



Career Planning in a Competitive Job Market

Take control

The recession has and will continue to affect every sector; therefore be ready for change and challenges under the new government.

No one can be sure what those challenges will be, so focus your plans on what is within your control.

Be the best

Many employers are looking for high academic achievement, and may specify a 2.1 or above. Aiming for the best possible result in your degree is a sensible first step.

In addition employers will always look for 'well rounded' applicants who have experience beyond study and can demonstrate they have useful skills, relevant to the needs of the employer and the job.

If you have obtained an academic grade below a 2.1, use your time to enhance your skills through work experience opportunities (internships, work shadowing, mentoring) and volunteering.

Work experience

Internships (e.g. short placements) and one year industrial placements can be invaluable and are often part of the selection process for many major employers of graduates.

Relevant experience is ideal, but do not undervalue other experience including voluntary work or involvement in a family business.

www.city.ac.uk/careers/vacancy_board
www.prospects.ac.uk/links/workexp
www.step.org.uk
www.placement-uk.com
www.milkround.com
www.targetjobs.co.uk

Extra curricular activities

Make the most of your spare time to engage in activities outside of work and study. These might also illustrate application of skills e.g. organising, or even have relevance to the job. For example:

- Taking part in university societies and activities
- Membership of relevant professional or student organisations
- Volunteering
- Acting as a course representative

www.city.ac.uk/studentcentre/studentunion/
www.city.ac.uk/careers/city_volunteering/

Do your research

You need to be well informed about the nature of the organisation and the job:

- Read their website any information about what they do and what they look for in applicants
- Keep up to date with events affecting the organisation
- Search news archives for recent items about the organisation and their sector. Nexis UK can be found on the Library database and has over 12,000 news sources.
- Be clear about where they are in their sector e.g. who are their customers? Who are their competitors and how do they compare?

Stay up to date

Fluctuation in global economies affects every country and sector.

Technological advances can influence the nature and availability of types of work, and so can government policy.

Stay in touch by:

- looking out for relevant news items
- networking with contacts working in the sector
- membership of an appropriate professional body
- talking to relevant employers

Use your networks

As finding a job becomes increasingly competitive, establishing and developing a network of useful contacts is all the more important.

Some jobs may never be advertised but are filled by individuals already known to the organisation. Perhaps they have worked there e.g. in a paid or unpaid capacity, or they have had substantial contact with the organisation in some other way.

Make use of any contacts you have, such as friends, relatives, colleagues, fellow students etc. If you need to build on this:

- Contact the City University alumni.
- Attend employer events e.g. recruitment fairs, presentations etc (detailed on our website).
- Try direct approaches to organisations.

Contacts might be able to advise you how to:

- Find a job or work experience in their sector
- Complete sector specific applications
- Identify issues affecting the sector and their implications

Make a good impression; contacts may remember you if they hear of an opportunity coming up that might suit you.

Be realistic about choices

Whatever the economic climate, achieving that dream job is rarely easy. Identifying alternatives a standard strategy in career planning.

Consider what those alternatives might be.

- Review what attracted you to your dream job. Are there other jobs that have some of the same characteristics and attractions?
- Many roles for graduates can be open to all, regardless of degree subject. Keep an open mind about jobs that might suit you.
- Small to medium sized organisations can offer opportunities, not just the well known graduate recruiters.
- Not everyone finds a 'graduate job' and many graduates choose jobs that do not require a degree. They may still progress and develop successfully, applying the skills and knowledge gained from their study.

If you need to go back to basics with your career choices, you could try job matching exercises such as Adult Directions or Prospects Planner to review your skills, interests and motivations. Both are available in our office but Prospects Planner is also online: www.prospects.ac.uk/links/pplanner.

Other web based resources include the Windmills Virtual Career Coach at www.windmillsonline.co.uk.

A one to one discussion with one of our career consultants can also help you to plan.

Make Informed Decisions

Fully research the areas of work that interest you. Be clear about entry requirements.

Read up on careers information, explore websites for organisations you want to join and talk to people working in roles that interest you.

www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations for job profiles
www.prospects.ac.uk/links/sectorbs for sector profiles

Considering Further Study?

Talk to potential employers and Career Consultants to find out if further study is necessary and if so, what course or courses will be recognised. Professional bodies may also stipulate if certain courses are acceptable.

Careers fairs, company presentations and other events present an opportunity to talk to employers, but you can

also make direct contact.

If you are considering further study because you cannot find a job or are not sure what to do next, this may not be the best strategy and could be a costly mistake.

Be Prepared

Many job applicants fail at the first hurdle, by not submitting an error free CV or application form that demonstrates clearly that they meet the entry criteria.

Make sure you know how to present yourself well at every stage of selection.

Support from the Career and Skills Development Service

Full details of our services, including booking procedures, and forthcoming workshops and employer events, are on our website.

www.city.ac.uk/careers

We also include a range of information in the My Careers Workspace module within CitySpace.

<https://uss2.city.ac.uk/WebCT/>

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