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The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

University Researchers and the Job Market

A Practical Career Development Resource for Research Staff

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A Practical Career Development Resource for Research Staff

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This is a revision and update of the 2001 AGCAS / University of London Careers Service publication ÔUniversity Researchers and the Jobs MarketÕ written by Liz Schofield. The authors would like to express thanks to Liz for allowing us to build upon her original publication, much of which has remained intact, having stood the test of time. Thank you also to Fiona Lincoln and Brian Marsh of Cardiff University for their support with the setting and design of this publication.

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

As a researcher, you have a range of skills and abilities that many employers, both inside and outside academia, will be keen to utilise. This booklet was first published in 2001 and aimed to offer realistic and practical advice on all aspects of making career decisions and on the job hunting process from recognizing your skills to articulating them to employers in written applications and at interviews. The author, Liz Schofield, a Careers Adviser at University College London, at what is now known as "The Careers Group", University of London stated in her introduction: "I hope it will offer you support and encourage you to take a step forward." This latest edition has been updated by members of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Task Group for Research Staff. They are all currently working as careers advisers for research staff at various UK universities and endorse Liz's original statement that the booklet is intended to offer support and encouragement to researchers who are considering their next career move whether it is inside or outside academia. The work done by Professor Sir Gareth Roberts (Sources and Resources) on the career development and training needs of academic researchers is gratefully acknowledged here and the direct result of his work can be seen in the number of careers advisers and staff developers who are now employed to offer specialist support to research staff. This 2009 edition of University Researchers and the Job Market reflects the growing body of work in this field and is part of the range of resources researchers have access to.

We also look forward to the benefits to the career development of Research Staff anticipated by the issue of the new Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (The Concordat) in June 2008 (Sources and Resources) to be implemented over the coming months and years.

The booklet, available as a set of PDF documents, can be read from cover to cover, or you may dip into chapters as they become appropriate to your needs. It is set out in three volumes with Sources and Resources section which brings together all sources used throughout.

Volume I	The Career Plan
Volume II	The Effective Job Selection Package
Volume III	The Support
Sources and Resources	Background, Employer Information, DVDs , Reading and Websites

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Who Is This Booklet For?

This booklet is for Research Staff many of whom are employed on fixed term contracts who work in a university environment. Although some of the case studies and examples used may not exactly reflect your own experiences, the majority of the text is deliberately non-specific in order to be relevant to as many of you as possible.

Research Staff are defined in the Concordat (see Sources and Resources for more detail) as follows:-

"Researchers are broadly defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed for this purpose. It is recognised that this broad category of staffing covers a wide range of staff with different disciplinary backgrounds, levels of training, experience and responsibility, types of contract (fixed or open ended, full or part-time), and different career expectations and intentions."

The Academic Research Careers for Scotland 2001 (ARCS) project identifies three broad categories of research staff:-

Career Starters – who see their first two or three contracts as stepping stones to a longer term career, either as permanent academic staff or in a research position outside academia.

Career Researchers – who have already completed a series of short-term contracts but

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What Does The Booklet Offer?

Many of you have chosen academic research because you enjoy the work, and several surveys show that many of you would prefer to remain in academia.

Surveys and Reports

There have been a number of studies and reports into employment patterns of researchers, the source cited here provides an excellent starting point for researchers who may wish to access information relevant to overall trends as well as discipline specific information.

Employer's views of researchers' skills

A comprehensive review of the existing literature into employers' views of the skills of early career researchers (2007) The Rugby Team.

This report reviewed studies dating between 1998 and 2006, it brings together both a comprehensive list of surveys and reports which researchers can access and offers an overview of the studies.

The UK academic profession has increased in numbers over the past decade or so partly in line with the growth in undergraduate numbers with total academic staff up by 29% from 127k in 1995/6 to 165k in 2005/6. (source HESA quoted by UCU Higher Education Employment Data) Nevertheless the competition for permanent or open-ended posts is extremely keen. Research staff, the vast majority of whom are on fixed-term contracts have no automatic career progression to the higher level research leader positions or teaching and research jobs presently and competition for research funding show now sign of becoming any easier. Whether you decide to continue to develop an academic career or to leave as soon as possible, I hope there will be something in this booklet for you.

The booklet aims to:-

- Increase your awareness of the options open to you outside academia.
- Highlight the skills you already have and suggest ways of developing them further.
- Suggest ways of gaining new skills.
- Give you some practical advice about the job search process.
- Give you an insight into the attitudes of employers.
- Provide an index of useful information sources.

The booklet touches on a number of subjects that are covered in more detail in other

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Set Goals

In most cases the ideal job is unlikely to fall into your lap. It may take some time to achieve your ambition, especially if it involves a complete career change. Setting short or medium-term goals can make the process more manageable. For example, you may need to complete a training course before you can apply for jobs in your chosen area. Obtaining a place on an appropriate course might be your medium term goal.

Take Action

This stage includes practical actions such as making networking appointments, producing CVs and filling in application forms. For more information see Chapter 5 'Researching Options' and Chapter 7 'Making Applications'.

You may find that you sometimes skip stages. For example, if you unexpectedly come across an attractive position and decide to apply for it, you will move straight from 'research' to 'take action'. Some stages may take place subconsciously. But generally, self-assessment and research at each stage of the job hunting process will ensure that you are better prepared for setting goals, both long and short-term, and taking action.

Case Study

Following a Social Psychology degree and a PhD in Media and Communications, Denise worked as a research associate on several short-term contracts. A 10-month temporary lectureship made her realise that she didn't want to combine researching with teaching, so she decided to look for a research role outside academia. *(**Assess and Review**Backrch 5y03Tm0 g( )Tgse 9 6*

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Take Action

Although generating and researching ideas is a vital process, simply reading and thinking through your options is no substitute for actual experience.

If you follow the networking tips in Chapter 5 ‘Researching Options’ you could make some useful contacts. Talking to current practitioners can be very valuable, but visiting the premises of a selection of employers can really give you a sense of whether this environment will suit you. You may be able to organise some work-shadowing (observing the work of a particular employee for a specified period of time), or offer to help out with some administrative tasks for a short time. Employers will appreciate your motivation.

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Chapter 3 IDENTIFYING SKILLS

The aims of this chapter are to demonstrate the powerful set of skills you already have, suggest ways of developing them further and to give you some ideas about gaining new skills.

Many of the skills discussed in this chapter are common to all academic researchers. Of course, you will also possess the knowledge-based ('hard') skills that are associated with your particular field of study, but it is important to realise that employers outside academia are often more interested in your transferable ('soft') skills. This may come as a surprise when you are so familiar with an environment in which subject knowledge is paramount. Transferable skills can be defined as 'an ability learnt in one context, which can be applied in another'. For example, your ability to explain complex technical issues could be used in a training role.

Some examples of the skills which are common to most researchers:-

SKILLS	RELEVANT EXPERIENCE
Communication	
Oral	Teaching, explaining research to those without specialist knowledge, presenting papers, interviewing (particularly social scientists).
Written	Publishing papers, writing project reports.
Interpersonal	

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The relevance of your specialist skills and knowledge will obviously depend on the roles you apply for. For example, an application for an academic position will rely heavily on your subject specific knowledge, whereas an application for a job in a bank may require more evidence of your team-working and communi

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Focus on skills and competencies and relate them to the commercial environment if possible."

"Emphasise the more rounded individual rather than the researcher. Are you a self-starter? Do you have leadership qualities?"

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How to Gain the Skills You Need?

In order to build your **research** reputation, you might consider the following suggestions:-

- Investigating the reputation of potential colleagues before accepting a short-term position. If you work with well-respected researchers, this will look more impressive on your CV.

- Trying to get some peer-reviewed practice before presenting a paper at a conference. Preparation will increase your confidence and allow you to project a more professional, competent image.

- Ensuring that your publications are of a high standard.

- Trying to win prestigious awards.

To build your **teaching** experience, you might consider the following possibilities:-

- Contributing to the supervision of PhD students.
- Demonstrating to undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- Training colleagues in particular techniques that you are familiar with.
- Running tutorials.
- Giving papers at inter-departmental or inter-university level.
- Attending 'teaching skills' courses run by the staff development department at your institution.
- Accessing information and resources from the Professional Development and

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Case Study

Following a first degree in Chemistry, a period of school teaching and a PhD in Biochemistry, Greta became a postdoctoral researcher funded by a cancer research foundation. Her ultimate aim was to become a lecturer and obtain a permanent contract.

Her first move was to ensure that she had a supportive manager. Consequently, she was encouraged to produce sole publications, ghost-write grant applications, jointly supervise several PhD students and visit other scientists, giving papers at conferences whenever she had the opportunity. This allowed her to build a good reputation and make vital contacts. Such exposure also led to several important collaborative projects, which promoted her reputation further afield.

There were limited teaching opportunities in her department and Greta knew that teaching experience would be vital. She took on extra responsibilities as an Open University tutor, working in the evening and at summer schools, in order to gain this.

When a permanent job eventually came up, Greta's experience and dedication ensured that she was the best candidate.

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Chapter 4 CAREER DIRECTION

The aim of this chapter is to help you review some broad employment options that you need to be aware of when planning career direction that is right for you now and in the future. Your current role as a skilled researcher can be a springboard for many career areas. You also need to decide whether you are currently prepared to take the short, medium or long-

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Destinations

As a researcher you may have entered the profession with a PhD or a Masters Degree with research training, have moved in from another career e.g. Social Work or teaching for social science research or IT or engineering for those scientific areas or taken a junior research assistant post as a first move following your degree. The skills and experience you have amassed along with your understanding of career success will have an impact upon your future plans. It is therefore very useful to review the destination information for research staff, PhD postgraduates, Masters postgraduates and graduates. This can help with both making decisions) and exploring the labour market. (see Chapter 2 Making Choices).

Research Staff Destinations

Official HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) Destinations data collected from academic leavers across the university sector is brief for research staff when they finish their contracts or leave research posts. Whilst useful background these statistics do not however provide the detail of the occupations entered. This data is drawn from the whole population, not distinguishing by discipline or research area. The return for 2006/7 has information covering just over 4,550, 45% of the 10,210 leavers. Over 29% moved to another Higher Education Institution either in the UK or overseas continuing an academic career whilst the option of working in a variety of fields in the private sector was taken by 16%. Others are split between health services, other public sector jobs and other jobs or further study. There were 8% staff not in regular employment.

PhD, Masters and Graduate Destinations

The PhD postgraduate, Masters postgraduate and Graduate destination information is specific on subject or discipline areas. The Labour Market section of the Prospects Website (see below) links you to destination trends, labour market trends with links to the publications What do Postgraduates Do? and What do Graduates Do?. Updates of this information is done annually. For the PhDs, just over 40% have entered educational professionals and general research. In addition there are also some interesting analyses in What do PhDs Do - Trends? A very revealing review of the destinations from 2003, 2004 and 2005 as a whole and by subject. If you wish to look in further

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They may however be concerned that researchers lack teamwork, leadership. project management, commercial awareness and ambition. You therefore need to be able to put those research skills to good use and check what is needed and make sure you "translate" your evidence into employer speak (see Chapter 7 Making Applications).

Linear Progression

Improving Your Chances

Academia

If you wish to remain in academia with permanent employment as your ultimate goal there are a number of current options. You may wish to continue in research by applying for further research contracts either developing your specialism or diversifying, moving to a more teaching based role, or work towards a mixed lecturing role including research, teaching and administration elements. You need to consider the following to build up skills, experience and contacts:-

- Building a significant body of research publications.
- Keeping up to date with fellowship options.
- Being aware of the increasing multidisciplinary research options.
- Becoming increasingly involved in funding/budgeting issues.
- Gaining some project management experience.
- Increasing your teaching responsibilities.
- Familiarising yourself with quality assessment procedures.
- Understanding broader higher education issues.
- Networking with colleagues both inside and outside your own institution.
- Obtaining extra qualifications, if appropriate.

Successful academic careers can be built within the constantly developing Higher Education sector.

Case Study

After obtaining a BSc in Physics, Alison went to work for an engineering company. She eventually realised that she wouldn't be able to progress any further without a higher degree, so she returned to higher education. Following a masters degree in Polar Studies she became a full-time research assistant.

During her first post, she attended a course on 'Career development for research staff'. Alison says 'this was very helpful in making me realise that no-one else was going to look after my career progression – it was entirely up to me to decide where I wanted to go and how I was going to get there'. This was the impetus for her to register for a part-time PhD.

After years of working on her own behind a computer Alison decided she would relish the opportunity to teach, so she took on some undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, attended short training courses at her institution and started applying for lectureships. She is currently employed on a permanent contract by one of the post '92 universities.

Her advice is "Don't be afraid to apply to universities further down the RAE scale. The teaching load may be heavier than at more prestigious universities but there are compensations, like a far more supportive atmosphere, encouragement and financial help to continue with research, and a greater chance of going straight into a permanent post."

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There are good quality Public Sector roles available.

Case Study

After gaining a first degree in Chemistry with Education and a PhD in the Education/Social Sciences field, Dorothy worked on various short-term contracts. A desire to return to her home town, and have a break from academia, lead her to Scotland where she now works as a research officer with a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Dorothy hasn't ruled out a return to academia. Her current role involves similar research, but also includes project and financial management, and liaison with various committees. She advises those who are considering the same path to "be aware that you won't have the same opportunities to publish. You will need to devote a lot of your own time to writing and negotiate heavily to make opportunities."

However, she does feel that it is a "good idea to step outside academia and broaden your experience. You will realise that research is done very differently in terms of time scale and techniques. You will have to deal with non researchers who don't understand why you want to do research at all and why you have to do it in a particular way. This can be very challenging."

Your skills can be transferred to new environments.

Case Study

Samuel obtained a first degree in Applied Biology, followed by a PhD studying cell division. He was a post-doctoral researcher for three years and now works as a senior computer biologist in a genetic research centre.

He decided to change his career because he wanted to get away from short-term contracts and laboratory work. His current job, which uses much of the knowledge he gained during his academic research career, was advertised in a popular scientific publication. His laboratory skills are now redundant, but he is learning new computer skills.

His advice, to those who are considering a change of career, is to "get some new relevant skills, maximise the CV, be confident".

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- Enhancing your commercial awareness, for example through increased knowledge of funding/budgeting issues, project management experience, and looking out for any industrial/government collaboration projects.

- Attending institutional and regional events run for researchers offering opportunities to hearing about career change experiences from former researchers.

- Attending so called “Graduate” targeted events to gather options information.

- Revisiting your University Careers Library for a range of occupational information. (See Chapter 10 Visiting the University Careers Service.)

- Gaining work-shadowing experience with current practitioners in sectors that interest you.

Suggestions for Research

You might use your existing expertise in a less research-orientated area, for example, a biochemist may consider a career in forensic science, quality assurance or the brewing industry. Similarly if you work in health-related research the NHS have many options from Clinical Science to Health Policy and Finance to consider.

Your knowledge of a particular subject area could be very useful in a department such as marketing or sales. In this type of role, you would also have the opportunity to build on other skills such as communication or negotiation.

Once you have identified and fully researched an occupation that interests you, you might send targeted speculative applications. See Chapter 7 ‘Making Applications’ (Volume II) for more information. For advice on identifying your strengths and deciding how you might use them, see Chapter 2 ‘Making Choices’.

Making the Most of the University

There are many options available to continue your career within the university environment, but in a different role. For example, you might look for employment in an administrative department such as Academic Registry or Research Support dealing with funding support and spin off companies. Check the internal jobs web page for your institution, this will contain all the current vacancies, from senior lecturer posts to maintenance jobs.

Redeployment

Some institutions may offer the option of redeployment for staff on fixed-term contracts. Make sure you check this out with your line manager or your Human Resources department well before your contract term expires. This may have the effect of giving you preferential rights to attendance at interview and could be a convenient chance to look at areas of the University that you had not thought of before. Being an internal candidate it is also easier to take up the option of an informal chat with the recruiter.

If you have contacts in other institutions, you could ask them to alert you if something suitable is likely to arise in addition to checking the job websites of your target universities.

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Ex Researchers can develop international careers in the university sector.

Case Study

Lolita is a multilingual experienced former researcher with an international background and a career path to match. She has worked and studied in 4 countries on her career journey with a first degree in Physics and PhD in Radiation Biology and presently works in Germany at a prestigious national research centre where she coordinates an international PhD programme, dealing with its marketing and developing training curricula.

The decision to change from her accomplished research career of 9 years duration was based on her declaration that "I felt that yet another post-doc was out of question – 'one could not retire as a post-doc!'. She looked at lectureships as her first option but after getting to second choice at two interviews realised that neither her heart nor her head could settle with this as the nature of the very busy mixed role as a teacher, administrator, grant writer would not leave enough time to research the only career she knew.

Career change dawned as a realistic option when she attended a career planning workshop and followed up with reading the book 'Leaving the Ivory Tower: alternative careers in science'. She was successful in finding a permanent research administration/technology transfer position at a university where she did one of her post-docs. "I wanted to stay in academia, be able to use my broad interdisciplinary research skills, but also to work directly with people." This turned out to be an ideal opportunity.

"I had to meet academics from a range of the departments and learn about their research, inform them on relevant funding opportunities and assist with preparing the grant applications, setting collaborations and getting their finding protected (patents) and commercialised. I was given the opportunity to attend the courses to learn about technology transfer, and it also meant the opportunity to broaden my skills and knowledge." When Lolita and her husband decided to move out of the UK, following his career, the technology transfer experience had broadened her experience sufficiently to help her gain the current role.

Advice from Lolita on a career change is to practise your research skills on checking out your career research, and make sure you have made the right decision. Finally, if it within a university be positive and be prepared to confidently justify yourself and your role to academic staff whose career choice you have moved away from.

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Looking out for growing areas and making use of you insider knowledge can be an ideal combination.

Case Study

Following a PhD in Pharmacology, Michelle worked as a post-doc for several years. She reached a point where she had had enough of the research treadmill. She had proved that she could "do research, come up with fundable ideas, raise external funds, supervise junior research staff, write papers, give presentations and gain a national/international reputation" and decided that she needed a change.

One of her responsibilities was to run the undergraduate work-placement scheme. Much of her time was spent "advising students on self assessment of skills and in articulating their achievements and abilities to prospective employers." She enjoyed this aspect of the work and decided "I had better start taking my own advice". She saw a potential niche, focusing on postgraduate education, and when a post came up successfully applied. She now has a permanent position in training and development.

Her advice is "Accept that you may have to play a waiting game. Try to gain some experience of working in the area of your choice. Look for areas in which there are likely to be new openings. Accept that short-term contracts are used to manage risk and exposure when people are setting up new initiatives."

There are many employers, closely linked with the university sector, who would find an employee with inside knowledge very useful.

Case Study

Jennifer obtained a first degree and worked in management and training roles with a variety of organisations for several years. She was then invited to become a researcher and worked on various labour market-related projects within a research centre. She was employed on a series of fixed-term contracts.

She became "sick of dealing with the uncertainty and insecurity which this way of working involved" so she started to look elsewhere. She saw an advert for her current job, linking small companies with sources of university expertise, and applied. Having worked with the director on a number of occasions and with a core of relevant knowledge gained from her extensive research experience, Jennifer got the job.

Her advice to research staff career changers is "try to get involved in as many activities as possible which are not specifically concerned with your own research". Jennifer was a member of the university's Concordat Implementation Group, and this gave her access to senior staff and extensive networking opportunities with individuals outside her own area.

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Bolles, Richard Nelson. What color is your parachute?: a practical manual for job-hunters and career-changers. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley,1997.
Green, Graham. Career change handbook: how to find out what you're good at and what you enjoy: then get someone to pay you for it. How To Books. ISBN 978 1 84528 137 3.
Hawkins, Peter, *The Art of Building Windmills: career tactics for the 21st century* Liverpool : University of Liverpool, 1999.
Hopson, B. and Scally, M., *Build Your Own Rainbow: a workbook for career and life management* Chalford, 2004.
Johnstone, Judith. Planning a career change. How To Books. 2006.

Change suggestions

Brown, Craig. Working in the voluntary sector: how to find rewarding and fulfilling work in

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Starting Your Own Business

A new direction may involve starting your own business. If you are considering this option, there are a number of organisations that can help you including some examples of regional help. Also check your own University student societies and your research and business links or commercial development sections.

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Self_employment/p!eFcmg
Graduate Prospects self employment site with advice and links.

www.businesslink.gov.uk BusinessLink provides information on self-employment, starting small businesses, entrepreneurship.

http://www.startups.co.uk/ All round advice and links site for new businesses.

http://www.financewales.co.uk/what_we_do.aspx Commercial funding for businesses in Wales. Regional help with HE associated spin out companies.

http://www.oxonbe.co.uk/ Regional help in Oxfordshire area.

New from Autumn 2008

http://www.vitae.ac.uk/ Look out for an increasing range of resources dedicated to research staff career development and for PhD students from Vitae, successor to UKGRAD which developed many resources for PhD students in the past.

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Chapter 5 RESEARCHING OPTIONS

Once you have some ideas about what you want to do next, whether that means staying in academic employment or exploring other fields, you will need to research the options that are open to you. This will enable you to make a more informed decision when suitable opportunities arise, and allow you to demonstrate your motivation in job applications.

Although the information in this chapter is mainly based on finding employment outside academia, there are many points that will be equally useful for those of you wishing to continue your academic career.

Sources of Information

There are a number of sources of information which you can make use of during your research:-

Careers Information

Careers Service Library/Resource Centre - for details on the facilities available see Chapter

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Training Information

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Examples of Labour Market Changes include:-

- A decline in manufacturing industry (a traditional employer of research staff);
- De-layering of management structures within the workplace, reducing the likelihood of automatic promotion and increasing the necessity for transferable skills;
- The outsourcing of non-essential services, reducing the number of permanent employees in a company but increasing the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- A change in focus from products to customers, leading to an increased requirement for commercial awareness in employees;
- Fast moving technology leading to an increased requirement for IT skills in the workplace;
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Similarly with the finance an accountancy industry with many firms unknown to the general public but listed in the According to Business Link are currently over 4 million SMEs in the UK, and the market is growing, so this could be a good starting point for your research **http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/**

Vacancy Information

Careers Service- See Volume III Chapter 10, Visiting the University Careers Service, for vacancies notified to the Careers Service.

The Internet - Vacancy sites like **www.jobs.ac.uk**

Newspapers - National, regional or local newspapers. For academic posts see the Times Higher Education Supplement **http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/** or the Guardian on Tuesdays.

Specialist Publications - Professional journals or trade magazines. Obtain through good newsagents or membership of the relevant professional body. The university library may also offer a selection. Quality weekly publications such as The New Scientist, New Statesman or Economist may contain academic posts.

Professional Development Websites - Often carry vacancies and support e.g. Vitae **www.vitae.ac.uk** Science.Org magazine and website **http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/**

Science Noticeboards - Institutional noticeboards often advertise academic posts.

Recruitment Agencies - Agencies are not permitted to charge you so avoid using those that try. Access the Recruitment and Employment Confederation website at **www.rec.uk.com** Use the 'Find a Consultancy' facility to search for member agencies representing your particular interest and geographical location. Some agencies have strong links to regional development and local universities such as Graduate Yorkshire **http://www.graduatesyorkshire.co.uk/**

Research centres outside academia. For example:
Social Research Association **http://www.the-sra.org.uk/**
Independent Industrial Research Associations **http://www.airto.co.uk/**
Association of Medical Research Charities **http://www.amrc.org.uk/homepage/**

Personal Contacts - A large number of jobs are gained this way. See Networking information below and, Chapter 6 Building Academic Networks.

Overseas Information

Your university careers service will have some reference information. See Chapter 10 Visiting the University Careers Service.

The Internet - Access the Careers Group of The University of London new web resource – 'International Job online through **www.careers.lon.ac.uk/ijo** for links to several international recruitment pages.

The Prospects website has a Work and study overseas section with country specific information **www.prospects.ac.uk/**

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The European Researchers Mobility Portal offers career opportunities and assistance for researchers **http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index_en.cfm**

Embassies - Contact the relevant embassy for advice on recruitment and information on living conditions etc. Access the London Diplomatic List on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website at **http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/what-we-do/building-strong-relationships-ol/foreign-embassy-uk/**

Networking Information

In each of the sections above, talking to practitioners has been a recommended strategy. In fact networking can be an extremely fruitful aspect of job hunting both inside and outside academia. Many of you already excel in this area, but others will feel daunted by the prospect of approaching strangers. Remember that most people will be flattered by your

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Generating Contacts

Identifying the appropriate contact is important, but how do you go about it? There are several levels you can progress through if you find the prospect of cold calling a complete stranger a little daunting.

- People you already know – friends, relatives, colleagues.
- People you almost know – the friends, relatives and colleagues of the previous group.
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Former Research Staff Say …

"Recognise that you have an incredible range of transferable skills. Many employers have no idea what 'being a scientist' is all about and how many things you do as part of your job. You need to be prepared to spell it out to them."

"Be aware of the stereotypes you will be up against. You may have to play down your academic achievements, but give examples of when you have met deadlines etc. Although an employer may often use the 'added value' of having an academic researcher on the team, they may also be wary that you will not be prepared to undertake mundane tasks."

If you think the stereotypes are accurate, you might use them to demonstrate why you want to escape from the negative aspects of academic work and embrace a new career in a different environment.

Lack of Research

If your research is half hearted and doesn't involve personal contact with current practitioners, your applications will suffer. You will not demonstrate sufficient motivation, particularly if you are trying to persuade an employer outside academia to take a chance on you. Your academic prowess will not always be enough to get you to interview stage. You must demonstrate that you are well informed about the sector, the employer and the skills they are seeking. This will help you to convince them that you are genuinely interested in changing your career and haven't just run out of options in academia.

More views from employers "We recruit postdocs/research staff into non-research posts but they must be able to capitalize on 'transferable skills", research occupations, the job market etc (large scientific services, SEARCH 2006).

Being Too Selective

Don't ignore advertisements that do not specify a PhD or research experience. Those they are Too

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However, employers' selection methods are carefully designed to assess specific skills and compare candidates in an equal opportunities environment. Why should they treat you any differently when there are lots of other excellent individuals to choose from? If you behave as if you are superior to other candidates, particularly in a group situation, you are likely to be shooting yourself in the foot. The employer will assume that you are not really interested in the job, and may even decide that you are not the type of person they wish to work with anyway.

One final point from employers "don't assume there is one entry point into a company, we recruit into technical positions, graduate training schemes, via websites, specialised journals, recruitment agencies , word of mouth, and by individuals contacting us for advice on what is the most appropriate route into our organisation" (large IT services, SEARCH).

Additional Support

Find out if there are professional development courses on networking, communicating effectively, personal effectiveness. If working within the university sector there may well be staff development opportunities via Human Resource departments, Research Offices, Postdoc Societies etc. Perhaps some of these are run in conjunction with University Careers Services especially at the larger HE institutions. The latter can be consulted on strategies and tactics to adopt. See Chapter 11 Making the most of Staff Development/ Human Resources.

Helpful publications include The Art of Building Windmills, Dr Peter Hawkins, including on line support via the Windmills Programme **www.windmillsonline.co.uk** and books such as Network Your Way to Success, John Timperley.

The Vitae website **www.vitae.ac.uk** has a good section on networking. See also Sources and Resources for Further Reading and Useful Websites.

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How to Build Successful Academics Networks

One essential feature of successful networking is pro-activity. You are going to have to actively search out and create opportunities for networking to achieve maximum success. Below are some key stages and activities to consider:-

Start With Who You Know, Then Build Outwards

During your everyday research start thinking strategically about how the people around you can help with your academic career. Make a list

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If you find it difficult to attend conferences due to funding limitations then search for other sources of funding yourself. Many institutions provide awards and bursaries to allow early career researchers to travel to conferences, and also check with a variety of funding bodies and charitable organisations.

Proactive 'Research', Volunteering and Visiting

Other opportunities for networking, aside from the above, include either being invited to give a presentation at another institution or, being proactive, asking if you can come and deliver one. If successful, not only can you advertise your own research and capabilities you can also use your time wisely when there to talk afterwards to key individuals and further extend your networks in an institution that you might like to work in later on in your career. Use your time there to collect essential information – are there enough groups doing similar work to generate a stimulating and collaborative environment? What are the facilities like? What kind of support is offered, both financially and developmentally (e.g. academic mentors, training) for early career researchers and probationary lecturers? Alternatively you could arrange your own workshops or seminar session and invite an interesting external speaker, someone you would like to spend some time talking to afterwards. An alternative way of visiting other institutions is as a visiting scholar, which would give you a lot more time to establish networks in a target institution. Many departments and institutions provide opportunities to become a visiting scholar, and some research grants and fellowships have these opportunities built in.

Join the On-line Community

An increasingly important method of networking extensively beyond your immediate research environment is by getting yourself on e-mail lists and on-line networking sites. The use of on-line academic networking forums and groups is increasing. These can be a good

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Websites

Research Councils

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www.researchiscool.com – A site set up in 2007/2008 by a PhD student from Edinburgh University. Designed specifically as a site to locate research jobs and for social networking amongst research staff at all stages of their careers.

www.vitae.ac.uk - An excellent resource for all aspects of researcher career planning as well as identifying regional and national training events and support.

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University Researchers and the Job Market

A Practical Career Development Resource for Research Staff

VOLUME II

The Effective Job Selection Package

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www.agcas.org.uk/disclaimer

Make sure you haven't left huge areas of unused paper or produced vast expanses of dense text. If the layout is bad and difficult to follow, employers may reject your CV without reading it properly.

Remember, the employer might only have 30 seconds to spend on each CV at the first sift, so make it as clear and easy to read as possible, set out so the most relevant information

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- Consider including some interpretation of the facts you are listing. For example, in the employment section, rather than simply providing a summary of your main responsibilities add a few lines about the skills you gained while doing these tasks.

- Give the most relevant information more prominence and more space. For example, don't waste a page on details of all the courses you have ever taught if there is no teaching requirement in the post to which you are applying.

- The CV of someone who has been working for several years may be significantly different, in layout and content, from the CV of a new graduate. For example, you might omit your school exam results to allow you to add detail to a more relevant section. However some employers e.g. accountancy firms, are interested in UCAS points so you will need to include A level/Higher (or equivalent) results in some applications.

- You may choose to discuss your employment history under a series of skills headings rather than choosing the more standard format of reverse chronological order. It is most important to put the information that matches the requirements of the post in a prominent position near the beginning of the document, and you can rearrange your headings to allow you to do that.

References

- Try to ensure that your potential referee feels able to support your application positively. You might do this by organising regular appraisal meetings or informal progress discussions. This is particularly important if there is a possibility that you might leave mid-contract. If your supervisor understands why you wish to leave and knows your career aspirations, they may be more able and more inclined to write a favourable reference.

CVs for Academic Jobs

Most of you will have had plenty of experience of writing academic CVs. You are also in an ideal environment to get feedback from colleagues, supervisors etc. However, you may find the following comments useful when applying for permanent positions.

- An application for an academic post must include evidence of your research reputation, academic achievement, teaching/research/administrative experience and track record in attracting funds. Therefore, an academic CV will list publications and courses you have taught, along with detail about the research methods you have used, techniques you are familiar with and so on.

- Although a CV for a job outside academia should generally be no more than two sides of A4 paper in length, an academic CV will usually be longer, providing all the information is relevant to your application and clearly set out.

- It is important to emphasise educational background when applying for academic jobs, so the '**Education'** section often comes first. Note that this is not necessarily the case in other CVs.

- Most of the allocated space (approximately a third of the first page) should be used to summarise your research to date. Alternatively, you could include a research synopsis as an appendix.

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You should also include details of funding and a list of technical procedures used.

If your first degree is relevant to the position you are applying for, include more detail. Otherwise, a brief summary of your final year project or dissertation and a list of relevant

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CV Examples

The two non-academic CVs which follow are adapted from the experiences of real individuals. All personal details have been altered. They are not meant to be a blueprint for the perfect CV. They are included to give you a few ideas and to illustrate some of the previous comments.

CV 1. Consultancy Research Role	**Skill-Based**

- The first CV is an application for a Research role in a Consultancy and demonstrates only one of your options in terms of layout and structure.

- This is a skills-based CV, particularly useful if you are considering a career change and wish to highlight your skills rather than t

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CV 1. Consultancy Research Role **Skill-Based**

Andrew Ross

25 Bute Street
Glasgow
G12 3AQ

Tel: 0141 3324891
Mob: 07786552305
a.ross@socsci.gla.ac.uk

PERSONAL PROFILE

A dynamic and experienced researcher looking to move into Consultancy. Can offer a range of skills required in a commercial setting including the ability to self manage, juggle competing demands and meet frequent deadlines. Ready for a new challenge in a stimulating and client-focused environment.

SKILLS

Writing and Analytical Skills

My PhD developed analytical skills, logical reasoning, the ability to reflect and to use carefully reasoned arguments to present and defend insights.
My extensive writing experience includes the publication of a 2006 book entitled 'Adam Smith's Philosophy' and numerous journal articles on a range of topics. I have developed a clear and concise writing style.
I am a member of the Glasgow Editorial Board for the Journal Politics.
I act as a referee for the Routledge Journal The Adam Smith Review.
I am also a regular reviewer for numerous publications including Political Studies Review, History of Political Thought and Economic Affairs.

Organisational & Team Work Skills

I have excellent project management skills developed on my PhD research project and maintained in my current research projects.
My teaching commitments include designing and conducting tutorials, marking essays, attending meetings with the teaching team and contributing to the development of the teaching programme. For the past 3 years I have also taken on board a further responsibility as Convener and organiser for Postgraduate Research Seminars which run on a weekly basis in semester time covering topics in response to student feedback, including booking speakers.
I volunteered as Conference Organiser for the Northern Political Theory Association Annual Conference at the University of Glasgow in August 2005.
I am an enthusiastic Member and Organiser for the Department Research Seminar Committee which runs weekly throughout semester time.

Communication & Presentation Skills

I am a highly adaptable presenter having delivered in a variety of settings, from department meetings to international conferences.
As a tutor, I am highly competent in explaining complex information and ideas to a range of students at different stages. In addition I have learnt to communicate my research at non-specialist level to the varied audiences attending my conference seminars.
Tutoring in groups and providing pastoral care to individual students has fully developed my communication and interpersonal skills.

IT Skills

Extensive use of MS Office, e-mail packages, use of search engines and academic databases for advanced research functions.

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EMPLOYMENT

2004 – Present **The University of Glasgow**
British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow

Class Co-ordinator for Honours Class in The Scottish Enlightenment
Tutor on Level Two Politics options:

History of Political Thought	Classical and Renaissance Political Thought
Reformation to Enlightenment	Eighteenth-Century Thought

2002 – 2004 **The University of Glasgow**
Tutor

Tutored on the following Level 1 courses:

British Politics	European Union Politics
American Politics	Feminism

2003 – 2004 **University of Paisley**
Part Time Lecturer, Department of Politics

Summer 2003 **George Mason University, Arlington Virginia**
Summer Research Fellow at the Institute for Humane Studies

2002 **The University of Glasgow**
Tutor, Faculty of Social Sciences Graduate School

EDUCATION

1999 - 2002 **University of Glasgow**
PhD in Politics

Thesis title 'The Idea of Spontaneous Order in Liberal Political Thought'.

1998 – 1999 **University of Edinburgh**
M.Sc. (Distinction) Social and Political Theory

1994 – 1998 **University of Edinburgh**
M.A. (Hons.) Politics (First Class)

Courses included social policy and economics.

REFEREES

Professor Gerald Campbell
Department of Politics
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8RT
0141 3305064
g.campbell@socsci.gla.ac.uk

Dr Briony Sandler
Department of Politics
University of Paisley
Paisley PA1 7HA
0141 842 536398
B.Sandler@paisley.ac.uk

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JS Mead, Y Garofolis, M Mestas, CA Sousanis, GA Wilde, SL Burns, JK Dgby, S Papastavrou (2006) The associations of ACE polymorphisms with physical, physiological and skill parameters in adolescents European J of Human Genetics 14(3): 332-339.
JS Mead, Y Garofolis, M Mestas, Ca Sousanis, GA Wilde, JK Digby, S Papastavrou (2005) Effects of interaction between ACE polymorphisms and lifestyle on adiposity in adolescent Greeks Obesity Research 13(9): 1499-1504.

TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

Invited speaker to the Estonian Academy of Physical Education (2006) 'ACTN3 genotypes and obesity-, power- and endurance-related phenotypes in adolescent Greeks'.
Invited lecturer at the International Networking for Young Scientist (INYS) workshop (2006; Malaysia). This involved delivering two lecture-style talks and a computer-based laboratory tutorial session.
American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) 53rd Annual meeting (2006). Presentation on 'ACTN3 genotypes and obesity – power - and endurance-related phenotypes in adolescent Greeks'.
ACSM 52nd Annual meeting (2005) funded by the Genetics Society. Presentation on 'Physical activity-dependent effects of -adrenergic receptor polymorphisms on obesity-related phenotypes in children'.

References available on request.

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What are the most stimulating, difficult or unusual experiences you have had in the last 5 years, and what have you learnt from them?

On the actual form, the space allowed for the answer to this question was limited, and this can be a significant indicator of the importance of the question. If they only want a short answer, try to analyse exactly what they are looking for before you start. In this case, they may be expecting evidence of creativity or an insight into your personality.

As with CVs, there are many useful rules which may be applied when answering application form questions.

Be very clear about what the questions mean and how you are expected to answer them.

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Covering Letter Example 1

6 Hawthorn Grove
Nottingham
NG5 2BL

22nd July 2008

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Covering Letter Example 2

27 Wilton Lane
Kilburn
London NW10 7DL

7th June 2008

Dear Ms Khan

Student Recruitment Officer (Sciences) Ref: 16782/SRO12

I would like to apply for the above position advertised on your website. I am currently working at University College London in a research role and am now looking to move into a student recruitment role reflecting my significant experience and commitment to science.

My interest in Student Recruitment stems from my 3 years volunteering as a Science Ambassador in local schools whilst undertaking my PhD. I found it hugely rewarding working with young people on classroom projects to inspire and encourage them to consider careers in science. I also advised older pupils on applying to science degrees and on the 'university experience'.

I have further enhanced my communication and interpersonal skills working as a tutor to undergraduates during my PhD and as a demonstrator in my current role. I am a confident and articulate presenter when communicating scientific ideas to a range of audiences including at national and international conferences.

As a university researcher I can offer a high level of managerial and organisational skills required in running a lab and supervising other staff and students. Furthermore, attending university committees keeps me up to date with developments in the sector, particularly relating to the science disciplines. Working closely with undergraduates over a long period means I have a strong insight into the issues applicants face when applying to university and have a breadth of knowledge of the range of science courses offered at undergraduate level.

I look forward to your response. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

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Further Resources

The following websites have informative and up-to-date sections on Applications including sample applications:-

- **Researchers Portal –** advice for research staff and students **www.vitae.ac.uk**
- **Prospects** – the UK's official graduate recruitment website **www.prospects.ac.uk**
- **Hobsons** - advice for job seekers in the graduate labour market **www.get.hobsons.co.uk**
- **Target Jobs**

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Chapter 8 INTERVIEWS

Researchers often have very different levels of experience of interviews; some may have had a number of interviews whilst others may not have had a formal job interview until they apply for a fellowship or an academic or non-academic job. Whatever your experience this chapter can be used to review your past interview experience and refine your skills or to assist you to prepare for your first interview.

Academic Interviews

Within academia there are variations in interview procedure. A post-doctoral position may be obtained through talking to the right people at a conference, involving virtually no formal selection interview. However, the application process for a permanent academic job or a research fellowship may be a much more formal experience, involving the presentation of a research paper, teaching a class and a panel interview with senior university staff. Do expect to be asked questions on areas other than your research, for example, teaching approaches, managing resources and people. Your preparation must include these areas as well as your research. Examples of questions that you might be asked can be found later in the chapter. If you apply for a post outside the UK you may be interviewed by telephone or a video conference may be set up. Remember that there may be some cultural differences concerning interview styles and behaviour across the globe. Try to use contacts in the country or consult others who may have worked there previously to check out any significant differences that you may need to take into account.

Non-Academic Interviews

Many organisations now use panel interviews as well as other selection exercises and psychometric tests in order to select the best candidate. Smaller organisations though may still rely on a one-to-one interview conducted by a senior manager as their main recruitment method. The growth of the recruitment industry itself has meant that more companies use agencies to make an initial assessment of candidates, therefore, you may be invited into the agency for an interview with their staff or increasingly they may use telephone interviews at this stage. Some agency staff may have very little knowledge of academic research and so it is important that you highlight the transferable nature of your skills and experiences.

A former researcher comments:-

"Interviews for research jobs had been very informal. Decisions were made on my track record e.g. where I had been before and what I had done, and on being known already. The CVs that I prepared for research posts were very much academic CVs i.e. the emphasis was on places where I had worked and the evidence that I was an independent researcher, technically competent and that I could start and complete a piece of work (papers published, papers presented, grants held, research interests, invited talks, Society involvement, refereeing carried out etc)."

The same researcher, on applying for a position in training and development, says:

"The interview for the permanent post that I was appointed to was very formal. It was also a skills/competence-based interview that complemented the skills CV that I submitted when I applied for the position."

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Technical and Case Study Interviews

Some industries will want to test your technical skills and problem solving. Don't be surprised if they begin with some basic level knowledge, they want to know that you can still explain things simply to others who may not have your higher level of expertise, so remember to "revise" some of the basics before you get there, don't be caught out by some simple calculations that you would normally be able to do very easily outside an interview. Technical interviews may also take you into your non-specialist area, don't immediately say "this is not my field", have a go, they are testing your ability to think quickly and use other knowledge to attempt an answer. In technical interviews using illustrations can help you to explain things; it is probably a technique you would use in meetings or discussions with colleagues at work. You can use the same technique in an interview, so ask for a piece of paper or use a whiteboard, if you feel this would help you to explain something clearly, it also demonstrates that you have a range of communication techniques.

Criterion-Based Interview

Some employers may have a list of specific questions that they must ask all the candidates. Try to include some extra information in your answers to each question. As long as it is relevant, this may help you to stand out in the interviewer's mind.

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- Be prepared to be asked about those areas where your application is not as strong and have a positive approach as to how you would rise to these challenges.

A former university researcher, now working for an IT company, advises “give yourself enough time to find the right position. Sell your reasons for leaving academia as a positive for the company. Companies want people who want to develop and progress.”

- Read through the job description and list your evidence for each of the requirements. When you are doing this try to “think” yourself into the job this will help you to formulate answers which demonstrate how you would approach aspects of the work.

- Find out what support may be available to you from your university. There may be interview skills workshops run by your careers service or staff development unit, this will enable you to learn more about interview approaches and also to practice in a safe environment. You may also be able to obtain a practice interview with a careers adviser or an employer. . See Chapter 10 ‘Visiting the University Careers Service’ and Chapter 11 ‘Making the Most of Staff Development. Colleagues and friends may also help you to practice.

Preparation will enable you to build a more accurate picture of what the employer is looking for, and allow you to provide more relevant information about yourself at the interview. It will also demonstrate your interest and motivation to the employer.

Performance

Appearance and Body Language

A significant proportion of the employers’ impression of you is based on your appearance and your behaviour.

- Your outfit should reflect a professional attitude. Dress code can be an issue, and there may be those of you who feel that what you say is more important than what you wear. However, the employer doesn’t yet know anything about you and will form strong views from a first impression so it is better to adopt a smart and businesslike approach initially.

- Smile and make eye contact.

- Try to appear confident.

- If you have a habit of wild gesticulation when expressing yourself, try to tone it down. Don’t suppress it completely as you may become stilted and end up concentrating more on that than the points you are making.

Questions

During the course of the interview the employer must determine **three** things, and their questions will reflect this.

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Personal Development and Qualities

How do you normally cope with pressure?

How do you recognize when you are stressed?

What makes you angry?

Competency-Based Questions

Give me an example of a time when you had to convince someone to change their point of view. How did you do this and what was the result?

Tell me about a time when you have led a group or team, what was the outcome and what would you have done differently?

Your Answers

The most important communication skill in an interview situation is **listening**. Make sure you answer the question that was asked.

- Pause before you answer. Not only will this help you to listen to the entire question but it will also help you to begin your answer positively, rather than in a stumbling and halting fashion.
- If you can't think of an answer immediately, ask for a moment to think about it.
- Where relevant, you may elaborate on certain topics, but keep it concise.
- If you are required to give negative information (such as describing a weakness), make sure you present it in a positive way e.g. how you overcame it and what you learned from the experience.
- Another daunting question is 'where do you see yourself in 5 years time?' Part of your research should include finding out about typical career paths within the industry. Use this information to imply that you wish to progress in the job and take on more responsibility.

Your Questions

At the end of the interview, you will usually be asked if you have any questions.

- Try to have something to ask, but if you don't have anything, explain that they have covered everything you wanted to know.

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- Ask about training programmes or career development opportunities (as long as they aren't mentioned in the brochure/job description). It is worth finding out who will be conducting the interview beforehand as there is no point asking a personnel officer what they enjoy about working in the Radiology department. You might also ask about future development plans or management structure.

- If there is a vital point that you haven't yet had the chance to make, now is your opportunity.

The End of the Interview and Feedback

- To avoid unnecessary panic, find out when you are likely to hear from them. If they don't contact you within the allotted time, telephone to find out why.

- If you are rejected, it is a good idea to request feedback. You could explain that you are very keen to work in this field and would welcome any advice on your performance, on improving your self presentation, and if there are any areas of skills knowledge and experience they feel you need to address in a competitive market. They may be unable to offer this, but it could be very helpful to your future applications if they do.

- If you feel that you have been unfairly treated at any stage of the selection process make detailed notes of all matters, facts, documents and your feelings and consult the Diversity advisers at you Careers Service or Human Resources for initial advice.

Assessment Centres

The interview itself is often only a part of the whole process. Increasingly employers require you to complete various tasks on which you are assessed. The particular exercises involved in an assessment centre (sometimes known as a second/final interview, or selection centre/board) will depend on the job for which you are applying. Chapter 9 Employer Assessment Centres offers detailed advice and information on the range of exercises used by employers.

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Chapter 9 Assessment Centres

An invitation to an assessment centre can strike fear into the hearts of many job seekers but this should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a trial. The purpose is to give you the chance to demonstrate the key competencies required for the post. They can involve a lot of hard work on your part but on the whole are a lot fairer and objective than having to sell yourself in one short interview. In addition, you can use this experience to find out a lot more about the employer, again much more so than you would find out in an interview.

Assessment Centres have become increasingly common in recent years and for a large scale recruitment scheme you are pretty much guaranteed that later in the recruitment process you would be invited to an assessment centre of one or two days. However it's not just large organisations that employ a range of assessment activities. Many different types of recruiters, including some universities, recognise the importance of assessing your relevant skills in different activities so you can expect that recruitment for many jobs will involve some if not all of the activities listed below.

In the case of large scale recruitment, it may be reassuring to know that at the Assessment Centre you are not usually competing against the other participants but against the criteria set by the employer. So, in theory all participants could successfully gain a place. This means that you can support each other through the process, making it a more positive experience.

What Can You Expect?

Panel Interviews and One-to-One Interviews

For information on the range of interview formats and advice on approach and preparation see Chapter 8 Interviews.

Presentations

In many cases you will be given prior notice of your topic so that you can prepare a professional and polished presentation. Take note of how much time you have and practice until your timing is perfect as they may mark you down for over-running.

Alternatively you could be given the topic on the day and have only a short amount of time to prepare. In this case they are clearly not expecting a very slick presentation or visual aids but to see how you can think on your feet and deliver under pressure.

Your audience size could vary from a small number of people (possibly the same people on the interview panel) to a wider group of staff from the organisation. It could also include your fellow candidates.

However much preparation time you have, make sure your presentation has a clear structure to it. Introduce it by explaining what you will be covering, then deliver the talk and finish by summarising your main points.

Even if you don't have much rehearsal time, try to avoid the temptation to read from a script. You will impress more if you can summarise the main points of your presentation onto bullet point cards and use them as prompts.

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Useful reference books include:-

Harry Tolley and Robert Wood. *How to succeed at an Assessment Centre : test taking advice from the experts.* London, Kogan Page, 2005.

Andrew Bradbury *Successful Presentation Skills.* London Kogan Page, 2000.

Patsy McCarthy and Caroline Hatcher. *Presentation skills* : the essential guide for students.London,Sage, 2002.

Work Simulations

The employer may want to assess you in a real working situation. The most common activities used are listed below:-

Case Studies

You will be given a possible work scenario on which you will have to make recommendations. Usually this will involve a large amount of information to assimilate and analyse before presenting and explaining your proposals a short time later to an assessor or in a written report. You are not being tested on your prior knowledge of the subject but on your analytical skills, logical thinking, decision making skills and communication skills.

In-Tray Exercises

This will test your organisational and planning skills by giving you complex information to deal with in a short period of time. Nowadays many take the form of 'E-Tray' exercises involving a large number of e-mails you have to decide on how to prioritise, delegate, and draft replies to. It could also take the form of paperwork such as memosgon

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Your Overall Performance

However many exercises you have, try to focus on one at a time and don't worry if you performed less well than expected in one exercise. It is your overall score at the end of the assessment centre that counts so you could perform poorly in one exercise and still be successful.

Also, remember that the assessors want to see you do well; after all they have invested a lot of expense and resources into this process. By now you have successfully completed at least one recruitment stage so keep reminding yourself that you have so far demonstrated the competencies the employer is looking for. Be positive, enthusiastic and put your all into it. If you do this, you are likely to find afterwards that you have really enjoyed the experience. And remember, just as with interviews, it's not just about what you say but how you say it. So maintain your non-verbal communication throughout the activities – this means good eye contact, facial expression and gestures expressing your positivity and enthusiasm.

In common with interviews, you may learn your fate at assessment centre the same day or later by letter or e-mail. Many employers give feedback to unsuccessful candidates and may even encourage you to re-apply at a later date. If you are unsuccessful, take on board any feedback and work on your development points so that you are successful next time.

Further Resources

The following websites have informative and up-to-date sections on Assessment Centres with relevant links to practice activities:-

- **Researchers Portal –** advice for research staff and students **www.vitae.ac.uk**
- **Prospects** – the UK's official graduate recruitment website **www.prospects.ac.uk**
- **Hobsons** - advice for job seekers in the graduate labour market **www.get.hobsons.co.uk**
- **Target Jobs** – advice for job seekers in the graduate labour market **www.targetjobs.co.uk**

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University Researchers and the Job Market

A Practical Career Development Resource for Research Staff

VOLUME III

The Support

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Chapter 10 VISITING THE UNIVERSITY CAREERS SERVICE

The amount of information and the degree of access available to researchers will depend on the size of the careers service and the number of staff. There is considerable variation between institutions. Some careers services are funded to help Research Staff, and may have careers adviser(s) who specialise in looking after researchers, whereas others must commit their limited resources to helping current students only. In some institutions, careers guidance may be offered to Research Staff by a staff development unit, research offices or human resources department.

The following is a guide to what you might find.

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Advice on making applications, interviews etc

- Feedback on your CV, application form or covering letter from a careers adviser.
- A mock interview with a careers adviser or employer.
- Relevant seminars by visiting employers.
- Career workshops or career management courses specifically for Research Staff.
- Practice aptitude test sessions, allowing you to sit a series of tests under exam conditions.

Employer Information

- Presentations run by individual employers.
- Skills sessions run by individual employers.
- Recruitment fairs offer the opportunity to talk to a number of employers under one roof.

Vacancy information

- Employers at recruitment fairs often provide vacancy information.
- Employer presentations commonly include information about current vacancies.

On Paper

Career Choice Information

- Relevant reference books (see Sources and Resources for more details).

Occupational Information

- Occupational files, put together by the careers service, containing more detailed information on individual occupations. These files often include literature produced by professional bodies and other relevant organisations.
- General career publications such as ‘Occupations’ or ‘The Penguin Career Guide’ which are also available from good bookshops.
- A library of reference books covering different occupational areas.
- Occupational publications such as the GTI Guides and Inside Careers Guides covering areas such as law, science, engineering and chartered accountancy.
- Alumni information. Many careers services keep a database of alumni contacts who are happy to be contacted for occupational information.

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Advice on Making Applications, Interviews etc

- In house publications and leaflets on all aspects of the job search process.

- General career publications on ‘how to write a CV’, ‘how to do well in an interview’, aptitude tests etc.

Training Information

- Postgraduate course directories, such as Hobsons Postgrad **www.postgrad.hobsons.com** and the Prospects Postgraduate Courses Directory.

- Occupational files containing training literature produced by professional bodies and other relevant organisations.

- Postgraduate study files put together by the careers service.

- Directories of short courses and evening classes e.g. Floodlight.

Employer Information

- Employer files, put together by the careers service, containing detailed information about individual employers. These files often contain recruitment literature, annual reports and press cuttings. Large national employers should be represented, as well as smaller local companies.

- Employer directories such as Inside Careers, Target and Prospects. These directories list a large number of graduate employers and can be searched by category and subject area.

- Resources such as employers’ recruitment directories and databases, business directories and, in some cases, specialist journals.

- Specialist directories such as The Legal 500 **http://www.legal500.com/** which lists law firms or the Hollis UK Press and Public Relations Directory, **http://www.hollis-pr.com/A-Z/w.htm**) which includes the contact details of PR firms throughout the UK.

Vacancy Information

- Graduate vacancy bulletins.

- Current vacancy files or a noticeboard advertising the latest opportunities.

- Various professional journals or popular publications (such as New Scientist) available for reference.

- Information about recruitment fairs or other events.

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Overseas Information

- Overseas files, put together by the careers service – containing information on working overseas.
- General careers publications on working overseas.
- Information on producing CVs or resumes for overseas job applications.
- Employer directories for various countries.

Other Sources

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Chapter 11 MAKING THE MOST OF HUMAN RESOURCES

As a member of staff at a UK University your employment will be subject to both the UK legal requirements and national good practice expected of a major Public Sector employer. This will include policies covering your specific conditions of employment, your rights and obligations as an employee, those of your fellow employees, for example your research leader or PI, and your employer, the University. The transition from student researcher to employee may have felt seamless especially if you have remained at the same University and research centre but you are in a different legal position with changed conditions and also have a new set of university support to help you along. It is worth checking both your contract of employment and the University Human Resources policies dealing with everything from working hours to maternity leave and promotion processes.

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (the Concordat) **http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk/** launched in June 2008 provides a set of key principles for the future support and management of research careers, and under each principle, an explanation of how it may be embedded into institutional practice. The three principles most vital for you as an individual researcher are:-

Principle	Description
3	*Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.*
4	*The importance of researchers' personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.*
5	*Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.*

All Universities have agreed these principles as Universities UK **http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/** have become signatories to them on their behalf. Each University must make their own arrangements to implement them within a reasonable timescale and this will vary greatly between Institutions. Thus your need to be aware of University policies and get to know how they work.

Human Resources Policies

Human Resource (HR) policies are not just there to protect you when you think something may be going wrong they can maintain clarity and fairness in the workplace by being transparent to all staff and form standards that all staff should adhere to. Being aware of policies and practice to support your personal and career development can be an important part of making the most of your current employment opportunities and preparing for your future in the jobs market.

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Typical policies of interest include:-

- **Fixed-term contracts** including redeployment, redundancy matters, notice periods, entitlement to time for job search in the last few months of contract.

- **Equality, diversity and work life balance** including carer, maternity, paternity and adoption leave, rights to request flexible working and release for civic duties.

- **Promotion, regrading and secondments.**

- **Staff wellbeing** including staff counselling and occupational health.

Most Universities will have a staff handbook that will set out policies and identify staff who can assist with specific confidential advice on matters effecting your employment. Your Institution website will also provide information about HR policies and other related policies that may govern your current and future work like those dealing with applications for grant funding. There are often some independent interpretations and traditional practice within academic schools and faculties depending on size and funding. Some will have devolved HR functions so be sure to check your own School provision.

Staff Development

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Sources and Resources

For Volumes I ,II and III

- Background information
- Employer and employment market information
- Useful DVDs
- Reading
- Useful Websites

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3. Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly

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Other Developments

2006 Research Councils UK Research Careers and Diversity Strategy published at **www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/strategy.htm**

2007 Recruiting PhDs what works? A report by Dr Charles Jackson .Although a project about the experiences of newly qualified PhDs entering non academic employment this provides very useful insights into the necessity for direct communication between researchers, employers and University Careers Services which can be instructive to research staff looking at this employment market **http://www.vitae.ac.uk/cms/files/UKGRAD-Recruiting-PhDs-what-works-Mar-2007.pdf**

Other relevant policy documents, including information on developments in Europe, can be found in the Policy section of **http://vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/1391/Policy.html** similarly reports can be found on the publications section **http://vitae.ac.uk/1272/all/5/Publications.html**

Fixed-Term Contract Legislation

2002 - The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations state that fixed-term employees (including postdoctoral and other research staff) should not be treated less favourably than comparable permanent employees and that the use of successive fixed-term contracts will be limited to four years, unless the use of further fixed-term contracts is justified on objective grounds. The response of universities to this legislation varies between institutions but there have been moves by some institutions to transfer Research Staff from Fixed to open ended contracts.

Association of Postdoctoral Researchers

The aim of the Association of Postdoctoral Researchers is to provide a voice for the UK's research staff and postdocs. Find out more from the Wiki at **http://scratchpad.wikia.com/wiki/NationalpostdocUK** There are also many entries on post doc blogs.

The USA has the much larger and longer established National Postdoctoral Association **http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/site/c.eoJMIWOBIrH/b.1388059/k.DBBE/NPA_Home.htm**

University and College Union UCU - UCU have a recent guide entitled 'The Researchers' Survival Guide' **http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/5/0/ucuressurvivalguide_apr08.pdf** This covers a range of useful advice and is downloadable to members and non-members alike.

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Starting Your Own Business

A new direction may involve starting your own business. If you are considering this option, there are a number of organisations that can help you including some examples of regional help. Also check your own University student societies and your research and business links or commercial development sections.

http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Self_employment/p!eFcmg Graduate Prospects self employment site with advice and links.

www.businesslink.gov.uk BusinessLink provides information on self-employment, starting small businesses, entrepreneurship.

http://www.startups.co.uk/ All round advice and links site for new businesses.

http://www.financewales.co.uk/what_we_do.aspx Commercial funding for businesses in Wales. Regional help with HE associated spin out companies.

http://www.oxonbe.co.uk/ Regional help in Oxfordshire area.

Useful DVDs

AGCAS videos/DVDs available at University Careers Services

- 'Why Ask Me That?'
- 'The Assessment Centre Video'
- 'Your jobs on line'
- 'Making an Impact- the graduate job interview'
- 'Selection Success in One'
- 'Can I Have a Few Minutes of Your Time?'

Reading

Academic Careers

Ali, L. and Graham, B., *Moving On in Your Career. A guide for academic researchers and postgraduates,* Routledge Falmer, London, 2000.
Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. *The Academic Career Handbook,* Open University Press, Buckingham, 1998.
Boden, Rebecca, Epstein, Debbie & Kenway, Jane. *Academic's support kit* [set of 6 books]. Sage Publications. London. 2005.
Delamont, Sara & Atkinson, Paul. *Successful research careers: a practical guide*. Open University Press. Maidenhead 2004.
McCabe, Edward & McCabe, Linda. *How to succeed in academics*. Academic Press. London 2000.
Newhouse, M., *Cracking the Academic Nut: A Guide to Preparing for Your Academic Career*, President and Fellows of Harvard College, USA, 1993.
Newhouse, M.,

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Career Change

Change Process

Basalla, Susan & Debelius, Maggie. *So what are you going to do with that?* a guide to career changing for MAs and PhDs. VHPS Holtzbrinck Publishing. 2001.
Bolles, Richard Nelson. *What color is your parachute?:* A practical manual for job-hunters and career-changers. Ten Speed Press.,Berkeley,1997.
Cope, Mike.*Personal Networking: How to Make Your Connections Count*. Pearson Education, 2003.
Green, Graham. *Career change handbook: how to find out what you're good at and what you enjoy: then get someone to pay you for it*. How To Books.
Hawkins, Peter,

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http://www.oultwood.com/index.php	Local Government – the Oultwood Local Government Website Index, searchable by country.
http://www.rbg.org.uk/	The Research Buyer's Guide (RBG) is a directory of market research providers and support services there is also careers section.

- **www.sfc.ac.uk/** Scottish Funding Council distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges.

- **www.shintonconsulting.com/postdoc/index.html** Careers resources for post-docs including career change and CV advice.

- **http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk/sortit/** Sortit an online careers guidance programme from The Careers Group University of London, which has key sections on Self Analysis, Options Generation, Research etc.

- **www.swan.ac.uk/crs/ University of Wales, Swansea** Includes a 'Career Development Planner' for contract researchers (in the section on career development) which assists in identifying transferable skills. Also case studies.

- **www.targetjobs.co.uk** advice for job seekers in the graduate labour market.

- **http://www.legal500.com/** The Legal 500 which lists law firms.

- **http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/** Time Higher Educational Supplement – articles of interest and HE job vacancies.

- **http://www.the-sra.org.uk/** Social Research Association.

- **www.ucu.org.uk** Universities and Colleges Union.

- **http://www.ukspa.org.uk/home** SMEs (Small and Medium Employers) directory of members of the United Kingdom Science Park Association.

- **www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/careers/researchers/** Comprehensive career development site for research staff including career development, researching career options, decision making, job search, fellowships and making applications. Includes an extensive directory of useful websites.

- **http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Pages/Default.aspx** Universities UK is the respresentative body for the executive heads of UK universities.

- **http://www.vitae.ac.uk/** VITAE a national organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes. Access using the researcher portal.

- **http://www.windmillsonline.co.uk/** Virtual career coach – highly recommended.

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