

Career Toolkit for New Graduates

Welcome to the Career Toolkit for new graduates. If you don't yet have an answer to the question "What next after graduation?" this toolkit, produced by the Careers and Employability Centre (CEC) will give you some key tips and useful resources to help you decide on and work towards your next step. It is designed to be used in conjunction with our many online resources which can be found via the dedicated graduate careers website pages at www.as.bham.ac.uk/graduatecareers.

Remember, you can use the CEC for **up to one year** after graduation including:

Access to the online vacancy database
Access to Information Resources
One to one appointments and CV support
Careers events, fairs and workshops
Advice by email



Further details at www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers or telephone 0121 414 6120
The CEC is in the University Centre (R23) , upstairs from the shops and Barclays Bank

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Sign up to our e-newsletter via our webpage www.as.bham.ac.uk/graduatecareers

Resources

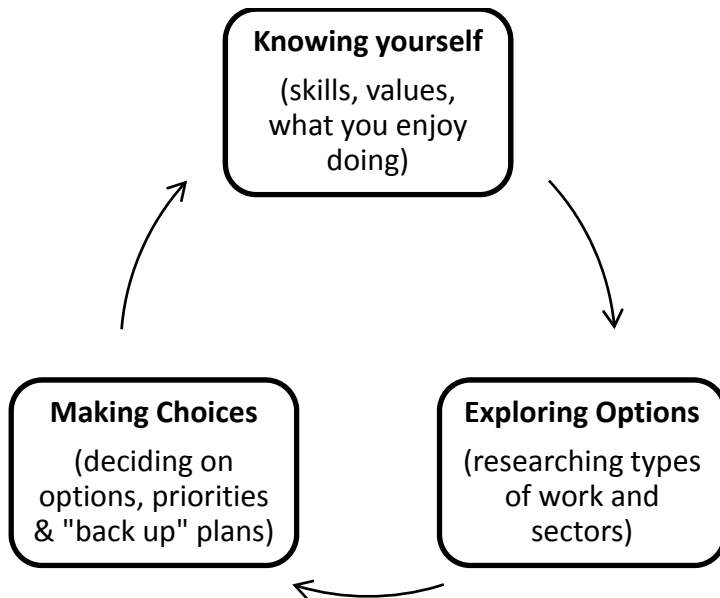
- www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers (section "Choosing a career") and www.prospects.ac.uk (sections "What jobs would suit me?" and "Explore types of job")
- Career planning programmes, including Adult Directions, are available in the CEC. Get ideas by looking at what other graduates from your subject have done – see www.prospects.ac.uk for the national picture and CEC website, section "Your College" for Birmingham data.
- Other people: People you know such as family, friends, university contacts and former colleagues are all people who may be able to give you advice and information about different jobs and sectors.
- Work experience: This is a great way to help you decide whether a particular type of work is for you (see "How to find a job" section for tips and resources).
- Career Planning reference books: There are a number of books in the CEC Information Resources – feel free to come and browse.

Deciding what you want to do after graduation

Key points

- This is a big decision and it's normal to feel a bit confused, anxious or overwhelmed.
- Remember you are just deciding on the first step, not committing yourself to one thing for the rest of your life. People can change jobs and/or careers a number of times during their working life.
- It's a process that takes time but it's important to make a start and not just hope it will go away!
- In a difficult economic climate you may need to be flexible and open-minded when considering your options.

Making career decisions



Top Tip

This diagram shows the key steps towards a career decision. Go to the section **“Choosing a Career” on the CEC website** for lots of links and resources to help you through this process.

How to Find a Job

Key points

- Despite uncertain economic times there are many great opportunities for graduates.
- Stay positive and keep your end goal in mind. Setbacks and rejections are part of the process – learn from them and see them as steps towards getting to where you want to be.
- Finding your ideal job may take time – keep an open mind and consider short term options or “plan B”.

Tips for success

- **Focus:** Knowing what you want to do (see page 2) will ensure focus and stronger applications.
- **Short term options:** Temping, work experience, volunteering, part-time work, short contracts – all these are a good use of your time while you are applying for a permanent position. It's better to be adding experience and skills to your CV than just waiting for the perfect job.
- **Think beyond the well-known and large organisations.** They offer great opportunities but there are also many smaller and medium-sized employers with excellent roles for graduates.
- **Don't just rely on advertised jobs.** Some sources of advertised jobs can be found on page 4, but don't restrict yourself to these. Direct, speculative approaches to potential employers in your target field can be an effective way of securing a position which might never have been formally advertised. For some sectors this is the main way of job hunting. Get to know the typical recruitment methods for your sector (use the resources listed on page 1.) Further tips on speculative approaches on page 4.
- **Check deadlines and recruitment timetables** so that you can prioritise and organise your applications. The larger employers tend to recruit at least a year in advance so if you are just starting your job hunting after graduation, you are likely to be looking at entry for the following summer. Many other organisations, however, have a shorter timetable and recruit at different times of the year. Also keep a record of applications made and save copies of applications so that you can keep track of everything (also useful for interview preparation!).
- **Be thorough.** There isn't a magic number of applications that you should make. Don't sacrifice quality for quantity but at the same time you need to have enough applications on the go so you are not putting all your hopes on only one or two. Thorough research of the job role, employer and sector will help you produce well-targeted applications. This takes time, but is more likely to result in an interview than sending off a lot of rushed applications.
- **Always follow up your applications if you don't receive a response after a couple of weeks.** When employers are busy, and particularly when they receive many applications for a job sometimes applications can be overlooked or put to one side and forgotten about so this will help ensure you are considered.
- **Market yourself!** A well-presented and targeted CV or application form which emphasises your strengths and skills, together with a confident performance at interview are key factors in achieving your ideal job.

Top Tip

See the sections **Finding a Job** and **Applying for a Job** on the CEC website for advice, information and links on CVs, applications, interviews and vacancy sources. Remember that you can also have one to one advice on any aspect of your job hunting in the CEC or via our email enquiry service.

- For advice and information on benefits and services for job seekers from JobCentre Plus see www.direct.gov.uk/jobseekers

Using Recruitment Agencies

- See www.rec.uk.com/jobseeker (Recruitment & Employment Confederation) for a listing of recruitment agencies and advice on how to use them including your legal rights.
- Tips on using recruitment agencies can also be found on the CEC Recruitment Agencies Leaflet from the CEC or in the Job Search (Resources>Recruitment Process) section of our website.

Direct sources of vacancies

- **CEC online vacancy database** (linked from the graduate web page) includes a wide range of vacancies. You can access this after graduation – contact us if you have any problems registering.
- **Other graduate jobs websites** include (see also links from the Resources section of CEC website):

www.prospects.ac.uk	www.gradjobs.co.uk
www.targetjobs.co.uk	www.graduate-jobs.com
www.get.hobsons.co.uk	www.gradplus.com
www.realworldmagazine.com	www.grb.uk.com
www.milkround.com	http://jobs.guardian.co.uk
- **Graduate Directories.** Available to take away from the CEC, listing the larger employers.
- **Graduate Internships.** Kick start your career and enhance your CV with a graduate internship. Check out the **Graduate Talent Pool** and **Graduate Advantage** links on our graduate web page.
- **Sector specific sources.** There are a number of specialist jobs websites and journals for different sectors and professions. Find these via the Contacts and Resources sections of the job profiles on www.prospects.ac.uk (Explore Types of Job) and the Resources section of the CEC website.
- **Attend careers and jobs fairs** and talk directly to recruiters. See the Events section on the CEC website and for events elsewhere in the UK see the Careers Fairs section of www.prospects.ac.uk. Sign up for the CEC e-newsletter (sent weekly during term time) to keep up to date with events.
- **Planning to stay in the West Midlands?** See the sections Finding a Job>Staying Local and Resources>Recruitment Process>Local Jobs and Businesses on the CEC website for relevant links including a list of local recruitment agencies. A key organisation for local graduates is Graduate Advantage www.graduateadvantage.co.uk.
- **Generic jobsites** (not graduate specific) could be worth looking at if you are prepared to enter the field you are interested in at a more junior level to gain experience, or even if you have significant work experience – not all jobs appropriate for you as a graduate will specifically mention “graduate” in the advert or be advertised on graduate specific jobsites

How to make a speculative application

- Identify the organisations of interest through e.g. the employer database on the CEC vacancies database, professional directories (the CEC has some of these for reference), websites and online directories (see “Sector specific resources” above). Talk to people you know about your area of interest – they may be able to suggest potential organisations to contact.
- Research each organisation and try to find a named person to contact (website or phone reception).
- Email or write to them with a CV and cover letter that is tailored to them (i.e. not a general mass mail shot) focusing on your relevant skills and experience and your genuine interest in their organisation. Be clear about the type of position or area of their business that you would like to be considered for rather than asking for “any suitable vacancy”.
- The hit rate of responses may not be high, but it can be a very effective way to find a position.

Other Options

Further Study

This is a popular option but it's important to consider your motivation. Good reasons for doing further study are if it's essential or desirable for your chosen career area, or that you love your subject and want to take it further. Less good reasons are that you want to put off making a career decision or an assumption that a higher degree will automatically make you more attractive to employers. It's a big investment of your time and – if you are self-funding – money, so make sure you consider your options carefully. Depending on the course you are considering, timetables and deadlines (if applicable) vary and there may still be places available for the year you graduate.

Top tip

For information and advice on how to search for postgraduate courses or research programmes, the application processes and funding options see the Postgraduate Study link from the CEC graduate web page and the Postgrad Study section of www.prospects.ac.uk.

Thinking of starting your own business?

Entrepreneurship and Innovation (EI) at the University of Birmingham can help with information, advice and inspiration. Find out more at www.as.bham.ac.uk/ei or ring them on 0121 414 8775.

Time Out

This is another popular option for new graduates and one that as well as being enjoyable, can add valuable skills and experiences to your CV. Whether your “time out” involves travel, voluntary or community work, temporary paid work, learning a new skill or a mixture of all of these, it's important to plan how you are going to use your time. Employers generally view time out (of up to about one year) positively as long as the time has been used constructively and the individual can reflect on how the experience has developed them.

The CEC website has lots of links and resources to help you plan your time out including lists of volunteering and travel schemes and case studies of Birmingham graduates. Find these via the Taking Time Out link on the graduate web page.

Top tip

Don't wait until the end of your time out to think about your longer term plans. See the resources listed on page 2 “Deciding what you want to do after graduation” to help you plan for the next step after your time out activities.

Congratulations on your graduation and best wishes for your future!