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ANU CRICOS Provider Number 00120C
Completing your PhD is a cause for celebration, as you have accomplished a challenging and demanding task, and realised a long-term goal.

However this can also represent a crossroads in your career. Armed with new knowledge and skills and a prestigious qualification, you may find yourself beginning the process of career assessment and planning where your new qualification may take you.

As you will see from the advice provided by former students, employers and career professionals, there are many options available to you. The key to your success, however, lies in careful research and career planning, so that you find the position that best matches your values and skills, and which utilises your highly-developed research and analytical capabilities.

The purpose of this publication is to assist in this task, by providing wide-ranging information and advice about:

- the labour market for postgraduate students
- career planning
- identifying career opportunities
- job search strategies
- marketing your skills and qualifications effectively.

We also encourage you to consult your on-campus careers service for additional assistance.

Good luck in your future careers!
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CHAPTER 1

HIGHER DEGREES AND THE LABOUR MARKET

If there is one constant in the postgraduate labour market it is change. While the choice to do a PhD was once seen as a necessary step on the road to an academic or research career where career expectations were relatively linear and predictable, PhD graduates are now much more likely to be found in a diverse range of industries and occupations.
While much has been made of the changing labour market and of the decline in job opportunities in the academic sector both here and overseas, the key issue here is diversification. In spite of the fact that the certainty of academic tenure post-graduation may have gone, there is an increasing awareness across a wide range of industries of the value of the generic skills that a higher degree develops.

The statistics regarding the postgraduate labour market reflect this. While 29.3 per cent of higher degree graduates were in the teaching/higher education sector, and 20.3 per cent were in science, the remaining graduates were employed in a diverse range of industries, including:

- managerial (12.5%)
- other (8.4%)
- business (7.4%)
- engineering (6.3%)
- health (6%)
- clerical/sales (2.1%)
- all others (7.4%)

Significantly, while a high proportion of these graduates are engaged in research particularly in the science and education sectors, many were employed in non research-based positions.

Overall, 90 per cent of higher degree graduates were in full time employment and only a small percentage were looking for work. The overall prospects for postgraduates then are promising, but perhaps less predictable than they were a few decades ago.

One significant postgraduate employer is the Australian Public Service. This is not surprising given that sound research and analysis skills are always in demand in the public sector, particularly for the more senior positions. Additionally, the private sector offers a diverse range of options and opportunities and career paths can be as diverse as:

- a mathematician on Wall Street
- an English PhD writing a manual for a computer company
- an Art Historian helping the Paul Getty museum put a collection together
- a cell biologist working as a patent agent for a pharmaceutical company.

A comprehensive list of employment options for PhDs is included in Postgraduate Employment Options by Sector in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 2
CAREER PLANNING – THE THINGS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE
SELF-EVALUATION

Career decision-making is a multifaceted process that involves both self-analysis and gathering information from external sources. Self-evaluation is an essential first step towards identifying careers that will work for you and involves the identification of values, skills, preferences and interests.

CAREER VALUES

What do you want out of work? What are the key factors and conditions that motivate you at work? What are your guiding lights?

Understanding what is important to you in life and work underpins good career choice and effective job-search strategies. It will also affect the level of job satisfaction you feel.

Exercise:
Consider the following career values. Try ranking them in order of importance. Use them (and others) as a reference point when evaluating employment opportunities.

- advancement
- security
- variety
- challenge
- travel
- balance
- autonomy
- creativity
- public contact
- income
- collaboration

leading edge
status
learning
excitement
help others
flexibility
influencing others
manage
precision work
pressure
leadership

SKILLS ACQUIRED IN HIGHER DEGREE STUDY

In addition to knowing what you value about work, it is equally important to clarify what skills you have and which ones you wish to use and develop.

The skills that you have developed as a postgraduate research student are firstly specialist skills related to your discipline, and secondly generic/transferable skills developed through your experience as a student but not usually discipline-specific. Examples of this second group of skills are: interpersonal communication, writing, research, analysis, planning, organising, budgeting, problem solving, prioritising, time management, assessment, reporting, goal setting and skills in information technology.

COMPLETING A SKILLS AUDIT

It is important to complete a comprehensive skills audit as it will provide the basis for your job applications. Such an audit gives you an understanding of what you have to offer the employment market by identifying your strengths and the skills you prefer to use as well as any skills gaps that need to be addressed. Make sure your skills audit encompasses your paid employment, voluntary work, international experience, community involvement and extra-curricular activities as well as your postgraduate experience.

Common categories (with some examples) of skills that employers look for are:

**Communication**
- persuading and negotiating
- establishing and maintaining networks
- listening and empathising
- delivering presentations
- maintaining good client relationships
- being assertive
- writing to the needs of the audience
- maintaining an effective network

**Research**
- develop research strategies for projects
- understand and apply research methodology
- interpret statistical data
- present research findings effectively
| Leadership and teamwork | • working effectively with people's differences and strengths  
| | • coaching, mentoring, giving feedback  
| | • applying teamwork skills to a range of situations  
| Problem-solving | • developing creative, innovative solutions  
| | • showing independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them  
| | • resolving customer concerns in relation to complex project issues  
| | • apply continuous improvement principles  
| Initiative and enterprise | • adapting to new situations  
| | • being creative  
| | • generating a range of options  
| Planning and organising | • managing time and priorities  
| | • change management  
| | • establishing clear project goals and deliverables  
| | • collecting, analysing and organising information  
| Technology | • having a range of current IT skills  
| | • modelling and statistical analysis using computers  
| | • applying IT as a management tool  
| Career self-management | • having and articulating ideas, vision and personal career goals  
| | • evaluating and monitoring own performance  
| | • taking responsibility  
| Learning | • enthusiasm for ongoing learning  
| | • management of own learning needs  
| | • using a range of mediums to learn  

Adapted from: *Employability Skills for the Future*, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002

As a postgraduate student you will have developed many of these skills, some to a high level. Your challenge is to identify what aspects of your skill-set need developing and how you can apply your existing skills to meet the requirements of positions in which you are interested.

For example:

• Completing a research degree indicates a strong capacity for analysis, independent thinking, capacity for self-direction, consultation, problem solving, dealing with information and project management – just to name a few.

• Working as a tutor develops a particular set of interpersonal skills related to listening, communicating effectively to groups, instructing and presentation. Any teaching experience will give you supervisory skills especially in regard to articulating goals and establishing work schedules. Extracurricular activities may also have developed these skills.

• Presenting papers at conferences requires planning, liaison and presentation skills. It may also involve a good deal of teamwork, networking and cross-cultural communication.

**PERSONALITY PREFERENCES**

Your personality will have an impact on what career plans you make and also how you go about making them. How would you describe your personality traits: self-directed, cautious, determined, easy-going, extraverted, aggressive, ambitious, serious, adaptable, imaginative, enthusiastic, logical, sensitive, decisive? Would you prefer to work in the high-powered world of international consulting, be employed at the coalface of social welfare or beaver away at challenging research projects?

Preferences about options like these will partly be determined by your personality. Considering them alongside interests, skills and values will give you a great start in career planning. The Careers Centre has a range of resources to assist you to find out how your personality preferences may impact on your career decision making.

**OCCUPATIONAL INTERESTS**

Following your interests is crucial to career success and satisfaction so it makes sense to spend some time clarifying what they are and exploring them. It’s likely that your interests have guided you through your studies. Other interests beyond what you are studying may also be important in determining what industries and career settings attract you.

Spend some time identifying your interests and any related work options by asking questions like:

• What would I love to do in my life?
• Where do I want to work?
• What types of activities engage me the most? For example those focused on people, data or technical activities?
• Who does work that interests me? Why?
• What organisations interest me?
• What have I done in the past that really motivated me?
Successful job-searching is a lot easier if you’ve put some thought into career planning. Knowing what you want out of a job and what skills you have to offer, allows you to assess opportunities more efficiently and apply for jobs in a targeted way.
The employment scene is undergoing constant change and keeping up-to-date with trends and expectations often underpins job-search success. Take a broad and flexible look at the labour market – you are likely to discover opportunities you hadn’t thought about and others which may not be directly related to the content of your studies but which are nevertheless interesting. The section in this guide entitled Postgraduate Employment Options by Sector highlights a number of career ideas and places to look for further information.

To find out more specific information on organisations and jobs that might interest you, try the following suggestions.

- Read annual reports, graduate recruitment guides, newspapers, career journals, directories and websites.
- Talk to people – identify people that may have information you need or at least know where to find it; conduct information interviews, attend relevant functions. Contact recruitment agencies and professional associations and talk to their staff about opportunities.
- Participate in events like the Employer Visits Program and attend Career Fairs.
- Gain paid or unpaid work experience in your fields of interest.

Networking is about identifying people and organisations that may be of use to you in your job-search and future career. The activity of networking can range from seeking information from people who are engaged in work you are interested in doing, to advising these people that you are looking for work and letting them know your range of skills and interests.

Networking requires commitment and can be a challenging activity for those who are not used to it. It is however one of the most powerful strategies a jobseeker can use. Remember, over 70 per cent of jobs are not advertised and most of these are filled via networks.

Everyone has contacts – whether they be friends, relatives, work colleagues or academic staff. These contacts in turn know many more people, who could have information and advice to assist you with your job-search. Add to this the contacts you can find through sources like careers fairs, employment directories and websites, and you are well on the way to identifying a substantial network.

Start by:

- talking to your supervisor and colleagues in your department
- finding out where previous postgraduate students have gone – make contact with Research Schools, alumni offices and relevant departments that can help with this
- talking to colleagues with similar research/career interests in other universities.

Expand your network further:

- join relevant professional associations. These organisations send regular newsletters to their members and organise seminars and other networking events
• attend conferences and seminars relevant to industries in which you are interested
• organise work experience or voluntary work with an organisation you would like to work for or that has links into your preferred industry.

INFORMATION INTERVIEWING – A FORMAL NETWORKING SKILL

When approaching people in a formal way to learn more about employment opportunities you should follow these suggestions.

1. Arrange a meeting – face-to-face is best but may not always be possible. Make contact by phone, email or letter requesting a meeting and explain why you’d like to meet. Make reference to the mutual friend/colleague who referred you, if that is how you have identified the contact. Stress that you are asking for a short meeting and that you will be seeking information, not asking for a job.

2. Prepare for the meeting – research the organisation. Think about a range of questions to ask. Make sure your résumé is up to date. Plan appropriate dress.

3. At the meeting – you have limited time, so focus on getting through the questions you want to ask. As with all good communication pay attention equally to listening as well as speaking, adopt open body language and be friendly and relaxed. Ask informed questions about the organisation and the work your contact does. For example:
   - What are the good and not-so-good things about the job?
   - How did they come to be involved in this kind of work?
   - What has their career path been like so far?
   - What sort of qualities/skills help people to succeed in this industry/occupation?
   - What advice would you give me for effective job-searching? Where are vacancies advertised? Ask for some advice about your résumé and who else you should go and talk to.

4. Follow up the meeting with a thank you – this could include an update on progress you’ve made as a result of the meeting. There may be some information that you have found that is of use to your contact in return. Understand the importance of reciprocity both in job search and as you progress through your career.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT NETWORKING

Networking is the most effective way to find out about jobs. It will undoubtedly increase your knowledge bank and gives you the opportunity to meet people who can open the door to job vacancies. Through its very activity you are demonstrating initiative and enthusiasm as well as research and communication skills – all highly valued in today’s labour market. Your visibility may also give you the edge over other applicants who only promote themselves through written applications.

EVALUATING OPPORTUNITIES

Once you have identified an opportunity that appears interesting evaluate it further by asking questions like:

1. Is the job and the organisation consistent with my work values?
2. Would I be able to use my preferred skills?
3. Do I have most of the skills to do the job?
4. Could I persuade someone that I have the skills and qualities that they are seeking? What examples from my experience can I use to demonstrate that I have the skills to meet the key criteria?

In the sections Writing Excellent Applications and Success at Interviews you can learn how to express your skills and qualities in a targeted, positive and appealing way.
A PhD is often viewed as a passport to research opportunities, teaching positions and eventually permanent employment in the form of ‘academic tenure’. However, in recent years changes in financial support from the Government and an increased reliance on external sources of funding have resulted in universities employing more casual and fixed-term staff. However, variable funding patterns also create a large and dynamic employment arena with many opportunities for the entrepreneurial academic who is adaptable, determined and passionate about their area of expertise. The Commonwealth Government has established many programs to encourage university-industry links and prospects are good within areas that have formed these collaborative partnerships. In addition the influence of business has increased global competition for commercial applications of research and resulted in improved international opportunities for postgraduate students. Therefore in the current higher education employment market, business and marketing skills are fast becoming as important as teaching and research skills.

Entry-level tutoring and research positions can have high workloads, but it is crucial to find the time to enhance your career prospects by getting involved with collaborative projects and networking with colleagues. It is also vital to continue writing and publishing your research, so as to increase your career prospects by getting involved with collaborative projects and networking with colleagues. It is also vital to continue writing and publishing your research, so as to increase your competitiveness within the academic labour market.

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING A CONSTANTLY CHANGING ACADEMIC LABOUR MARKET

- Make your aspirations known. Don’t assume people know you want an academic career because you are doing a higher degree.
- Develop a portfolio career strategy. Many successful academics ensure they are up-to-date and adaptable in the changing tertiary climate through consultancies to the government and private sectors as well as often having significant community involvement in their fields of interest. It is also common for academics to have previously worked full-time in their area of expertise while tutoring or guest lecturing in the tertiary sector part-time.
- Expand your networks by attending conferences, joining professional associations and helping out on committees and with extra projects where possible.
- Find out who is in charge of recruiting employees for the department and contact them directly. Casual jobs such as tutoring are often not formally advertised. This market functions completely at the school or department level and recruitment occurs each semester.
- Make use of all the sources of professional development on your campus as effectively as possible.
- Seek mentors both within the university and industry.
- Improve your teaching skills at workshops in teaching and learning centres and understand the range of teaching positions available in all kinds of colleges and universities.
- Get help at Career Centres with career planning, job applications and interview preparation. These centres often run targeted workshops for postgraduate students.
- Many universities have a department that coordinates the university’s liaison with the business and community sectors. If you are interested in exploring the application of your scholarship outside the university, the coordinators in these sections can introduce you to local organisations that have a need for your expertise.
- Become ‘university-savvy’. The most successful academics know how the system works and actively participate in the process.
- Find out the position classification standards for Levels A and B and know how to position yourself against them.
- Read your local enterprise agreement and inform yourself about the terms and conditions applicable to your employment.
- Keep copies of contracts and letters of appointments and check that they specify the duties you are expected to perform. Know salary deadlines and procedures. Administrative staff often have high workloads so, if possible, take responsibility for getting your forms approved and deliver them to the human resources department yourself.
- Serve on committees and participate in student representative organisations as this will extend networks and provide insights into how the university functions.
- Join the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU). It is the main union representing academic and general staff and has special contribution rates for casual staff. The NTEU can provide advice on all matters related to your conditions of employment. It is also a great place to network and is a good source of information about trends in the higher education sector.
- Take an active approach and create opportunities.
- Don’t leave job-hunting until you need one – continually scan the market. Take note of the jobs that interest you and get the selection documentation. Evaluate your skills against these jobs and develop an action plan to improve your strengths and minimise any weaknesses.
- Study your university’s undergraduate curriculum and make a list of courses you’d like to teach. Develop teaching strategies and share this list with your mentors, supervisor, and department head. Presenting such a plan sends a clear message of your interests and determination.

- Contact your university’s equivalent of a community or general interest education centre. These classes are aimed at adult populations and are an excellent opportunity to enhance teaching skills.

- Seek opportunities to teach in other settings, such as at local community colleges or nearby institutions. You might arrange with a faculty member to lecture or do small group instruction on an occasional basis, or you might teach an entire course on your own.

- Contact distance learning institutions. This is a growing source of academic employment.

- Be prepared to move along a career path using ‘stepping stone’ positions both within and outside Australia; this works much better than staying in one place with a limited pool of jobs.

FIND THE BALANCE

It is easy in your keenness to develop skills and networks to become involved ‘for the experience’. In many cases these activities will not help you find a career position. For example, casual and even contract tutoring rarely leads to a tenured position. Conference organisation, research assistance work, and assisting research teams will not often get you full time employment. Use these opportunities to develop skills to put on your CV, but often a little is enough. Use the time to develop your career prospects through publication and then, in combination with the experience you have gained, you will be a good candidate for advertised positions.

WHERE TO LOCATE JOB ADVERTISEMENTS

- Get The Australian’s Higher Education Supplement on Wednesdays or view it online at www.theaustralian.news.com.au/highered

- Subscribe to relevant journals and e-lists where jobs may be advertised for your field.


- Check the website www.academic360.com, a meta-collection of internet resources that have been gathered for the academic job hunter.

- Most Australian and international universities have a current vacancy listing on their websites.

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROFILE

In the current funding environment it is ironic that while student to staff ratios are increasing, academics are also under increasing pressure to build research profiles and get external funding to support their research. Judith Pablan and Julie Gorrell from The Australian National University, provide the following advice for early career researchers on how to develop a research profile.*

NETWORKING

Any savvy PhD student knows that attending conferences helps to get you and your research known. Preparing papers for a conference takes time but brings your research to the notice of other people working in your field. Taking time at conferences to approach people from other institutions, including international conference participants, whose work is related to yours can lead to research collaborations and may help future job applications, either through building your list of referees or because your work is known by someone on the selection panel.

Know who is doing the ground-breaking and/or well-known work in your field. If you enjoyed an article or book of theirs, contact them to say so. Tell them what you’re working on and arrange to meet them, if possible, at an upcoming conference for example.

If you are an invited speaker to a conference, it may be possible to have your attendance at the conference funded by the organisers. It is also possible that your attendance can be funded from other sources – make sure you ask your department first about what funds they could provide and make sure it is an attractive proposition for them by hunting down other sources first.

Helping to organise conferences, workshops and colloquia is also another good way of getting known to those working in your field. This type of involvement can also reap rewards when you submit job applications or applications for externally funded fellowships. Make sure your supervisor knows that you are prepared to take on an organisational role and that you are involved in setting the intellectual framework for these events.
A successful conference requires financial backing. There are many granting agencies that contribute funding for staging conferences – mainly through funding individual invited speakers.

Networking can lead to requests for you to write book reviews or articles, or collaborate in an upcoming publication.

**PUBLISHING**

Getting your work published, preferably in refereed journals, means your research reaches wider audiences, ends up being cited in other works and can soon lead to an international reputation and invitations to international conferences as an invited speaker. Ask someone else who has published in your field to read articles before you submit them to a publisher.

If your field is in the humanities or some of the social sciences you’ll probably need a book too – either a monograph or one in which you have collaborated with other authors. Given the state of the publishing industry in Australia, it is possible that you will require a subsidy. Many institutions have publication subsidy programs – for example, the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Agreeing to write book reviews is a relatively painless way to get the attention of other researchers in your field. It also provides you with a connection to publishers. It can be a double-edged sword though – you don’t want to spend more time writing reviews of other people’s work than you spend on writing your own.

**OTHER WAYS OF GETTING KNOWN**

There are other ways of developing your profile, depending on your interests. If you’re in the humanities for example, acting as an advisor to museums on exhibitions can boost your reputation beyond the usual academic networks. Similarly, for those working in the sciences and social sciences acting as a consultant to industry or government bodies can diversify your networks. Although each discipline has different pathways in which reputations are developed, the point is to be selective and open to alternatives.

**RESEARCH GRANTS**

Grant funding helps you to raise your research profile by helping to finance your research. Grants can fund – in full or, more likely in part – researchers’ salaries and the other costs of carrying out a research project, such as travel, equipment and specialist research personnel (i.e. research assistants, programmers). For most early career researchers, there are three principal ways of getting hold of research grant funds – apply for a Postdoctoral Fellowship, get yourself named as a Research Officer on someone else’s research project and/or apply for project funds to support the non-salary costs of your research.

**POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**

These two to three year full-time posts are funded to carry out a discrete research project. You can apply as an individual or as one of a team of investigators named on a single grant application. The Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) as well as a range of other grant making organisations offer postdoctoral fellowships. University research offices have details about them. All grant-funded fellowships are highly competitive. A PhD awarded in the last three years as well as refereed publications are baseline requirements. You may also need to have been awarded university medals or other ‘prizes’ to be competitive, but you can boost your profile by active involvement in other activities as already mentioned.

**GRANT-FUNDED RESEARCH OFFICERS OR RESEARCH ASSOCIATES**

These (usually) full-time research positions are offered by major grant agencies like the ARC and NHMRC. They are not as competitive as Fellowships and the NHMRC will fund Senior Research Officers to run a research project that they have conceptualised.

The ARC on the other hand only funds Research Associates (RAs) and Senior Research Associates (SRAs) as employees on a project led by someone else.

These are academic appointments. While RAs are not generally involved in the project’s conceptual development of the project, SRAs are viewed as essential elements of the successful completion of the project, and take a greater role in its creation and development. To add weight to the application, SRAs will often be named in it, (though the ARC no longer requires them to be) because their appointment may be critical to the success of the project.

**PROJECT FUNDING**

You may already have a salaried academic post but need additional grant funding to carry out a research project. You might need funds for teaching relief, for example, for travel and accommodation to do fieldwork, to employ research assistants or to buy some equipment that is essential to your research. Again an experienced, well-known researcher might be willing
to be the first named applicant on a collaborative application where you are also named. However, the ARC has in recent years committed more funds to supporting early career researchers. So, only team up with more established researchers who are going to be actively engaged in the project and who are not there by virtue of their reputation alone.

Universities also run their own research grant programs - the old Small ARC grants for example - as well as grants funded by the institution itself. Institutional grants are a good way to kick off a research project that might attract larger externally funded grants.

University research offices can check that the technical requirements for an application are met, but if you want feedback on the esoteric aspects of your grant application you will need an expert reader - from among your colleagues or the networks you’ve built up. It’s too late once you’ve submitted the application.

Whether you are writing an article for wider publication or preparing an application for grant funding, calling on someone with expertise in the area to read your article or grant application before you submit it to a publisher or granting agency is standard practice.

FINDING A GRANT – FUNDING DATABASES

There are many publications that list grants and other funding support for conferences, travel and research. Some are in hard copy format but increasingly, information about grants is available in electronic format. Institutional research offices usually keep copies of major funding publications and provide some form of electronic grants database for the use of their students and employees.

A good electronic database will have a facility that allows you to lodge your ‘research profile’ on the database. The profile can include your research interests, the type of funding you need and so on. It will notify you automatically when additional or updated funding schemes that agree with your profile are entered into the database. They will give you a brief description and usually a web link to more information. Some of these facilities are complicated while others are refreshingly easy to use.

As you build your research profile, your CV will reflect it under headings like Conferences Attended, Conference Papers, Refereed Journal Articles, Other Articles, Books, Book Chapters, Book Reviews, Grants and Awards.

* This article first appeared in the NTEU Advocate 27, November 2001.

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ASSESS POSTDOCTORATE OPPORTUNITIES

“Post-doc positions are not always advertised. Be proactive by visiting labs or research centres that you may be interested in, talk to senior people, students and post-docs. Conduct information interviews. Send your CV in advance or take it with you. Look for research centres that have a culture and reputation for supporting the career development of their post-docs especially in regard to making contacts in the academic community, getting published and writing successful research submissions. This is very important for future career success. Also concentrate your efforts on being employed in centres with a good reputation in the academic community. Overseas experience as a post-doc is usually highly regarded, especially in a big-name lab or research centre which is a leader in its field. This experience leads to opportunities to publish in better journals and the likelihood of meeting highly regarded people working in a prestigious field. Ideally, choose a field relevant to the Australian research community if you intend to return.”

Professor Frances Shannon, Head Molecular and Bioscience Division, The John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR – IT’S NOT ALL ACADEMIC

Increasingly, the modern university is a diverse community of scholars, administrators and students. While an academic career path within universities is one option, a career as a general staff member is also worth considering.

Your advanced research and management skills may equip you for a wide variety of positions in:

- statistics and planning
- project management
- student administration
- public relations
- international education
- finance
- information management
- research and grants management
- human resources
- student services.
Having dedicated so much time studying and researching in a university environment, you will be highly familiar with the culture of the sector. Additionally, the intrinsic value of your qualification is likely to be recognised (given that degrees are of course the basic product of universities).

Specialist publications, such as the weekly Higher Education supplement found every Wednesday in *The Australian*, or the sector newspaper *Campus Review*, are great places to research opportunities in the sector as are the websites of individual universities.

While change has certainly been a constant in the sector over the last decade, most Australian universities remain significant employers in their local areas and are statistically significant employers of their own graduates – many of the senior administrators in the sector now holding postgraduate qualifications.

**THE PUBLIC SECTOR – A DIVERSE RANGE OF OPTIONS**

There is a constant demand in the public sector (federal, state and local) for good graduates with sound research and analytical skills.

Many government departments have specialised graduate development programs, the aim of which is to attract staff with the potential to develop research and management skills and expertise in public sector policy. Given this philosophy, your postgraduate qualifications are likely to put you into strong contention for these positions.

Recruitment into graduate programs is highly competitive and you will be expected to demonstrate competence in areas such as teamwork, communication and leadership skills, as well as your analytical and research abilities.

In thinking about where in the public sector you might work, researching departmental portfolios and finding a department that matches your values is important. You should also consider the differences between the graduate programs. It is usual for programs to incorporate a combination of study, mentoring, networking opportunities and a series of work rotations, but practices can vary from department to department.

Many postgraduates find graduate programs in the public sector a rewarding career option as the following quotes illustrate:

"Going through my PhD I had no idea that I could apply for a graduate position with the Public Service as I thought these were only available to students completing their first degree. I also had fairly stereotypical ideas about what public servants do. I applied to two Commonwealth departments - the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. These both engaged my interest and seemed relevant to my research in workplace diversity and learning. I successfully gained entry into the DEST graduate programme and spent 12 months undertaking training and placements in various sections. This I found challenging and interesting and I was impressed by the quality of the work and capability of the people I encountered. Since then I moved to various areas and am now working in policy development on skills shortages."

PhD graduate, ANU

Depending on your personal circumstances, you may even consider taking on a part-time position while studying, which can be a great way to increase your public sector network and gain an insight to the culture and values of a particular department. As Lyn Maddock, Manager – Human Resources, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reflects:

"In the public service, applicants with postgraduate qualifications are often overlooked if they apply for lower level positions, say as Australian Public Service levels 2 and 3: for many of these positions what is required is hands-on experience in performing many routine tasks, rather than high educational qualifications. Postgraduate students are more successful for positions at levels 4 and 5 for entry into a public service agency if they have little prior work experience. At these levels, there is more need for their special abilities and subject matter expertise."

In summary, the public sector employment options for postgraduates are numerous, and include graduate programs as well as a range of positions at other levels. It is essential to thoroughly research any department that interests you and make yourself aware of each department’s recruitment protocols.
ONLINE RESOURCES

The following websites may assist you in finding out more about public sector career options:

- **Australian Public Service**
- **Australian Capital Territory Public Service**
- **The South Australian Public Service**
- **Victorian Public Service**
- **New South Wales Public Sector**
- **Queensland Public Sector**
- **Northern Territory Public Sector**
- **Western Australia Public Sector**
- **Tasmania Public Sector**

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**OF BUSINESS**

*We hire post-grads into a wide variety of positions some of which could be regarded as traditional and some not; for example research scientists, clinical trial monitors, medical information services, pharmaceutical sales representatives, pharmaceutical marketing analysts and medical marketing analysts. I encourage people to keep an open mind and consider a broad range of roles, there may be some interesting and challenging jobs they have not discovered yet.*

Human Resources Director, Private Sector

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As a postgraduate, your employment options in the private sector are varied and are often linked to your discipline and your areas of expertise.

A science PhD for example may gravitate towards a large pharmaceutical company where scientific research is core business, while an IT postgraduate is highly competitive when seeking employment in systems and software development.

However, while you may decide to work in areas where the discipline content of your degree will be highly prized, particularly if you want to continue to develop your knowledge of a specialised field, there are many other options.

A science postgraduate, for example, may use their highly developed scientific literacy in a career in scientific writing, or pharmaceutical marketing and sales while the IT postgraduate may be involved in management consultancy.

In the humanities, employers in industries such as editing and publishing are increasingly recognising the value of employing postgraduates, primarily because of the range of writing and research skills which their degrees have enabled them to develop.

Thinking laterally and seeing your degree as a package comprising both specific knowledge and broad based skills, is the key to maximising your private sector options.

If you decided that your specialist knowledge and skills are highly marketable and the idea of being self-employed has appeal, consultancy is also an option.

To access more information about private sector opportunities you can start with the following resources:

- **Graduate Careers Australia**: Career exploration website, featuring the Job Search facility whereby one job search returns all advertisements from the Graduate Opportunities and SEEK Campus job databases
- **Graduate Opportunities**: Profiles a wide range of private sector graduate recruitment programs in Australia and New Zealand and has links to many private sector organisations:
  - [www.graduateopportunities.com](http://www.graduateopportunities.com)
THE ROLE AND SCOPE OF CONTRACTING AND CONSULTING IN TODAY’S WORKFORCE

This section, contributed by TMP/Hudson Global, aims to raise postgraduate student awareness on the nature of contract and consulting work in today’s labour market and how to promote additional studies as an asset in this environment.

Contracting has recently emerged as an alternative working relationship, along with other types of non-traditional employment such as consulting. Many businesses are using such arrangements to improve efficiency and allow the business to focus on core activities.

Contract and consulting work involve working within an organisation for a fixed or flexible term, and meeting the needs of a client who requires specialist skills for a specific period of time. The working arrangement usually involves acting independently or working through an agency.

Predominantly, contractors and consultants are professionally skilled individuals with extensive work experience or specialised postgraduate academic qualifications. Normally, contract professionals and consultants are commissioned by organisations when extra assistance and specialist skills are required in setting up or conducting project-based work, or when there is a skill shortage either on a short- or long-term basis.

Specifically, organisations recruit contractors and consultants:

- to assist in periods of peak activity when resources are stretched, such as financial year-end
- to assist with or manage special projects
- to assist with business restructures or systems upgrades/implementations
- for continuity management: to fill gaps during reorganisation, or following staff departure.
- for change management: when companies need help implementing the changes they require in their business
- for problem solving: when companies need specialist skills through trouble shooters with proven track records
- for skills transfer: to offer mentoring at managerial and operational levels
- to cover parental leave.

It is important to recognise the difference between being an employee and being a contractor as the obligations depend on the nature of the relationship. Employees are engaged under a contract of service which is characterised by the employer’s right to command and control the work of the employee – it is in effect a master/servant role. The employee is essentially an agent of the employer and is remunerated for the provision of labour. Independent contractors are engaged under a contract for service. A contractor agrees to provide a certain end result; however, how they achieve that result is under their control. Payment is usually based on the completion of the task.

Regardless of the form of arrangement agreed to by the parties, if a dispute arose the court could still look behind the contract, whether written or oral, and define the true relationship between the parties. An employer cannot contract out of its obligations.
ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES
OF WORKING IN CONTRACTING OR
CONSULTING

Contracting and consulting offers the opportunity to gain exposure to different organisations, capitalising on existing skills to expand professional experience without the obligation of a permanent position.

Advantages

The advantages of working as a contractor or consultant are outlined as follows.

Flexibility
• In most cases, you can be selective about the jobs you choose to take on.
• You set your own schedule (i.e., if you want time off between contracts this is up to you).
• In many cases, you set your own pay rate.
• Opportunity to work within flexible time frames that suit you.
• Flexibility to assist with a change in career directions.

Remuneration
• Contractors and consultants generally make a significantly higher wage than permanent employees performing the same tasks.
• Contracting and consulting provides an income even if you are not sure of your current career direction.

Keeping Skills up-to-date
• As a contractor or consultant, one can set aside time for keeping skills up-to-date.
• Opportunity to keep up to speed technically i.e., tax legislation and accounting standards.

Variety
• Many contractors and consultants enjoy the variety of the organisations they work within and the people they encounter as they go from job to job.
• Variety and choice of work can be very fulfilling.
• Exposure to a different client base.

Experience
• Contractors and consultants have the opportunity to gain experience across a variety of industries, companies and roles.
• The opportunity to try new companies and environments.
• Less office politics.

Disadvantages

The rewards of contract and consulting work can be great; however, there are risks that must be considered. The disadvantages of consulting and contracting are outlined as follows:

Lack of Security
There is little stability in contract and consulting work. While it serves a client no purpose to release a contractor for no reason, a contractor is essentially an ‘at will’ employee and can be released at any time. Further, there is no guarantee that there will be another job waiting in the wings. It is therefore essential that a contractor keep their skills updated and marketable.

Benefits
Depending on the arrangement, some contractors and consultants find the benefits available quite limited, i.e., in many cases, you will not have the usual company health plan to rely on.

Travel
To keep busy, both contractors and consultants may need to be flexible to go where the work is. You may have to travel out of your area to find your next contract.

There are a number of strategies you can adopt to prepare your skills for and get the most out of contracting and consulting:

1. Analyse your skill set. Decide on your specialisation – this will help you be more targeted in your job search and the type of contract that suits you.
2. If you plan to become a long-term, full-time contractor, you should review your skills and assess how long these skills will be sought after. Make sure you are commercially aware of trends in your industry or specialisation.
3. If you plan to do some training, check to see if practical knowledge is required to add value to the training before you can start marketing your skills.
4. Register with a recruitment firm, however, don’t register with too many. Choose only two or three highly reputable consultancies that will represent you in a professional manner.

5. A reputable recruitment consultancy will either reformat your résumé or give you advice on how you can be more effective with its presentation.

6. Some people set up their own company, however it is best to check with your accountant to see if this is relevant, depending on your personal and tax status.

7. You may need to be flexible concerning your hourly rate, as it may vary depending on the company and the project required.

8. When contracting, use your employers as references; don’t ‘burn your bridges.’ If you are good at what you do, you will be re-employed for other projects or for long-term assignments.

9. If a problem arises while on a contract, don’t just leave. Contact your recruitment consultancy, they will be able to assess the situation and act as an intermediary with the company on your behalf. If you’re self-employed; you would need to identify and adopt a suitable process to work through any problems or ‘road blocks.’

If your ultimate aim is a career in senior management or administration, consider high profile organisations such as the United Nations and The International Red Cross, as they generally demand high level tertiary qualifications, as well as experience in the not-for-profit sector.

Closer to home, the not-for-profit sector offers a variety of settings within which to develop your career. These organisations encompass endeavours across the arts, health, social services, education and environmental fields to professional societies and research institutes.

Areas of particular demand include fundraising or marketing expertise, as well as database management and information technology skills. You could also find yourself using your research skills to design and conduct research, analyse data, predict future trends, formulate policies, evaluate policies or programs, manage projects, community liaison and stakeholder consultation. Other roles could range from lobbying and advocacy to writing grant applications or tenders through to administrative careers.

If you are thinking of a career in this sector, volunteering is definitely worth considering, particularly as large, well-known Non-Government Agencies and charities will often recruit permanent staff from their volunteer pool. It will also give you the opportunity to develop a professional network, as well as getting that much needed work experience on your résumé.

Most states and territories in Australia have organisations, which coordinate volunteer activities, and arrange the required workers compensation to undertake volunteer activities in a workplace setting.

While there are some opportunities for short-term assignments for young volunteers with limited experience, the majority of positions are for people with recognised trade or professional qualifications, and experience in their field of work. This is in keeping with Australian Volunteers International’s philosophy that it “provides opportunities for Australians to live alongside, learn from, and share skills with people in developing communities.” Opportunities to volunteer exist in fields such as Health, Education and Training, Sciences and the Environment, Agriculture, Management and Administration, Computing, Social Development and Law, Finance and Economics, and Engineering and Architecture. Generally, volunteers on placement earn the equivalent of the local wage, and placements last two years on average.

THE NOT-FOR-PROFIT SECTOR – AN AREA OF GROWTH

Another sector which is of interest to many postgraduates is the ‘Not-for-Profit’ sector. This diverse sector includes international organisations, such as Greenpeace and The Red Cross, as well as a multitude of smaller community based organisations. Many students will be attracted to these organisations because of the intrinsic value of what they do. If you feel strongly, for instance, that you want to make a difference to the fate of endangered species, then the World Wildlife Fund will probably appeal.

A word of caution – given the increasing need of these organisations to be professionally and strategically managed, often in a low funding environment, your commitment to a particular cause – however strong – is not likely to be enough on its own to break into this sector. While your career values are important, not-for-profit organisations – like most another employers – will be interested in the skills and experience that you have acquired and the value that you can add to their organisation.
Here are some websites providing more information about careers in this sector:

- **NFP Analysts**
  
  Australia’s online guide to the not-for-profit sector
  
  [www.nfp.net.au](http://www.nfp.net.au)

- **Pro Bono**
  
  Australia’s Volunteer Match site helps skilled volunteers find positions at not-for-profit organisations
  

- **Working the Globe: The Easy Guide to Overseas Opportunities**
  
  This pdf is available for download at Graduate Careers Australia
  

- **Idealist**
  
  [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)

- **Community Information Victoria Inc (CIVic)**
  
  [www.civ.org.au](http://www.civ.org.au)

- **Community Information Strategies Australia Inc**
  
  An online directory of services and agencies in South Australia is available here
  
  [www.cisa.asn.au](http://www.cisa.asn.au)

- **Queensland Council of Social Services**
  
  [www.qcoss.org.au](http://www.qcoss.org.au)

- **Citizen’s Advice Bureau ACT**
  
  [www.citizensadvice.org.au](http://www.citizensadvice.org.au)

- **Conservation Volunteers Australia**
  

- **SEEK Volunteer**
  

- **FIDO skilled volunteer search**
  

- **Go Volunteer**
  
How to market yourself in writing and at interview
Written applications can consist of any of the following components: cover letter, résumé or curriculum vitae, response to selection criteria and application forms. They may be required in hard copy or through electronic means. It is important that for all aspects of the application and selection process your documents are up to date, well presented, targeted and positively reflect your unique strengths.

**PREPARATION**

Important steps in the preparation of good written applications include:

- knowing your career goal
- identifying your skills — transferable and subject related — and attributes, through thorough self exploration. Think about how you will demonstrate them using examples and evidence
- researching potential employers
- assessing your suitability for a job
- talking to the contact officer.

**ASSESSING YOUR SUITABILITY FOR A JOB**

As a first step towards writing an application try preparing a brief summary of the key requirements of the position and how you would meet them. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Requirements</th>
<th>Examples of Relevant Experience/Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Tutoring, conference presentations, customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and analysis</td>
<td>Thesis, papers, internship at Environment Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork and leadership</td>
<td>Group projects at university, sport, professional collaborations, postgraduate student society representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level writing skills</td>
<td>Contribution to publications, newsletter for community group, thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>Intermediate level skill with Word, Excel and databases. Excellent web skills. Some desktop publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial awareness</td>
<td>Part-time work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>Thesis, volunteer work for Greening Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now you have a picture of your strengths and weaknesses with regard to the job’s key requirements. Presenting your information in a full application is more challenging, particularly if you want to work outside of research or in an area you are not familiar with. Think about which skills and experience are most relevant and give them the highest priority. Also, be sure to use a range of examples throughout your application.

**THE CONTACT OFFICER**

If it is possible, it is a good idea to talk to the Contact Officer specified in the advertisement before you submit your application. Research the organisation and position on offer and then ask probing, well-considered questions focusing on the following:

- clarification of terminology in selection criteria
- direction/changes in the section/job/industry
- priorities for the organisation, section, position
- detailing expectations of the person in the role.

Talking to the contact officer gives you an opportunity to:

- gain useful information to assist in writing your application and prepare for interview
- give a good impression to a person who may be on the interview panel or have influence in the selection process.

**BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR WRITTEN APPLICATIONS**

1. Use plain, good quality A4 paper.
2. Use bold headings.
3. Avoid grammar/spelling errors.
4. Be consistent in presentation and content throughout.
5. Use a header/footer with your name and page numbers.
6. Use standard business fonts such as Times New Roman, Times, Helvetica or Arial.
7. Do not use a font size smaller than 11pt.
8. Make good use of white space where possible.
10. Print each application on a good quality, laser printer.
11. Adopt a positive tone throughout. Use action verbs like:

   - motivated
   - originated
   - controlled
   - supervised
   - planned
   - produced
   - reduced
   - implemented
   - established
   - organised
   - solved
   - monitored
   - instructed
   - maintained
   - invented
   - created
   - initiated
   - researched
HOW TO WRITE A COVER LETTER

A cover letter should:
• state the reason for your interest in the position, organisation, industry
• be tailored to suit the position/industry, so you must do research first
• link your résumé to particular position
• be a marketing tool to draw attention to your skills and attributes, relevant to the position
• mention job requirements as in the advertisement/selection criteria and link to your skills and strengths
• persuade the employer that you are suitable
• emphasise skills, qualifications, experience, strengths, successes that you have documented on the résumé which give you the competitive edge
• usually be no more than one page in length.

In the greeting:
• Make the effort to find out and hence include the name of the contact to whom your application is being sent.
• Address this person formally, eg Professor <full name>, Doctor <full name>, Mr <full name>, Ms <full name>, Miss <full name>.

In the first paragraph:
• Express your interest in the position/organisation, stating exactly what it is you are seeking; include the job reference number if appropriate.
• Indicate how you were informed about the job. For example 'as advertised in The Australian on 3 March 2004'.
• Inform the reader as to what you are currently doing by way of study and/or employment.

The body of the letter – usually two to three paragraphs:
• Think clearly about how you will fit into an organisation and draw attention to your strengths; Do you have strengths in interpersonal skills? Are you a good leader or organiser or time manager? How will this give you advantages in fitting into the organisation’s culture?
• Indicate how a position in that particular organisation will help you achieve your career goals or satisfy your interests/values.
• Focus on the particular contribution you can make; show enthusiasm.
• Explain why you want the job, give an indication of why you are interested in this particular organisation.

• Link your qualifications and skills to the position/industry.
• Refer the reader to your résumé for more details.
• If you do not have relevant experience or skills explain how you think you might gain them.
• State how your course/work experiences (full-time, part-time, voluntary and community activities) have given you the necessary technical and generic skills and experience to do the individual duties of the position.
• Explain how the position will fit into your career ambitions and plans for the future.
• If responding to an advertisement you should focus on criteria mentioned in the advertisement.
• If responding to formalised selection criteria, this section of the letter will be shorter as you will write a separate supporting statement to address the criteria.
• Include a summary paragraph which clearly indicates your suitability for the job.
• Always be positive.
• Arrange the content of your letter so it flows logically.
• Allow your own individual style or ‘voice’ to come through.

The conclusion:
• Thank the prospective employer for receiving your application.
• Conclude with a confident statement requesting an interview, or discussion of possibilities if it is an inquiry letter, and reconfirm your interest in and suitability for the position/industry.
• If it is inquiry letter, always suggest you will phone in 10 days or so to check the progress of your inquiry.

General
• Keep the letter as brief and factual as possible – approximately one page.
• Proofread very carefully for grammar and spelling errors.
• Show how you can ‘add value’ to the organisation; to do this you must do your research.
• Use words/jargon relevant to the industry; reading company brochures and web pages will help.
• Keep a copy of everything you send to a prospective employer.
• This letter, like your résumé, is a marketing tool for you. It must be well written and professionally presented.
SAMPLE COVER LETTER

Your Name  
Your Address  
Your Phone Number  

Date  

Name of Addressee  
Their Position Title  
Organisation  
Address  

Dear Mr/Ms ____________,  

Opening Paragraph gives your reason for writing and if relevant state where and when you saw the position advertised.  

Body Paragraphs:  

Highlight your relevant experience and any unique selling points you have.  

State your reason for wanting to work for this organisation and in this position. These paragraphs should demonstrate your enthusiasm for a career in this area.  

Final Paragraph re-emphasises your interest, refer to attachments (résumé, transcript, selection criteria, application forms), and positively conclude by asking for further consideration.  

Yours sincerely,  

Print your name under your signature.
WRITING A RESUME OR CURRICULUM VITAE

BASIC SECTIONS

Career Objective/Summary
This gives you an opportunity to really target your CV. It should be a brief targeted statement (one to two sentences) about your career objective in relation to the position and organisation you are applying to. If you can’t articulate a specific objective, leave it off your résumé as a generalised objective will add little value.

Skills Summary/Profile
This is not common on academic CVs but for industry it is a great way to target your application by giving you an opportunity to highlight the most relevant aspects of your skills and experience. It is important to use succinct statements with examples that clearly demonstrate your competency in a particular area. Headings could include communication skills, teamwork, leadership, research, analytical, as well as relevant specialist skills.

Education
Clearly describe your educational achievements, giving specific dates, institutions and aspects of particular interest.

Experience
Remember to include volunteer, community, and work done as part of clubs and associations to which you belong, as well as any paid work you have done. This can be done under separate headings. A résumé can have most impact when you describe your skills under functional headings such as interpersonal communication, teamwork and leadership, management experience, research and analysis, language skills, programme management, marketing and written communication.

Referees
The inclusion of two to three referees is usually adequate. You should include their full name, title, their place of employment if applicable, telephone and email contacts.

Other Possible Headings
As well as these basic sections there are many other possible headings that may present you in the best light to a prospective employer and reflect your particular experiences. The following is a list of commonly used résumé headings. It is only a sample of the headings you could use and it is important you choose headings appropriate to your skills and experience.

- Achievements
- Research Experience
- Teaching Experience
- Leadership Experience
- Project Management
- Publications
- Professional Affiliations
- Hobbies and Interests
- Career Summary
- Experience Summary
- Community Service
- Languages
- Extracurricular Activities
- Interests
- Summary
- Career Highlights
- Skills Summary
- Tertiary Education
- Achievements
- Qualifications
- Relevant Education and Training
- Research Experience
- Areas of Expertise
- Professional Affiliations
- Employment Summary
- Employment Record
- Professional Experience
- Relevant Experience
- Work Experience
- Awards and Recognition

To present your PhD as professional research experience, describe it with titles such as ‘Professional and Research Experience’ or ‘Education and Research Experience’. Tailor the description of your research to the audience and emphasise why the research was done, in what ways it was successful and what the outcomes were.

Applications for Academic Positions
If you are applying for an academic position the key facts to include are those to do with publications, teaching, descriptions of research and details of funding awarded. Identify what has made you a success as a researcher and why you would be a good academic. Some points to highlight are:

- conferences attended and presentations given
- publications: including research articles, industry reports
- committees: note especially any positions of responsibility you have held
- funding: prizes, scholarships, awards to attend conferences
- professional memberships
- teaching philosophy and experience.
SAMPLE RÉSUMÉ FOR A NON-ACADEMIC POSITION

TRACEY LEADS
University of Science, Dept. of Neuroscience, 0000
Tel: (xxx) 863-1234email: TLeads@science.edu.au

Summary
• Practiced and effective writer, editor, and public speaker. Able to present complex material in a clear, concise, and persuasive manner, tailored for a range of audiences. My experience includes research publications and being a regular columnist with The Chronicle of Higher Education.
• Diverse research and teaching positions have proven my ability to become expert quickly in new subjects and techniques, to identify important concepts and information, and to troubleshoot problems creatively.
• Completing a PhD, being a Writing Associate with the University of Science Writing Centre and teaching part-time demonstrates my expertise in managing multiple projects, setting priorities, meeting deadlines, and supervising others.
• Committed to popular science communication and currently seeking a position as a researcher or writer with a leading science publication.

Education
University of Science Ph.D. in Neuroscience (expected) June 2006
University of Science Mind and Brain Fellowship (2002–04)
Elected full member, Sigma Xi (2001)
Nexus University B.A., with distinction in Biology 2000

Writing and Editing Experience
Columnist November 2001–Current
Write monthly columns giving first-person accounts of job search.

Writing Associate, University of Science Writing Centre 2002–2005
Conduct sessions with individual students to discuss all stages of the writing process.
Provide assistance with research papers and dissertations on a variety of science topics.

Research and Academic Publications
Refereed scholarly journals in seven publications, including an invited publication. Co-author of a book on dynamic neuroscience (in progress). (List of publications is appended.)

Other
Copy-editing course at Research University Learning Centre (July–Sept 2001).
Staff Writer, High School Newspaper (three years).
Research Experience

Doctoral Candidate, University of Science Department of Neuroscience 2002–2006
Dissertation: Behavioural and electrophysiological studies of cannabinoid effects on nociception (pain) in rats.

NSF Undergraduate Research Fellow, Murdoch University Summer 2000
In Department of Biological Sciences, conducted cloning study of an ion channel.
Special expertise in spinal cord electrophysiology, pharmacology, and behavioural tests of acute and chronic pain.

Teaching and Presentation Experience

Teaching Assistant, University of Science, 1999, 2000, 2003
Conducted lab demonstrations and review sessions, counselled students, and graded lab reports, papers and exams for courses in Physiological Psychology, Neural Information Processing, Structure of the Nervous System, Principles of Neuropsychopharmacology.

Honors Thesis Supervisor, University of Science 2002–2003

Presentations at numerous national and regional professional meetings. 2003–Current

Professional Affiliations

Society for Neuroscience
American Pain Society
The National Association of Science Writers, Inc.

Interests

Writing for children, piano (Grade 5), eco-tourism, skiing

Referees

Professor John Academic, Ph 02 87654321
PhD Supervisor
University of Science

Ms Elaine Author, Ph 02 87093456
Editor
The Chronicle of Higher Education
In all jobs with the Australian Public Service, applicants are required to address specific selection criteria. (It is not sufficient to simply send a CV when applying for positions that are advertised.) Applications which do not include a fairly detailed statement addressing the selection criteria, will not be considered; it is surprising how many (otherwise well-qualified) applicants either do not prepare such a statement, or do it poorly. Most APS agencies provide very helpful material to applicants to assist them in writing their application. Very few applicants read it thoroughly, and many fail to fill out forms required as part of the recruitment process. This lack of attention to detail will reflect poorly on their application.

Senior Human Resources Manager, Australian Public Service

WHAT ARE SELECTION CRITERIA?

Selection criteria are the qualifications, skills and personal attributes and standard of work performance needed to perform the duties listed on a duty statement. They are written as statements, which need to be addressed. Selection documentation gives you a framework for the structure of your application.

Almost all applications to government and university positions require you to respond to selection criteria. These are formally written up in a document, which you are advised about in the advertisement and have to request from the organisation or obtain from the Internet. Take into consideration the duty statement, as well as the selection criteria, when framing your response. Selection panels are accountable to demonstrate how one candidate was chosen over another, based on their suitability for the role as measured against the selection criteria.

Common selection criteria include:
- communication skills (written and interpersonal)
- teamwork
- research and analytical ability
- leadership ability
- ability to work under pressure
- organisational skills
- time management
- project management.

QUALIFIERS IN SELECTION CRITERIA

It is important to understand that key words in the selection criteria indicate the level of skill or knowledge required. How you frame your response will depend on you knowing what these mean. Some of the common words used are:
- excellent, sound, good
- well developed

outstanding
- demonstrated (experience)
- capacity to, ability to (potential)
- awareness of.

STEPS IN RESPONDING TO SELECTION CRITERIA

- Read them carefully.
- Highlight the words which indicate the level and type of skill required.
- Note if there is more than one requirement in the criterion.
- Brainstorm all the experiences you have had which could be relevant to each criteria.
- Choose which experiences you will use to support each criterion: try not to use the same one too often.
- If you have no specific examples to relate to a criterion, think laterally and use some of your transferable skills.
- Draft your response, using relevant specific examples to support your claims.
- Try to highlight results and outcomes you’ve achieved in your examples and quantify results where possible.
- Responses can be in point format, prose, or a combination of the two. Sometimes the selectors will give precise instructions as to which option you use. Be sure of following them.

Here are some common selection criteria with examples of achievements you could use to demonstrate them.

Example 1
Well developed oral and written communication skills, including the demonstrated ability to publish and present scientific research. Examples:
- Chaired a meeting
- Answered a complaint
- Delivered a paper
- Prepared a submission
- Negotiated with a supervisor
- Networked at a conference.

Example 2
Proven capacity to work effectively as part of a member of a multidisciplinary research team with a demonstrated commitment to a high level of personal performance and the provision of quality outcomes. Examples:
- Coached a team
- Led or participated in a group discussion
- Co-published a paper
- Managed a tutorial
- Solved a group conflict.
Example 3
Proven ability to operate independently, prioritise and organise own workload, and to perform duties under minimum supervision. Examples:

- Worked well to deadlines
- Completed a complex, multifaceted task, e.g. your PhD
- Managed your own workload while dealing with other work and family priorities.

Example 4
Evidence that you are able to take initiative, make informed research decisions, and to take responsibility for these decisions.
Examples:

- Produced research outcomes
- Managed your own research
- Had some form of community involvement
- Contributed to a Board or Committee.

Example 5
Knowledge, understanding and commitment to principles of Equal Employment Opportunity, Occupational Health and Safety and Employee Participation Examples:

- Membership of an OH&S Committee
- Apply safety standards in the supervision of staff
- Preparedness to work with and handle laboratory animals.

ONLINE APPLICATIONS

There are a number of ways you can apply for positions using the Internet.

- As an attached document to an email

Differences in operating systems can create compatibility problems so always find out in which format the employer would prefer to receive your application.

- By posting your résumé on recruitment/job board/employment agency sites

Organisations which have electronic databases of potential employees will use specialised software to scan your application on receipt and extract key information from your résumé such as your name, contact details, education and skills and experience. This database of applicants can then be searched when positions become vacant. Key words and key phrases help facilitate as many hits as possible in the electronic/computer search process.

It is important to remember that applicant tracking software varies and is usually specific to an organisation. Consequently it is essential to follow any organisational guidelines and clarify any points you are uncertain about with the Human Resources department of the organisation.

Most large job sites list résumés chronologically and recruiters often look at the most current postings. Therefore it’s a good idea to re-post your résumé regularly.

- By completing an online application form

Many employers will direct you to their own online application form on their organisation’s website. It is important to carefully read all instructions provided before completing the application. If possible, type all of your responses in a Word document first and then simply ‘copy and paste’ them over into the online application form. This will give you the opportunity to refine and review your responses before submitting them as part of your application and hence into the employer’s database.

Some important things to remember about all electronic forms of recruitment are:

1. Your email address is the primary contact method with these applications so ensure it is professional, current and correct.
2. Check your email regularly for messages relating to your applications.
3. Try not to leave it to the last day to submit your application as high web traffic may cause problems and delays.
4. It is usually possible to save your application when partially completed and then return to it at a later time.
5. When complete, print a hard copy for your records.

SUCCESS AT INTERVIEWS

“Listen and be perceptive during the interview ... don’t give a prepared speech about yourself and your achievements ... be confident enough to tailor it to the interview situation and the areas the interviewer seems most interested in.”

Human Resources Director, Private Sector

A face-to-face interview is your opportunity to convince the employer that you are the right person for the job. Having reached the interview stage suggests that you have met key selection requirements already, so take confidence from this and prepare to extend the employer’s knowledge of your skills, experience and qualities. Employers want to gain an understanding of why you have applied for the position, your level of interest and how well you could fit into their organisation’s culture. Equally, the interview provides the opportunity for you to assess the desirability of the organisation and the position.
PREPARATION

When preparing for an interview, find out about:
- the vacancy; talk to the contact officer if you haven’t already done so
- the employer and the industry they are in; consult websites, annual reports, recruitment literature, industry/company publications
- the format of the interview and who will be conducting it; be clear about the time and location of the interview.

You should also review and be able to articulate:
- your academic choices and achievements
- your strengths and weaknesses
- your range of experience – identify key examples of achievements that you want to promote at the interview.

Finally, ensure that you:
- practice responses to common interview questions
- devise questions you want to ask.

AT THE INTERVIEW: QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

Most questions asked at interview can be predicted and usually focus on three issues:
- Can you do the job? Do you have the qualifications and/or skills?
- Will you do the job? Do you have the enthusiasm/motivation?
- Will you fit in? Could they work with you? Do you get on well with people?

Here are some interview common questions:
- What interests you about this position?
- Why do you think you would be successful in this position?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- What are your future career plans?
- What motivates you to do a good job?
- How do you evaluate success?
- What value can your study program add to this organisation?
- How does your work experience relate to this position?
- How have you demonstrated organisational skills?
- What do you hope to achieve in your time with our organisation?
- Describe yourself as an employee?
- You seem to be interested in ..........? Tell us about this.
- What attributes are you using to evaluate the organisation you hope to work for?

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEWS

Competency or behaviour-based interviews operate from the premise that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past behaviour in a similar situation. This type of interview is now commonly used in selection processes. Questions are probing in nature and the competencies employers look for include:
- Team work/interpersonal skills
  Give me some examples about when you have had to handle difficult people.
- Achievement drive
  What would be the best example of you giving a project or piece of work your absolute best effort and being disappointed by the outcome? What would you do differently a second time?
- Flexibility
  Tell us about a time when you have had to adapt quickly to substantially changed circumstances at university or at work.
- Persuasiveness and negotiation ability
  Describe a time when you have been required to negotiate in difficult circumstances. Why was it important for you to become involved? What strategies did you use?
- Analytical thinking
  Describe a project that you have worked on that has required a high level of analysis and contribution of new ideas.
- Customer/Client service
  Tell us about a time when you have delivered a high level of customer service. How did you know?

Be specific in your responses to such questions by using examples from your own experience to describe:
- the situation – detail an example that relates to the particular kind of competency that is being assessed
- the action you took – describe what action you took in response to the situation (how were you involved? How did you react?)
- the results or outcome – detail the outcome, demonstrating why it was a positive and successful and what you learnt from it; if you can, refer to independent feedback from another person.
**AShING QUESTIONS AT INTERVIEW**

It is essential that you prepare questions in advance of the interview. Think about what you really want to know as it presents a great opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for the job. Some questions may even come to mind while you’re at the interview.

Questions should ideally reflect your knowledge both of the position and the organisation. Do not ask questions if the answer to them can be found on the organisation’s website. Do, however, ask probing questions based on your knowledge of what you have read on the website.

Questions you ask could relate to:

- the strategic direction of the company
- the potential for you to be involved in key projects
- changes occurring in the organisation/industry
- the team you’ll be working with
- opportunities for development

**COMMUNICATION STYLE**

Much of what we communicate is not in the content of our words but in the way they are communicated through voice tone and body language. Focus on adopting a positive and enthusiastic approach to the job and the organisation. Convey this in an upright posture, an enthusiastic tone and eye contact with all interviewers. Listening effectively is also an important communication skill – remember to demonstrate it.

And remember an ideal interview situation involves an equal exchange of ideas and information.

**MANAGING THE NERVOUSNESS**

For many people an interview and other job-selection activities are very nerve-wracking. Though it is sometimes easier said than done, try to relax and be yourself. Ways to overcome at least some of your nervousness include thorough preparation, visualising yourself doing the job and using relaxation techniques such as deep breathing.

Focus on your achievements and adopt a positive attitude. Take into account the potential inexperience of interviewers or the pressures they are under. And always see the interview as a two-way street where both the employer and candidate want to find out more about each other.

**OTHER SELECTION METHODS**

Although it varies hugely from employer to employer, you cannot expect to always be appointed solely based on an interview. A combination of interviews and other assessment activities are now commonly used to select candidates. These could include psychometric and aptitude testing, group interviews and exercises, presentations and problem solving exercises.

Employers recruitment methods are rarely a big secret – many explain their techniques in their recruitment literature or on their website. Some give you examples of what to expect. Consult them as part of your preparation.

**ASSESSMENT CENTRES**

Assessment Centres involve an extended selection process, usually of one to two days duration. The formal program during this time may consist of psychometric tests, aptitude tests, presentations, case studies, business in-tray exercises, problem solving exercises, observed team work, discussions/interviews with staff at various levels and social events. Assessment Centres simulate work-related scenarios and are designed to give employers multifaceted information about candidates in assessing their suitability for the organisation.

**GROUP EXERCISES**

Group exercises are designed to assess your behaviour and effectiveness in a team. They could include group discussions about a topic determined by the employer or assessor. Sometimes these topics are deliberately contentious. Alternatively the group may be asked to discuss and then deliver recommendations in relation to a business problem.

Skills and qualities being assessed in such activities may include communication style, co-operation, negotiation, ability to analyse and present a reasoned argument, participation and contribution.

**APITUDE/PSYCHOMETRIC TESTS**

There are two main types of aptitude tests – personality inventories and ability tests. They aim to measure your ability and suitability for a job and are now used extensively in recruitment. Prepare by looking at examples and models offered by the recruiting organisation or at those found in books on the topic. Generally speaking, you should aim to work through the questions reasonably quickly. If you get stuck, move on.
PRESENTATIONS

Presentations, either individual or group, are a common form of assessment activity. You may know your topic a few days in advance or it may be given at shorter notice. An understanding of good presentation structure and style will help you to successfully get through these exercises. Remember to concentrate equally on content and how you come across – your body language and voice tone can make a huge impact on your presentation. Try to anticipate the needs of your audience and tailor the presentation to them.

It is highly likely that a formal presentation on your research will be required as part of the selection process for an academic position. Talk to your supervisor and colleagues about their experiences and to gain some practical advice.

PROBLEM SOLVING TASKS

These exercises set you ‘real’ business tasks such as prioritising a range of tasks or responding to a case study involving disparate information. These exercises are designed to test your ability to priorities, plan, make deductions and analyse. They are an opportunity to demonstrate your clarity of thought and comprehension, your mental agility and your creativity and imagination in a practical context – exactly the kinds of skills you have developed in your PhD.

TURNING STEREOTYPES ABOUT PHDS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Holding a PhD has in the past led, in some people’s perception, to negative beliefs about the relevance of and the transferability of skills of those who hold such a qualification. Here are some of the more common stereotypes that you may come across with some tips about how to address them:

PhDs have only worked inside a university and won’t fit in.

- Describe all the steps required to complete the PhD program with appropriate details.
- Actively describe how you undertook your research, e.g., conducted interviews, worked with industry partners, consulted people outside the University – show the employer how these skills have direct workplace application.

PhD candidates are unable to perform to a high level.

- Highlight your track record of achievement, i.e. Grade Point Average (GPA).
- Emphasise the competition to get into a PhD program.
- Discuss how you had to compete against others for scholarships, prizes, fellowships and international grants.
- Emphasise your conference presentations.

If you don’t go into Higher Education, there’s something wrong with you.

“I found people suspicious of a PhD unless the position was with an academic institution.”

- Discuss how your career goals are broader than an academic career.
- Talk about the positives of your career direction. That you want to see the impact of your research. That you wish to apply your knowledge to affect change – make sure you can articulate clearly why you want to work for that employer.
- Discuss your skills, results and achievements. Make the employer aware they are looking at someone who can make a real difference in their organisation.

You’re just marking time until an Academic job comes along.

- Explain your interest in the position and organisation in terms of your personal goals.
- Undertake research into the organization and work out how you meet and exceed what they are looking for. Then demonstrate through your explanation that you’ve done this research and clearly state why you are sincerely interested in them and what you have to offer.
- Prepare a listing of your strengths and think of examples that demonstrate them.
- Consider doing an internship or volunteer work – this can indicate your interest in the area.
PhDs are too costly. I only need an undergraduate qualification.

“PhDs are not understood in the community and some employers seem hesitant to employ, over qualified candidates who seem threatening or not practical enough.”

- Stress the advantages that a PhD brings including an extensive track record of achievement and accomplishments.
- State that you bring not only specialised knowledge but a range of skills and experiences in the areas of research, analysis and communication (oral and written) for example.

PhDs lack 'real world' skills. Too theoretical.

“I worked in an organisation dominated by engineers and valuers who saw themselves as practical men and who were sceptical of the benefit of an ivory tower academic in the organisation.”

- Talk about where you have developed the key skills the organisation is seeking. Use examples and demonstrate successful outcomes.
- Avoid the use of academic terminology where possible. Remember applications are not a thesis. Make your points clearly and concisely.
- Have someone else read your applications.
- Stress collaborative experience you have had, and your desire to work in more of a team setting, or where your work will have more of an impact.
- Emphasise the management tasks involved in completing your project and always focus on tasks done and successful outcomes.
- Remember that through your research you would have developed extensive experience in project management, leading discussions/meetings, presentations, organising a panel/conference, tutoring, running a study/lab group. A range of these skills are transferable and they are what employers are looking for.

View your type of PhD as irrelevant.

“I was seen as over-qualified and my PhD was not seen as a prerequisite to getting the job. In fact, it was seen somewhat as a detriment, largely because it was unrelated to the job.”

- Emphasise the process; the skills developed and experience gained, rather than the end product created.
- Describe your research as a series of tasks you have solved. Make the interviewer see this as similar to what they face every day.

A FINAL WORD

Completing a PhD is a fantastic achievement and a springboard to a challenging and satisfying career. As this book illustrates there are a variety of career pathways for a PhD to consider and exciting opportunities to identify. At a time when the world of work is rapidly changing, you need to prepare yourself to take advantage of these opportunities. We hope that the information contained in this resource has been useful in getting your job search underway and that the benefits of your PhD extending into the workplace are fully realised.

Good luck with your brilliant careers!
SELECTED WEB RESOURCES

ANU SERVICES FOR HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH STUDENTS

Academic Skills and Learning Centre
- www.anu.edu.au/academicskills
Provide assistance with all types of writing theses, articles for publication, conference and seminar papers, reports, etc.). Seminars and workshops are also offered. Check the Academic and Professional Skills Program, offered through the Graduate Research School.

Careers Centre
- www.anu.edu.au/careers
Services include assistance with career planning, information about specific jobs, employers, or industry sectors, feedback on job applications, and interview preparation. Individual appointments, seminars and workshops are available.

Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods (CEDAM)
- www.anu.edu.au/CEDAM
Offers the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (GradCertHE) for university staff and post-graduate students to enhance their undergraduate teaching, graduate supervision and/or academic leadership and management.

Graduate Information Literacy Program
The Graduate Information Literacy Program has been designed to provide postgraduate students with the information searching, information management and information technology skills that will be needed to complete a graduate degree at ANU. These skills are sought after in the workplace.

Graduate Research School
- www.anu.edu.au/graduate
Offers the Graduate Teaching Program (GTP), a semester program of teaching support and development for Post Doctoral Fellow and PhD student tutors and demonstrators at ANU. Also offers the Academic and Professional Skills Program, jointly with the Academic Skills and Learning Centre, which includes courses on how to get a post-doc, and how to apply for research grants.

Human Resources
- http://info.anu.edu.au/hr
Has a link to ANU job opportunities, and information about academic promotions.

Organisational Development Unit (ODU)
View the staff or student brochure on courses available.

Research at ANU: Postdoctoral fellows at ANU
- www.anu.edu.au/research
Has information on courses for Postdoctoral Fellows.

Research Office
- www.anu.edu.au/ro
Offers workshops and seminars on all aspects of grant, fellowship and scholarship application writing, including access to the SPIN, COS and other funding databases, at www.anu.edu.au/ro/funding/SPIN.php

AUSTRALIAN WEB RESOURCES

Australian Research Council (ARC)
- www.arc.gov.au
Information about grants, job vacancies and links to related sites.

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
- www.nhmrc.gov.au
Information on research funding and public consultation.

Grant Search Register: The Essential Guide for Grant-Seekers
- www.grantsearch.com
Funding database with approximately 3,000 sources of financial support for study, travel, research, business and professional development.

Graduate Careers Australia
- www.graduatecareers.com.au
Job search, information, resources, articles, and links to employers.

The Australian Academy of Science
- www.science.org.au
Online AAS newsletter, to keep track of the latest updates on academy news.

Australian Academy of Social Sciences
- www.assa.edu.au
Information on proposed projects, current projects, completed and published projects together with their funding sources, an international scholars program with China, Vietnam and Netherlands, information on academic workshops held on a broad range of social sciences issues.

WISENET: Women in Science Enquiry Network
- www.wisenet-australia.org/profilesindex.html
A wide range of career profiles of women in science and technology.
INTERNATIONAL WEB RESOURCES

University College, London
- www.ucl.ac.uk/keyskills/index.html
Skills analysis.

Royal Society of Chemistry
- www.rsc.org/Education/CareersAndCPD/index.asp
Careers and professional development.

University of California, Berkeley
- http://career.berkeley.edu/PhDs/PhDs.stm
Career Centre for graduate students and PhDs.

University of Edinburgh
- www.careers.ed.ac.uk/STUDENTS/Specific_Information/postgrads.htm
Careers Service for postgraduate students.

King's College London
- http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/pg/services/careers.aspx
Careers services for postgraduates.

The UK Grad Program
- www.vitae.ac.uk
Practical advice for postgraduates.

Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA)
- www.hesda.org.uk
Promotes staff development within universities and colleges in the UK. Contains information on career management for contract researchers.

Job Hunters Bible
- www.jobhuntersbible.com
The supporting website for the What Color is Your Parachute job-hunting book. The site has advice, contacts, interactive tests and articles.

VACANCIES: POST DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS AND ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Academic Jobs European Union
- www.academicjobseu.com/default.asp

Academic Jobs in the UK and Abroad
- www.jobs.ac.uk

Campus Review, Australia
- www.camrev.com.au

Career Frames International Job Searching – Academic
- http://careerframes.com/

Chronicle of Higher Education, USA
- http://chronicle.com/jobs

Graduate Job Search Online
- www.careers.strath.ac.uk/graduatejobsearch

PhDcareer
- www.phdcareer.com

PhDs
- http://phds.org

PhD jobs
- www.phdjobs.com

Postdoc Jobs
- www.postdocjobs.com

Quint Careers
- http://quintcareers.com/teaching_jobs.html

The Times Higher Education Supplement, UK
- www.thes.co.uk

The Weekend Australian
- www.theaustralian.news.com.au
Individual university Human Resources/Job Vacancies pages

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Graduate Careers Council of Australia, Career Paths for PhD Graduates: A Scoping Study, 1999

Harman G., Producing PhD Graduates in Australia for the Knowledge Economy, 2002, Higher Education and Research Development Vol 21, No2, 2002


NTEU and CAPA, A Postgraduate’s Guide to University Employment, 1997

Sheffer H. and Woodford B., How to Plan for a Career Before You Have One, The Chronicle Website
CAREERS CENTRE

JB Chifley Building (15)
Arts Centre Laneway
Just off Union Court, opposite the Gods Cafe
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

T: +61 2 6125 3593
F: +61 2 6125 5191
E: careers@anu.edu.au
W: www.anu.edu.au/careers