a postdoc knows you and your work then he or she is more likely to give the position to you than someone approaching them totally out of the blue. If you are able to travel a long way to get this position and will even consider moving overseas then this also improves your chances.

If your aim is to win a postdoc position then it's important to have a 'plan B' as well. It might take you months of waiting before you do land that position.

Further reading: [How to get your academic work published](#)

CV building for the future

Having finished your PhD and passed the viva the last thing you want to do is immediately get down to more research. It used to be possible to take a break after your PhD before coming back to it with fresh eyes later. However, in today's competitive climate that really isn't the case.

You need to start work on publications and future plans straight away. Perhaps your PhD would make a great book; if so, start looking around for publishers immediately. If not, then think about breaking it down into articles or smaller reports. You also need to think about going to conferences to keep your research profile high.

Being successful at this stage of your career is all about having the drive to push forward even during times when you may be struggling financially or when permanent, secure jobs are not available. Realistically it may take you several years before you land that dream job and so don't let those years slip by while being unproductive. Make sure you can show an employer that you have been building your CV, doing research, publishing and developing your teaching portfolio, even while maybe struggling to make ends meet.



Author: Dr Catherine Armstrong

From PhD to first post in academia

This section shares insights from the stories of three early career researchers outlining how their PhD subject and the skills gained helped them to gain a first post in academia.

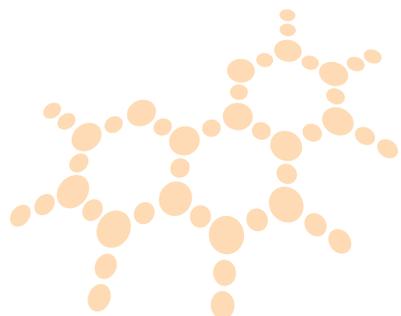
The quotes and insights are taken from case studies generously provided by Caroline a Lecturer in English Language Studies at the University of Birmingham, Monna a Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology at the University of Northampton and Michelle a Researcher in the Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research at the University of Northampton.

The value of contacts and networking

It is who you know, as much as what you know to stand out in a competitive job market and it is therefore essential to network and build contacts during your PhD.

"I think that if you are considering applying to work in academia talking to as many people as possible is the best thing you can do. I was often told that networking was a really important part of hearing about potential employment opportunities but I would take it a stage further than that. Hearing about the roles that other people do really helps you to frame the kind of job that would – and would not – work for you." (Michelle)

"It also helped that the department knew me from my PhD days and that I'd gained experience at the Open University." (Caroline)



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Experience, skills and attitude

It is important to demonstrate in a CV or at interview that you have the relevant experience, skills and attitude for the role. Ensure that you think strategically to build up the skills prospective employers will be looking for.

"I think that during the PhD, I developed 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. In addition, I believe my love for research, self-motivation and hunger for knowledge has really helped not only to complete the PhD, but in my role as a senior lecturer." (Monna)

"I think that the key things that helped me to succeed at interview above research knowledge/skills were communication skills and evidence of having worked with a range of different groups. Whilst I was completing my doctorate I did a number of work placements, from researching in third sector organisations to acting as a consultant to local authorities alongside some part time lecturing. This gave me the opportunity to apply what I was learning and I think that those experiences combined with my doctorate gave evidence that I could manage quite a varied workload and liaise effectively within and across different organisations." (Michelle)

Caroline is a lecturer in English Language Studies at the University of Birmingham where she completed her PhD entitled 'A Corpus Linguistics Study of SMS Text Messaging'.

Monna is a senior lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology at the University of Northampton. Her PhD was entitled Psychological Rehabilitation from Sport Injury: Issues in the Training and Development of Chartered Physiotherapists.

Michelle is a researcher in the Centre for Health and Wellbeing Research at the University of Northampton. Her PhD focussed on the (in)accessibility of leisure spaces as experienced by teenagers who used wheelchairs.

Author: Jayne Sharples

New PhDs - going overseas in search of an academic career

It may come as a shock; you have finally finished the PhD after years of working on your thesis, you have taught part-time, presented at several conferences and have contributed to a peer-reviewed journal or two, only to find there is no job waiting for you in academia.

The time lag between finishing a PhD and securing an academic position can be as unsettling as it is frustrating for those whose sole objective is to be an academic. This, however, may be the period to do soul-searching by asking yourself whether it is time you moved outside of your current place of abode.

Many new PhDs in Western Europe and North America are now being told to be prepared to move overseas if they want to improve their chances of securing an academic role.

Brett L. Shadle, an Associate Professor of history at Virginia Tech, USA, says the decision to move abroad would obviously depend on the person and what their ultimate goals are.

“But, the way things are now, a new PhD needs to be open to many different kinds of jobs – both in and out of academia – and in and out of their home country,” he says

Dr Shadle’s sentiment is shared by Anne Schumann who believes it is perhaps the best time to savour academic life overseas. Dr Schumann finished a PhD last year at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She moved to South Africa for an academic career and she is currently working as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

She says if you decide you want to stay in academia after your PhD and are willing to go overseas, it is important to factor in your personal circumstances.



“If a new PhD has a partner and/or children, it is important that they will also be able to adjust – continue to work and/or find a good school – in the new environment,” she says. “Also consider the length of the post; to be sure it’s worth moving for. The AHRC, for example, has early career fellowships that last a maximum of nine months. If you have a family, it may not be worth moving to a new city for such a short fellowship.”

Dr Schumann also advises that you should consider the type of position. She says postdoctoral fellowships usually have limited teaching, but it offers you the chance to publish your PhD research and to start a new research project. However, the postdoctoral pathway is often between one to three years duration, unlike a full-time teaching post that offers more stability. So, if like Dr Schumann you want to live abroad for a short while, the postdoctoral pathway might be ideal for you.



Dr Shadle points out that you should also consider institutional and cultural differences. He says it is important to remember that academia may work differently from one country to another, and that you should investigate carefully how academia operates in the country you want to go to.

“For example, tenure in Britain is quite often different from tenure in the US – in the latter case, it is a much longer, stressful process. The British tutorial system is rare in America,” he says.

Dr Shadle suggests you track down a colleague working in the particular country under consideration.

“It might not be someone you know,” he says. “But perhaps someone your adviser knows, or someone in your field. It might be an expat or a local. Ask that person some basics about how things work, such as job security, teaching expectations of students and administration, bureaucratic issues, and so on.”

Author: Dr Shola Adenekan

Non-academic career options after your PhD

As well as an academic research and teaching career path, new PhDs may like to consider other options.

Catherine Mills has a PhD in American and Canadian literature from the University of Nottingham, but instead of taking on an academic role she is working her way up the university administration ladder at the University of Birmingham, where she currently manages its Graduate School.

Dr Mills argues that it has always been challenging to get that first foot on the ladder of an academic career but that the current climate has made the situation worse for PhD holders.

Clare Jones, a senior careers advisers at the University of Nottingham points out there are career options outside the ivory tower. They include opportunities that may relate directly to a new PhD's specific research.

PhD jobs within an industry

“For instance, they may have worked on a collaborative project with an industry or a charity or other organisations and that industry or employer might look to recruit them,” she said. “But relying on this option may offer a limited range of opportunities”.

Clare suggests there are also opportunities to use your generic and professional research skills, for example, as a Policy or Research Officer in an organisation.

“This option may also allow them to use their academic discipline background as well,” she said. “For example, a scientific policy officer in a science organisation or in a social science consultancy.”

Additionally, there are opportunities for PhDs to return to the breadth of their academic background in industry and employment sectors, says Clare. Examples include the engineering and science industries.

"In these sectors, new PhDs may remain in research and development roles and this may be considered the obvious route but they should also consider other business and operational functions as opportunities," she said. "Some of these options may have a PhD entry level point."

University administration and management roles

New PhDs may also want to consider Dr Mills' post-PhD choice of career by going into university administration as well as research management and development roles.

Dr Mills says this may be down to making the most of your networks and communication skills. As a step into a career in university administration and career management, she said she received a very good piece of advice from a careers advisor whilst working on her PhD.

"The advisor suggested I write a list of all people I and my family and friends know and identify any useful connections with the career sectors I was interested in," Dr Mills said. "As a result of this exercise - in addition to conversations with friends and family - I identified a contact at Warwick University. And through this contact, I organised a week of work experience in the University's Registry division. This proved very useful in the latter interviews I had for professional staff roles in UK universities, and I believe helped secure my first job at the University of Cambridge."



Graduate entry roles

Careers experts point out that you may also want to consider the Graduate Development route. They warn that the compromise with this option is that there may not be any additional salary or accelerated programme for PhD holders, and this is something you should be prepared for mentally and financially.

"Within this option, there are some career areas where the skills and abilities of PhDs are well utilised, such as management consultancy, patent law and qualitative analysis. For other career areas they should be using the generic and transferable skills and applying them to the role and career they decided upon."

"For example, I have currently been working with a PhD student who decided on a career in supply chain and logistics, applied to major retail and transport employers and secured three job offers having gone through assessment centres and interviews for graduate entry posts. She will be starting her career with a major retail company in September - they did not specify that they required a PhD but she was prepared to apply to them. The compromise with this route for PhDs is that there may not be any additional salary or accelerated programme for them and this is something they have to be prepared for."

Clare advises new PhDs not to dismiss this option too soon as it is a realistic entry point and once in that job or industry they are gaining valuable and relevant experience and may also benefit from the training and development offered. They may also have the opportunity to accelerate their career, gain promotion and increase their salary but it will be based on being able to demonstrate in the job the benefits they can bring as PhDs.

"I would say this is true of all the options above - the individual has to take responsibility for their own career development and progress," she said.

Reflecting on the value of your PhD - what are employers looking for?

If you are planning to apply for jobs outside of academia this section will provide you with tips for understanding what employers are looking for and how to create impact. Being clear about the transferable skills you gain from your PhD will help you to identify career options suited to your skills, strengths and interests. It will also enable you to demonstrate to employers the value you can bring to their organisation.

What are transferable skills?

Transferable skills are the skills gained through the experience of completing your PhD and can be identified by reflecting on and analysing your work as a researcher. Key to creating impact is to apply the skills learned in the research context, such as problem solving, analytical thinking and project management skills to career routes outside of academia. Also develop your skills by attending training courses, by taking on leadership roles and responsibilities in your department and by engaging in activity with business and industry.

Ask yourself:

- What are the transferable skills I have gained during my PhD?
- In which areas am I particularly strong?
- How can I develop my skills by taking part in activities outside of my specific PhD remit?



What are employers looking for?

Recruiters value PhD candidates not just for their technical expertise, subject knowledge and research skills, but also for the broader set of skills and competencies they bring to their organisation. Here are some examples of what employers of PhDs are looking for in their ideal candidates:

- analytical thinking and problem solving abilities
- ability to bring new ideas, curiosity and innovative approach to the organisation
- ability to solve complex problems
- project management and organisation skills
- leadership potential
- ability to work in a team
- excellent communication and client facing skills

Take some time to consider this list and to add to it by researching employers relevant to your areas of interest. Take every opportunity to develop the key skills employers are looking for and give evidence of your competency and experience in your CV and in interviews.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are the skills employers are looking for?
- How can I evidence my ability to do this?
- How can I demonstrate my ability to translate my skills to business and industry?

Exposure to environments outside of academia

You can add further impact and ease your transition to a career outside of academia by gaining work experience in the field you would like to work in. This is particularly important if you have no relevant work experience prior to starting your PhD. It will also give you the opportunity to gain awareness of what type of work you enjoy doing and to reflect on your strengths. Think creatively about how to gain relevant work experience. Use the contacts within your University and ensure you create impact when you do get the opportunity to work for a prospective employer.

Potential

Finally, think long term. Employers will be recruiting you for your future potential and will be prepared to invest in your training and career development. So do not just focus on how you add value in the short term, consider your long term goals, aspirations and potential.

Summary of practical tips

- Identify the transferable skills gained during your PhD
- Take every opportunity to develop your skills
- Research prospective employers and understand what they are looking for
- Articulate and evidence your skills in your CV and in interviews
- Gain relevant work experience
- Demonstrate the ability to adapt to a business and industrial environment
- Think about your long term potential and aspirations
- Use the resources and people around you, including your Careers Service, alumni contacts and industry mentors

Author: Jayne Sharples

Essential or desirable?

Employers will be looking for a series of essential skills, and also some skills that would be advantageous for you to fulfil the role. This example shows how these documents are often worded by employers and give you a chance to check whether you have them, considering how you can describe the transferable skills you have gained from your PhD into skills that employers are looking for. Think about some of the knowledge you have gained during your PhD and how this could be explained.

| Attribute | Essential | Desirable | Example of your skills |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Educated to degree level or equivalent | ✓ | | |
| Experienced in relationship management and customer care | ✓ | | |
| Pro-active approach in seeking new opportunities, both from companies and public bodies | | ✓ | |
| Awareness of regional strategies and their impact upon academia | | ✓ | |
| Experience of working in the HE sector | | ✓ | |
| Experience in commercial or business development activities. | | ✓ | |
| Management/supervision experience, including line management. | ✓ | | |
| To be personally well organised and able to prioritise own workload | ✓ | | |
| ICT literate | ✓ | | |
| Good communication skills | ✓ | | |
| Ability to think strategically, influence policy-making and manage change in systems and procedures. | ✓ | | |
| Networking and relationship management skills with external organisations | ✓ | | |
| Ability to communicate effectively, both oral and written | ✓ | | |
| Ability to learn independently and to master and apply new knowledge and skills quickly. | ✓ | | |
| Full driving licence | | ✓ | |
| Willingness to work unsocial hours including evening, weekend and overnight activities throughout the year. | ✓ | | |

From PhD to business start-up

PhDs are well placed to follow an entrepreneurial career route according to reports with research showing that there is a good skills match between a PhD and business start up.

Preparation for an entrepreneurial career

Research by its nature requires creativity, persistence and problem-solving ability. These are some of the very skills which will provide you with an excellent preparation for setting up a business or working in an environment requiring an entrepreneurial mindset. In today's economic climate there is the need to innovate and develop jobs through business start-up, and you could be well placed to get involved.

To help you prepare for an entrepreneurial career find out what is on offer at your University or through the Research Councils and professional bodies you are associated with. Look out for enterprise and knowledge transfer schemes and initiatives to support the commercialisation of research. Business Plan competitions can be an ideal way to explore your suitability to an entrepreneurial career, providing valuable support both in terms of advice, expertise and financial investment for competition winners.

Why choose business start-up?

Take some time to reflect on your preferred way of working, for example if you value independence, autonomy and creativity then you are more likely to be suited to an entrepreneurial career option. It is also important to consider factors such as your attitude to risk and the self-belief business start-up requires. Think also about your commitment and the extent to which you are prepared to put in the hours this type of work life often necessitates.

You may have all the strengths, skills and motivation required to pursue an entrepreneurial career, but this alone is not enough. Whilst we are not here to give you professional business start-up advice, it's important to highlight that you will need to have a robust business idea and a well-researched understanding of the market place. Seek out the entrepreneurship and innovation experts at your University and network more broadly with entrepreneurs and business owners. This will enable you to access relevant the relevant advice, networking and collaboration opportunities and support you need.

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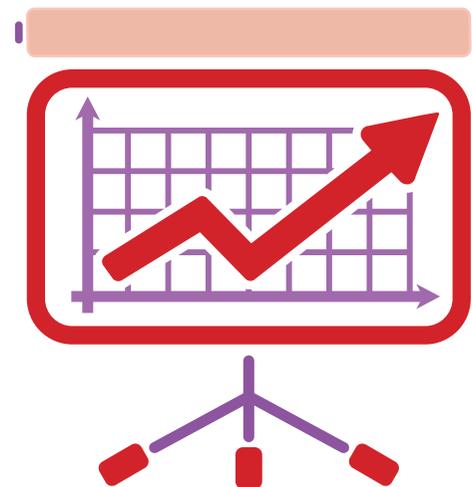
Do further research by accessing information on the web about business start-up.

If you are interested to read more about the motivations of doctoral entrepreneurs go to the Vitae website and download the publication "What do researchers do? Career profiles of doctoral entrepreneurs". www.vitae.ac.uk/wdrd. Vitae is the national organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of postgraduate researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes.

How and when to start up

One of the key themes from the Vitae report is that there are many roads to self-employment. At one end of the spectrum is a business with considerable start-up investment and ambitious growth plans. Success often comes from pursuing entrepreneurial aspirations with university support, for example by combining running a spin-out with an academic career. At the other end of the spectrum you may simply choose to work on a self-employed basis as a sole trader, or combine entrepreneurial activity with employment. See the [Jobs.ac.uk](#) article on Portfolio Careers.

As well as considering how to set up, you need to think about when to start up. In the Vitae publication many of the researchers had extensive CVs and considerable work experience before establishing their business.



Case study: business start-up

Dr. Sam Decombel has kindly shared her business start-up story, which followed completion of her PhD in Plant Genetics and a period gaining experience in technology transfer:

"I realised I didn't want to stay in academia but equally I wanted to find a role where I could use the skills and experience I had gained during my PhD. After investigating several options I came across technology transfer, which would allow me to continue working within an academic environment but with a more commercial outlook, helping researchers to take their technology to market where it could be of benefit to the public and society at large. My knowledge of the scientific background to the technology and the way academia functions in general was just as important as the new commercial skills I developed taking on this role, and I experienced a great deal of job satisfaction from knowing I was helping get important new technology to market."

Following a successful 3 years working as a Technology Transfer Manager Sam is now using these same skills developed during her PhD and with subsequent commercial training she has started her own company called PlayDNA, which will provide personalised genetic portraits of an individual's DNA with analysis for entertainment purposes.

Through developing a portfolio of technology transfer-based consultancy work Sam has been able to fund the business start-up project.

"I didn't originally set out with the intention of setting up my own business, I just focused on what aspects of my PhD I enjoyed and worked towards those areas, identifying a role that suited my strengths. Basing my career decisions on what I enjoy doing has meant I remain highly motivated and have great job satisfaction despite the occasional high levels of stress!"

Author: Jayne Sharples

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Dr. Sam Decombel



Activity: Clarify your career planning strategy

Now you have read the ebook it's time to work on your career planning strategy. Review where you are now and what opportunities are available to you. A SWOT is used in the strategic planning process in a range of contexts, and here we use the tool as an aid to your effective career planning.

This activity will help you to think strategically and to identify a focus for your plan and to clarify next steps. Fill in each of the quadrants in the SWOT grid, considering your current situation and also the broader perspective of the external environment, such as trends in the job market and growth sectors.

Tips for completing the SWOT analysis:

- Refer to the skills audit activity in the jobs.ac.uk Career Development Toolkit to help you complete the strengths and weaknesses section
- Consider your experience beyond your PhD, using the SWOT activity as an opportunity to broaden your thinking and to be creative
- Work with a fellow researcher or a professional careers adviser to brainstorm ideas and to get feedback
- Draw a conclusion, considering how you can build on your strengths, take advantage of opportunities and avoid the threats.
- Write down specific objectives or goals you want to achieve as a result of doing this analysis

Tip: If you need further assistance to help you clarify the career path you aim to take look, have a go at the CAREER INTERESTS QUIZ in the Career Development Toolkit.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Strengths</p> <p>What do you do well in your work as a researcher?</p> <p>What are your skills, qualities and strengths?</p> <p>What unique resources can you draw on?</p> <p>What do others see as your strengths?</p> | <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>What could you improve?</p> <p>In which aspects of your research do you least excel?</p> <p>What are others likely to see as weaknesses?</p> |
| <p>Opportunities</p> <p>What opportunities are open to you in the job market?</p> <p>Which employers will value your strengths and specialist knowledge?</p> <p>What trends and growth sectors could you take advantage of?</p> <p>How can you ensure that you use your PhD as a point of differentiation in the job market?</p> | <p>Threats</p> <p>What are the external factors which may inhibit opportunities?</p> <p>What is your competition doing?</p> <p>What are the potential gaps in your experience and skills which will block you achieving your career goals?</p> |
| | |

Activity: Goal setting and taking action

Now you have clarified your strategy take each of the goals or objectives you have identified and commit to actions to achieve your goals.

Here we have made a list of some of the actions mentioned in the ebook. Consider the list and add some more of your own.

What actions can I take now to positively influence my future career success?

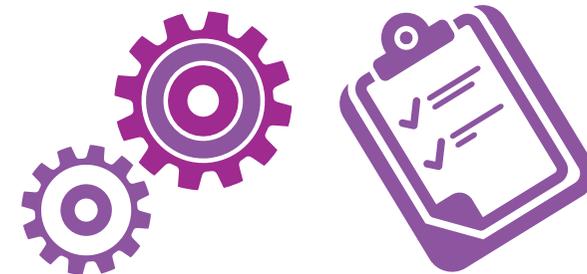
- Network
- Gain relevant experience
- Publish my research
- Develop my skills
- Find out about the experience of others
- Research what employers are looking for
- Get a mentor
- Build an online presence
- Update your CV

Add some more of your own:

-
-
-
-
-

Now complete this next table to articulate actions you can take now to reach your future goal:

| Action today | Goal / Objective |
|--------------|------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |



Activity: Moving ahead with your actions

Here are useful links to activities and articles on the jobs.ac.uk website which will help you to take your actions forward:

Networking

Refer to the Network for success section in the [Career Development Toolkit](#)

Mentoring

Read the [Career Mentoring for PhDs article](#)

Applying for Jobs

Read the article [Applying for jobs outside academia](#)

Tip: Set up a Career Planning file and keep a record of your actions and experiences, for make notes example in a journal or on your computer. Keeping track of your activity and successes will help you to stay motivated.

Doing this work as you go along will pay off in the long run and your professional approach to your career planning and development will come across when you are applying for jobs.

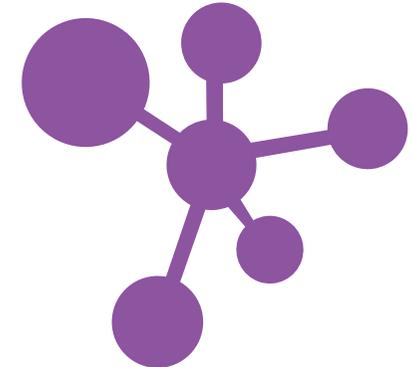
Career planning for PhDs checklist

Do you now have a clearer grasp of:

- Your skills and expertise?
- What you are looking for in your career?
- What opportunities exist?
- Where to go for further help and information?

Have you:

- Completed your SWOT analysis?
- Articulated your career planning strategy?
- Clarified your career goals?
- Committed to actions you can take today?
- Started to keep a record of your career planning activity?



We hope that you are motivated and enthused to enjoy your career planning journey and to approach your job search positively and confidently. Do take advantage of all of the resources and support available to you.

Look out for future articles ebooks by jobs.ac.uk which will build on many of the topics in this ebook.

Start your job search today at: www.jobs.ac.uk

About the Editor & Co-Author

Jayne Sharples is a freelance coach and consultant, specialising in career development, career change and design and writing of online career coaching resources. She combines her JS-Coaching freelance work with a part time role as Postgraduate Careers Consultant in higher education. Previously, she has worked in a variety of business development and project management roles within the corporate and higher education sectors.



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