

## Your PhD... what next?

### Academic jobs

Find out whether an academic career is for you. What does an academic job involve, what will it take to get a first post and how can you progress your career?

### Roles and responsibilities

The work of an academic typically combines research, teaching, administrative and leadership responsibilities. The balance of time spent on each of these roles will depend on the type of institution and the nature of the post, and will change at different stages of your career, particularly if you take on a leadership role.

Most academic posts include duties such as making applications for funding, attending conferences, building collaborations with other institutions and taking part in knowledge transfer activities with business and industry. Administrative tasks typically range from the preparation and design of courses, setting examinations and marking, through to attending meetings and involvement in policy decisions. Supervision and management of fellow researchers and teams is also a key element of an academic's work, particularly as you progress to more senior posts.

Find out more about each role and what you need to be successful at [An Academic Career](#).

### Skills and characteristics

- Passion for your research - you will need to be enthusiastic about what you do, and instil this passion in everyone that you teach, supervise and communicate with.
- Organisational and time management skills - the academic workload is heavy and varied, requiring you to manage your time and priorities effectively.
- People and networking skills - a key part of your role is to build relationships within your department and research groups, including supervising students and researchers. You will also need to build your network of academic peers nationally and globally.
- Communication skills - as an academic you will be continually writing reports and grant applications, and delivering lectures and presentations.
- Willingness to work long and flexible hours - the academic workload is large and you need to be prepared to put in the hours to get through it all.
- Administrative skills - with the large amount of paperwork, meetings to organise, students' work to mark and grants to write, you will need excellent administrative skills.
- Self-motivation - academics are required to manage their own workload and to take responsibility for their own self-management and motivation.
- Teamworking - you will be frequently asked to contribute to activities that are beyond your own research, but are for the greater good of the department or the university.

Find out more about how you can [develop your skills](#).

### Career progression

For early career researchers progression to a first post after completion of your PhD varies depending on the discipline area

For early career researchers progression to a first post after completion of a PhD varies depending on the discipline area you are working in. In the arts and humanities, a PhD may be followed by postdoctoral research, and then a lectureship, although in some cases it may be possible to obtain a lectureship after completing a PhD. Once in post, promotion to senior lecturer, reader and professor may follow.

In the sciences the typical career path requires the completion of two or three postdoctoral research positions, usually followed by an independent research fellowship. Then, subject to a good publications record, you may apply for a lectureship, where promotion to senior lecturer, reader and professor may follow.

Promotion is predominantly based on research performance, with some account taken of teaching and administrative responsibilities. However, if you have a role which is primarily teaching, or research, or knowledge transfer, the emphasis will differ. Institutions will typically have set criteria for academic promotion.

## Salaries

- Postdoctoral researcher: £27,000 - £35,000
- Independent research fellow: £35,000 - £44,000
- Lecturer: £35,000 - £44,000
- Senior lecturer: £45,000 - £53,000
- Reader: £45,000 - £55,000
- Professor: £53,000 plus

## Improving your chances

- Publish - you will be judged on your publications record so make sure you publish as much as you can, in the highest quality journals.
- Gain teaching experience - by getting involved with tutorials and lecturing.
- Network - make sure that you know, and have met, the big names and potential collaborators in your field.
- Be passionate about your research - make sure you can say why your research is important and fundable.
- Develop administrative and management skills - take on responsibilities such as managing project students, holding a budget or sitting on university committees.

Get more tips and suggestions at [An Academic Career](#).

## Finding a job

- [Jobs.ac.uk](#) - the most comprehensive website for academic jobs in the UK.
- [Find a PostDoc](#) - postdoctoral research positions.
- [PostdocJobs](#) - postdoctoral research positions and fellowships.
- [Times Higher Education \(THE\)](#) - jobs and news in the higher education sector.
- Individual university websites - if you have identified a certain research group at a university, check their own jobs webpage regularly. Try to arrange a visit to the research group.
- Journals relevant to your research area.
- [Research Councils UK](#) - for details of available fellowships. Website includes links to the seven research councils that have details of funding opportunities. Your supervisor may also be a good source of fellowship information.

Networking and using professional, work or educational contacts is a common way to find a job in academia. Being known in your field and letting contacts know that you are looking for a job can put you in a strong position to find out about hidden vacancies and job opportunities before they are advertised. You will find useful contacts through:

- Your department - many academics circulate information about postdoctoral research positions, fellowships or lectureships to their colleagues at other universities.
- Your supervisor - is likely to put you in touch with their network of contacts and will be aware of grant proposals. Your supervisor may also have contacts outside of academia.

- Your contacts in other universities - keep in touch with contacts you make when attending conferences and collaborating on research projects.

Find out more about how [networking](#) can improve your employment opportunities.

## Jobs outside academia

Consider the options available to PhD graduates looking to work outside of academia. What are employers looking for and how can you improve your chances and succeed in the job market?

### Where can I work?

A PhD is recognised by employers across a wide range of sectors as a sign that you will bring a distinctive skill set to their organisation. There are also opportunities where your subject-specific skills and knowledge will be in demand. Do not, however, limit yourself to applying for jobs which specifically require a PhD. Unless a PhD is a prerequisite for the job, employers won't necessarily mention it in their advertisements.

Sectors and types of work likely to match the skills and aspirations of PhD graduates include:

- Education (teaching) - outside of higher education there are opportunities to gain relevant teaching qualifications and to teach your subject in schools or to lecture in a further education (FE) college.
- Education (administrative and professional roles) - non-teaching roles are available in universities and other educational institutions. In universities, for example, PhD graduates are valued for their administrative skills and understanding of the research environment.
- Public sector - PhD graduates are valued in roles within the Civil Service, government agencies and local government for their analytical, research and communication skills. Your subject-specific knowledge will also be in demand if your research is relevant to specific public sector policy and strategy areas.
- Industry research and development - opportunities exist to continue your research in commercial and industrial environments, for example in the medical, pharmaceutical and engineering sectors. Roles are likely to combine applied research with project management. Many higher-level positions within research and development are only open to those with a PhD.
- Healthcare sector and medical research - the health sector is a relatively common destination for PhD graduates who wish to continue or build on their area of research, in the NHS or public research institutes. PhD graduates are also recruited to non-research roles.
- Business and finance - jobs are available in areas such as investment and retail banking, insurance and pensions. PhD graduates are particularly valued if they have specialist quantitative and statistical training, and high-level analytical and communication skills.
- Consultancy - your ability to work on projects and to devise novel solutions to problems are of value in a range of management consultancy contexts, such as business and finance, technology and IT. Think tanks also offer opportunities for PhD graduates.
- Publishing - the analytical and writing skills developed preparing papers and writing a thesis are essential skills for the publishing sector. PhD students who get involved with reviewing journal papers during their studies are well-placed to move into writing and editorial roles.
- Intellectual property (IP) - jobs are available for science, engineering or technology PhD graduates looking to put their skills in lateral thinking and writing into practice, in roles such as patent attorney.
- Not-for-profit sector - opportunities in charities, voluntary and non-governmental organisations often include openings related to your area of research.
- Entrepreneurial activities - the problem-solving and creative-thinking skills developed during your PhD, together with your communication and networking skills, mean that you may be suited to starting your own business. PhD graduates are often drawn to working independently and to developing their career on their own terms.

See [Vitae - Career opportunities outside higher education](#) for more areas of work outside of academia likely to be of interest to PhD graduates.

Although some jobs which attract PhD graduates offer a relatively high starting salary to reflect the level of expertise the employer is looking for, this is not always the case. A significant number of posts which are open to both first degree and PhD graduates will have the same starting salary for all new employees. Once in post, there is typically scope for PhD graduates to progress to management and senior management positions.

Login/register with My Prospects to find out [what jobs would suit you](#), a helpful starting-point for self-analysis. Also explore [types of jobs](#) or find out more about [self-employment](#).

## Skills and characteristics

Employers will be looking for evidence that you can demonstrate competency and achievement in the skill areas relevant to the job, for example:

- 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 independently and in a team;
- excellent communication and client facing skills;
- motivation and the ability to meet deadlines.

Find out more about how you can [develop your skills](#).

## Improving your chances

- Work experience, internships and placements - can help you gain relevant experience, skills and contacts for your chosen career path. Employers will want to see that you have had experience in environments outside of academia.
- Mentoring - find yourself a mentor, ideally someone who is working in the field you are interested in. They will talk through your options, help with decision making and provide you with an insight into their work.
- Work on campus - paid work can provide extra income during your research and help you gain a range of skills and experience. Teaching experience, for example, can provide valuable transferable skills even if you do not stay in education beyond your PhD.
- Taking on leadership roles and other responsibilities - whether it is captain of a sports team or heading up a student-led committee, these activities will provide you with concrete evidence that you have achieved in leadership roles. Take on additional responsibilities, for example become a mentor for an undergraduate who is considering doing a PhD.
- Raising your profile - consider how to get yourself known in circles outside of academia through, for example, setting up a blog or presenting at conferences relevant to the sectors you wish to work in.
- Networking - build contacts and widen your networks by connecting with people in the area of work you are interested in. Be systematic about keeping records of people you have met and use professional networking sites, for example [LinkedIn](#), to stay in contact and let them know what you are doing. Let family, friends and other associates know that you are looking for work.

## Finding a job

- [PhD Jobs](#) - job vacancies for those with doctoral qualifications.
- [Times Higher Education \(THE\)](#) - for academic and non-academic jobs in the higher education sector.
- Job websites of major newspapers, e.g. [Guardian Jobs](#).
- [Jobs.ac.uk](#) - includes non-academic higher education jobs.
- Professional journals and specialist magazines relevant to your employment area, e.g. [Nature](#) and [New Scientist](#).
- Professional associations and bodies relevant to your employment area - often advertise job opportunities.

- Careers service - many employers contact universities directly to advertise their positions. Also, sign up to careers talks given by employers in your area of interest.
- Register your CV online - recruitment websites such as PhDJobs, Guardian Jobs and **Monster** allow you to post your CV online and then wait for employers to contact you.
- Employment agencies - visit the **Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)** website for a list of member agencies in your career area. Even if the employment agency doesn't produce your dream job, temporary jobs can be a good way to find out more about a particular career and are a way in to an organisation.

Find out more about [job hunting](#).

## Develop your skills

Take time to consider what skills you have gained during your PhD. How can you further develop your skills and prepare for your future career?

### Skills training for PhDs

Most universities have a programme of training that is offered to PhD students. This includes training specifically related to your research, such as:

- research techniques;
- writing research papers;
- making technical presentations;
- issues related to patents.

Training also addresses other areas, often referred to as transferable skills, such as:

- time management;
- project management;
- negotiating;
- effective communication;
- leadership;
- assertiveness.

External organisations such as **Vitae**, the individual research councils (see **Research Councils UK** for a list), funding bodies and professional bodies may also offer training to support your development.

Employers want to see evidence that you have competency in the skills required for the job. Keep a record of your experience and achievements, building your CV as you progress. Balance targeted skill development with keeping your options open by developing a broad range of skills. A flexible approach is essential as employers are increasingly looking to recruit those with a rounded skill set.

See [academic jobs](#) and [non-academic jobs](#) and also employer websites for more information.

## How can I develop my skills?

Dem onstrating/teaching - will develop your people management skills, particularly through assessing learning and giving effective feedback. Teaching also develops your ability to talk about your subject area, which will improve your communication skills and prepare you for discussing your research at interviews.

Com mittee work - in addition to developing your communication and negotiating skills, participation will give you a broader view of the way in which your department is managed - a useful insight if you intend to stay in academia. It can also be a good way to learn about the structure and nature of formal meetings.

Supervising research - presents an opportunity to learn how to manage research effectively, to develop effective research skills in others and to develop your own skills in providing advice and encouragement.

Presenting at or attending conferences - provides an opportunity to develop your networking and communication skills. You will make new contacts, develop potential collaborations and improve your understanding of the context of research.

Joining a professional body - investigate the professional body most relevant to your area of study, particularly if you intend to build your career in research or a related area. You may be able to begin assessment towards professional membership, which will require you to demonstrate your professional skills as well as knowledge.

In the workplace - your research may involve spending time (often months) in a different setting related to your funding. Use this opportunity to investigate the career paths of other researchers or to gain insight into other opportunities. If your studies don't include a placement and you don't have time for other part-time work, you can still talk to potential employers or do some work shadowing to find out more about a particular career. Many university careers services and alumni offices have databases of alumni or local contacts willing to discuss their work.

At the students' union - as an undergraduate you may have been involved with student societies or voluntary work. These often provide excellent opportunities for skills development and you can continue these activities while working towards your PhD.

Volunteering - for a local charity or voluntary organisation, or as a mentor on a university scheme, for example mentoring students who are at an earlier career stage to you. You will develop valuable skills and demonstrate to employers that you are prepared to help others and give something back.

## Job applications and CVs

Use the following tips to ensure your application and CV will stand out when applying for academic or non-academic jobs.

### When do I start applying for jobs?

Timing is crucial and you need to start thinking about your career **action plan** before you enter the final year of your PhD. You need to be aware of the recruitment cycle as some jobs, for example management schemes with large organisations, have set closing dates. Check these well in advance of applying. For most jobs it takes about three months to go through the recruitment cycle, so start applying for jobs at least three to four months before you expect to finish your PhD.

### Applying for academic jobs

Applications for academic posts must highlight your abilities as a professional researcher, together with your skills and experience in teaching and administration. Make sure each application is carefully tailored to the post. Highlight the skills and experiences you have to offer, matching them to those that are described in the person specification.

Include the following sections in your application:

- Synopsis of your PhD - give a brief outline of your research that is understandable to non-specialists, as the selection panel is likely to include people outside of your direct research area. Explain why your research is important, and outline significant findings and achievements.
- Research interests - may be a separate section, or follow on from the synopsis of your PhD. Describe your plans for future research, making sure that they tie in well with the research interests of the institution to which you are applying.
- Research methods - outline the technical and methodological skills you have developed. Make sure it is clear how these will be of benefit in the post to which you are applying.
- Teaching experience - describe teaching you have done, and relevant training you have received.
- Other relevant experience - perhaps you've sat on departmental or university committees, got involved with organising a student conference or supervised undergraduate students. Explain the situation, the skills you developed and how they are relevant to the position you are applying for.
- Awards - include any awards or recognition received that is relevant to the position for which you are applying.
- Membership of professional bodies - includes details of relevant professional bodies, associations or learned societies that you are a member of.

- Conferences attended - list the conferences that you have attended, stating whether you gave a poster or an oral presentation. (If the list is particularly long, include as an appendix.) Include details of any involvement in organising conferences.
- Publications - usually comes at the end of a CV and can be included as an appendix. Starting with the most recent, include journal articles, books or chapters of books and reports. If you have a large number of publications, you may wish to create subheadings, such as review articles, in press, etc. If you have not published many titles, include any forthcoming publications.
- References - include details of two or three referees, at least two of which are usually academic. Make sure you have asked their permission before including them.

Proofread your application before sending it. If you claim that you have excellent communication skills or good attention to detail with a CV full of typos, the employer is unlikely to believe you.

Additional tips:

- Try to visit the university and department that you would be working in. It is important to establish a relationship and also to take a look at the university and the research group where you will be located. Potential employers will remember someone who made the effort to come and talk to them, much more than someone who simply sent in a CV.
- Read the journal papers produced by the research group. Be prepared to talk about them at interview. Employers are unimpressed by candidates that don't show an interest in their research.
- Be clear how this post will fit in with your longer-term career path. Be ready to talk about this at interview - employers will be looking for someone passionate about their research, not someone who is applying just because they need a job.
- Know where your research is going. Outline where you think your research will take you, which journals you plan to publish in, and the organisations that you will approach for funding.
- Think about possible collaborations. If you have been doing your networking, you should know some of the big names in your field. Outline any ideas you have for possible collaborative projects.

## Applying for non-academic posts

For non-academic posts, you need to sell your PhD and broader experience to potential employers. In order to do this, you must demonstrate your competence, skills and achievements in line with what they are looking for, including reference to your PhD and broader experience. Examples include:

- Problem solving - the whole essence of your PhD is about problem solving, and you will have developed a set of strategies for analysing a problem and approaching its solution in various ways.
- Project management - don't forget that your three-year research PhD is a large project with many elements and calls on your time. Give examples of the tools you used to manage this project, such as Gantt charts, mind maps or writing work packages with goals, objectives and deliverables.
- Time management - talk about the techniques you used to manage your time efficiently during your research, such as identifying tasks that can run in parallel, delegation and working with others.
- Management of self and others - talk about techniques you have used to manage yourself and make yourself more organised.
- Managing multiple priorities - without going into too much technical detail, outline the competing calls on your time and how you dealt with them.
- Communicating with different people - giving lectures or tutorials, taking part in outreach programmes, giving presentations at conferences or to your research group all require different methods of communication.
- Networking - meeting people at conferences and other events means that you have some networking skills. Talk about how you keep a record of who you have met and how you follow it up.
- Writing skills - outline the different kinds of writing you've done: journal papers, thesis, progress reports and anything else you've been involved with, such as communicating with the media and the public. Explain what you have learnt about the different styles.

- [Understanding and analysing information quickly](#) - as a researcher, you will come into contact with a huge amount of data and will become skilled at understanding and analysing it quickly.

See [job application advice](#) and [CVs and covering letters](#) for further information.

## Research and professional training

Find out if research or professional training is the best next step for you. What does your chosen vocational or professional pathway require and what funding is available?

### Postdoctoral research

For many subject areas, postdoctoral research is the next step for an academic career (although in arts and humanities subjects, it may be possible to gain a lectureship without postdoctoral experience).

In a postdoctoral research position, you will be expected to show more independence, taking full responsibility for the project. You may also take on additional roles such as the supervision of research students and the management of staff. You are also likely to get involved with the writing of research proposals and administrative tasks such as representing researchers on university committees.

### Further vocational training

After completing your PhD you may decide that you want to make a significant change in career, requiring further vocational training. Some PhD graduates choose to undertake the one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) that leads to a career in teaching. See the [Teaching Agency](#) website for more information. Working for the National Health Service (NHS) is another option and several postgraduate vocational qualifications are available that lead to client-facing or management careers - see [NHS Careers](#). It is also possible to complete a two-year MSc in Social Work to qualify as a social worker.

Explore [types of jobs](#) to find about further vocational training for your chosen career.

### Professional training

Some PhD graduates undertake further professional training to enable them to move into other careers. Taking a law conversion course (the Postgraduate Diploma in Law), for example, is an option. This one-year course allows you to convert to a career in law irrespective of your undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications. Passing the law conversion course entitles you to move on to the Legal Practice Course (LPC), if you want to become a solicitor, or the Bar Vocational Course (BVC), if you wish to train as a barrister. Accountancy is another option and involves studying for professional qualifications on the job.

Explore [types of jobs](#) to find out about further professional training for your chosen career.

## Will I get funding for further study?

The availability of funding for further study varies considerably depending on the course and on your own personal circumstances. Some training, such as accountancy, is paid for by the employer, whilst other courses, such as teacher training, may be covered by bursaries. Some courses require you to fund yourself, using savings or loans.

See [funding my further study](#) for more information.

## Action plan

Preparing an action plan will ensure that your job search and applications are effective. Find out how to focus your thoughts, identify interests and priorities and work out how to get where you want to be.

## Knowing yourself and what you want

An essential first step in your plan is to assess your skills, abilities and personality. What do you have to offer a future



can you do? What type of work environment are you suited to? What evidence can you give to demonstrate your ability? What type of work and working environment are you suited to?

- Your PhD experience - what are your strengths and which aspects of your work do you enjoy most? What skills and knowledge have you developed?
- Skills audit - broaden your reflections by thinking about activities and projects you have been involved in outside your research, such as work experience, societies and sport. Consider completing a [Personal SWOT analysis](#) to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Ask friends, family and professional colleagues for their opinion - what do they consider your strengths, skills and talents?
- Skills table and gap analysis - produce a skills table and include evidence for each skill. Identify gaps and areas for development in line with your career aspirations. Use the [Vitae Researcher Development Framework](#), specifically designed for researchers.
- Personality and character - use personality questionnaires and self-awareness tools or career management programmes such as [Windmills](#). Look at [what jobs would suit me?](#) and [psychometric tests](#). Find out what resources are available through your careers service.
- Values and motivations - what do you want from a job? What motivates you? Be honest with yourself. Consider practical aspects, such as location, work environment and finances.
- Further research - speak to people who are already in the job you are considering. Alumni can be a good source of information. Do a work placement or work shadowing. Arrange an advice session with a careers adviser.

## Researching your career options

Focus your research based on what you know about yourself and what you want. Add more detail to your SWOT analysis - what are the opportunities and threats?

- Internet - use the web to find out more about sectors and jobs you are interested in. See [industry insights](#) and [types of jobs](#). Visit employer websites and make use of professional networking sites such as [LinkedIn](#).
- Speak to recruiters and individuals - to find out about current and future trends and what it is like to work in a particular career. Visit your careers service to find out which employers are coming on to campus.
- Find out what researchers do - see [What do researchers do?](#) and speak to alumni from your field of research.
- Network - to develop contacts who will help with your job search. Think creatively about ways to build contacts, such as attending careers fairs and joining professional bodies. Put together a list of questions to ask people about their work to help you find out more about the role and whether you would enjoy it.
- Skills needed - find out how you can [develop your skills](#) to match the jobs you are interested in.
- Mentor - work with a mentor to help you research your options and to benefit from their experience and career insights.
- Career service - get advice from a careers adviser on issues such as trends in the labour market, how to focus your research and timescales for applications.

## Making a decision

- Consider the pros and cons - keep a note during your research and weigh up the options.
- Discuss your options - visit [your university careers service](#) and speak to a careers adviser. Speak to family, friends and your professional contacts. Talking your thoughts through with others can help you to make a decision.
- Try it out - consider undertaking a period of work experience, volunteering or work shadowing to try out the role and reflect on the positives and negatives. See [types of work experience](#) for more information.
- Intuition - what does your heart tell you? Can you imagine yourself in that role?
- Evaluate - look back at your skill set and preferences and evaluate whether it matches the role you are considering.

## Making applications

- Find opportunities - where are jobs advertised and what are the timescales for applications? Many large graduate

- Be proactive - make targeted speculative applications to organisations you are interested in. Your networks can be a key route to making applications. Set up a [LinkedIn](#) profile.

## Reviewing your progress

- Reflect - assess how successful your applications and interviews are going. Keep a record, for example, of how many interviews you are getting. What is working well and what could you do differently? What changes can you make to your plan? What help do you require?
- Feedback - try to get feedback from employers if you are unsuccessful as you can address the points raised in your future applications or interviews. Ask a careers adviser for feedback on your application form or interview technique.
- Skills check - review your skill set over time. What skills are employers looking for? Are you communicating those skills effectively? Do you need further training in some skills to make yourself a stronger candidate? Have your personal circumstances changed? Does this have an impact on your action plan?
- Check your goals - ensure that you have milestones and goals to aim for in your plan and review these on a regular basis. Are you still on track? What do you need to do more of? Are they still the goals you want?
- New opportunities - keep your eyes open for new opportunities. What do they mean for you? How do they fit in with your original plan?
- Stay motivated - find ways to retain a positive attitude during your job search. In the face of setbacks, for example, remind yourself of your achievements and strengths. Handle any rejection in a positive way and learn from the experience. Build a support network around you, including friends, family and mentors.



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