

Graduate Career Stories



**Edited by Holly Higgins
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Introduction

Students looking to secure their first graduate job need more than just labour market information; they also need to understand how the graduate labour market operates. In order to illustrate the complexity of the graduate labour market we invited 100 graduate employees to describe how they ended up in their current roles. The case studies presented in this booklet are the edited highlights of some of their stories.

In July 2010 participants were sent a link to a short online survey and asked to respond to the following questions:

1. What subject was your first degree and what year did you graduate?
2. Have you done any further qualifications (professional or academic) since you completed your first degree?
3. If you have completed any further qualifications, what prompted you to do them?
4. What are you doing now?
5. How did you end up in your current role?
6. How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?
7. What are your plans/ambitions for the future?
8. Do you have any careers advice for students who are about to graduate this year?

The stories have been edited in order to create a coherent narrative, but we have used the participant's own words where possible. All names and any details that may identify the respondent have been changed in order to protect their anonymity.

We hope the stories presented in this booklet will give students a better understanding of the complex reality of the graduate labour market and give them the confidence to actively manage their own labour market experience.

Holly Higgins
November 2010





**Katie – Editor
(Modern European Languages, 2006)**

How did you become an editor?

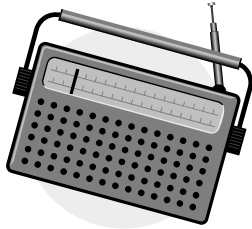
‘When I first graduated I spent two years as a lecturer teaching English in France (a post I found through my university which had links with four universities in France). I then moved back to the UK to take up a place on a graduate training scheme which was being run by a publishing company which specialised in educational publishing. After completing the scheme I spent a couple of years working with the primary and vocational teams and now edit a number of our modern foreign language titles. I enjoy my job and am hoping to work my way up through the ranks and perhaps move into commissioning resources for the modern languages market.’

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

‘When I was teaching English in France I was able to draw on my own experience of learning a language at university, and it was this teaching experience which enabled me to get onto the graduate scheme a few years later. I use my language skills all the time in my current role, but have also worked on other non-language projects where my degree experience has stood me in good stead. At university I developed skills in communication, analysis and time management, all of which have contributed to my success as an editor where project management skills are just as important as an eye for detail. In more general terms, university is a social education as well as an academic one, and gives you a great opportunity to learn how to work with a mix of different people. When you deal with a whole range of colleagues and suppliers on a daily (or hourly!) basis there is no room for being shy, or for not trusting your own judgement!’

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

‘Think really hard about what it is that makes you a different (and more attractive!) candidate than the others who will be applying and then make sure you believe it. Although graduate positions are tougher to come by now, I would advise against applying for a job you don’t really want. Enthusiasm can win an interview, and if you can’t convince yourself you’d be wasting your time trying to convince anybody else.’



John - Freelance Broadcast Journalist (Social & Cultural Studies, 2005)

How did you become a broadcast journalist?

'While I was studying I hosted a show on university radio which led to a work experience placement at a local BBC radio station after I graduated. I then secured further work experience at radio stations in Nottingham and London and applied for lots of jobs but I couldn't seem to get anywhere. After a year of casual work I had only been to one interview so I decided to do a postgraduate qualification in radio and television journalism in order to boost my CV. After I graduated, I spent a year working as a freelance journalist before finally securing a permanent job as a broadcast journalist with a local radio station in Yorkshire. However, after eighteen months with the radio station I decided to return to freelance journalism. At the moment I report on the news from around the county, but in the future I'd like to move into working on current affairs programmes and am hoping to take advantage of the opportunities that will become available when the BBC open their offices in the north.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

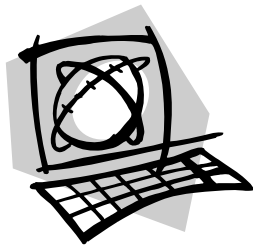
'The research skills I gained from my first degree have been invaluable in my work as a journalist. My degree covered a wide range of topics (from ethics to visual culture) so I have a broad working knowledge of a variety of subjects, which I find very useful when working on news stories. Also, if I hadn't worked at the university radio stations I'm sure I would be doing something completely different – and probably less interesting.'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'When I finished my studies I did work experience at a number of radio stations and applied for hundreds of jobs. When I only had one interview – which was a disaster! – I realised I needed to specialise and decided broadcast journalism was the area I wanted to work in.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'I'd say – don't panic. Get as much relevant work experience as you can. Don't worry if you don't have a concrete idea of what you want to do. I ended up graduating from my post-grad course when I was nearly 26 and at no point have I thought it would all have been easier if I'd known what I wanted to do from an earlier age. In fact, the life experience has really helped me make the most of my career. Take advantage of any contacts you have in the fields you're interested in – people LOVE to help others who express an interest in following in their footsteps so you won't be getting on their nerves!'



Phil - Sourcing Manager (Business Management & Computing, 2004)

How did you become a sourcing manager?

'When I graduated in 2004 I'd already done an internship in finance at a large US corporation as part of my course so I decided I'd like to gain some more business experience on a graduate training programme. I applied for some graduate programmes in the IT sector and spent two years on a commercial graduate training scheme which then led to my current role in procurement. I didn't particularly want to work in procurement when I graduated, and was actually more interested in sales, but once I was in the industry I discovered that the two functions are quite interlinked and require many of the same skills. I currently work for a multinational IT outsourcing organisation, sourcing products and services to support the company's internal operations. I'm planning to stay with my current organisation for another 6 months, but after that I'd like to do something different – I'm actually considering re-training so I can move into working in renewable energies. If that doesn't work out, I think my industry accredited qualification and five years work experience will enable me to re-enter purchasing if necessary.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'University provides a structured platform for learning and development, but is it up to the graduate to utilise it effectively. I think the most valuable experience was undertaking a work placement as part of my course. In business it is all very well and good being able to understand the textbook theory, but it is of no use if you can't apply it in a work environment. I was really surprised that sandwich placements weren't overly promoted at my university - I only really opted to do one by chance.'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'I completed my MCIPS (which I needed to become a Member of the Chartered Institute of Purchase and Supply) in 2010. I wanted to complete an industry accredited qualification because it proves that you have the knowledge you need to do your job. It looks good on your CV (academic qualifications and industry experience aren't always enough) and increases your earning potential. Studying for the qualification broadened my knowledge, which made me a more effective buyer.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

1. Visit the careers services ASAP. It's a free and usually under-used resource. Undergraduates tend to use it 2 weeks before they leave, which is too late.
2. Be pro-active. You might have a degree, but so do 500 other applicants. You need to be able to show that you can offer something else as well – have you been on any summer

placements or internships? Have you done any travelling or voluntary work? Use this experience to demonstrate that you are capable of working as part of a team, organising trips etc. If you can't think of anything to talk about – make sure you do something about it!

3. Learn from your mistakes. When you are applying for jobs always seek feedback if you are unsuccessful. Get people to check your CV, covering letters and applications for content and spelling.

4. Never give up, keep pressing and things will happen. Everyone gets rejected at some point; you just need to make sure that you respond positively to any setbacks.

5. Be realistic and flexible. You're not going to be offered a job as the MD of a company as soon as you graduate. I'm 5 years into my career and I'm still doing admin as part of my role. It might be boring, but it's all good experience. Having said that, it's worth reminding your line manager that you are capable of taking on additional responsibilities if you start to feel a bit stuck.'



Owen - Forensic Scientist (Forensic Science, 2006)

How did you become a Forensic Scientist?

'After I graduated I spent six months looking for a job, but couldn't find anything in my area so I got a temporary job with a pharmaceutical company. I spent seven months temping before deciding that I needed to get a postgraduate qualification in toxicology if I wanted to pursue a career in forensic science. I then began studying for my MSc and attended a number of lectures which were given by professionals who worked for a large multinational manufacturer. I made an effort to talk to them after the sessions and they gave me their details. Using my industry contacts I was able to secure some temporary work with the organisation, which I took up as soon as I graduated. I started as a temporary employee covering maternity leave, but when my colleague returned to work the company decided to keep me on a temporary contract and after two years of temporary work my role was made permanent. I'm currently a product safety scientist and I don't have any plans to leave at the moment as I'm very happy where I am.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'My job requires a working knowledge of toxicology so I often draw on the subject knowledge I acquired during my postgraduate studies. The experience I gained during my first degree has been particularly useful when it comes to interpreting and reviewing study reports.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'If you have the chance, get to know external contacts and ask your lecturers to introduce you to people in the industry as these are the people who will be interviewing you when you apply for a job. Also, remember that team-work is a really important aspect of corporate life. Many people are qualified to do a certain role, but few are able to show that they can work as part of a team. It is absolutely essential that you can prove to a potential employer that you are able to work well as a member of a team.'



Helen - Educational Researcher (Modern History, 2005)

How did you become an educational researcher?

'After I graduated I was appointed SU Vice President of Education and was involved in running an access scheme which tried to encourage non-traditional students to apply to the institution. After I finished my year with the student's union I wasn't sure what I wanted to do next so I applied for a variety of jobs and attended several interviews before I decided to go into educational research. I've always been interested in education, but I didn't want to go into teaching (both my parents are teachers) so wasn't sure what I could do. It was only after I began working for the student's union that I discovered educational research existed! I'm currently a senior researcher evaluating educational initiatives and conducting research. In the future I'd like to move into a more managerial role and take responsibility for projects as a research manager or head of a department.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'Studying history was excellent preparation for a career in research because it is such an analytical subject. My experience in student politics has been really useful, especially when I'm evaluating education policy, and managing the access scheme gave me a good understanding of the sector more generally.'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'Once I started working in educational research I discovered that I would really need a postgraduate qualification in social research methods or education if I wanted to progress within the field. I did an MSc in Social Research Methods with the Open University because I couldn't really afford to take a year out so decided to study part-time alongside my job.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Having experience of working for the student's union and with summer schools was really useful when it came to applying for jobs. I think that experience undoubtedly helped me to get my first job. However, it also meant that I had very unrealistic expectations as to how quickly I would be able to progress within the workplace. Now I am very grateful to my employer for offering me an entry-level job and providing me with support and encouragement while I was studying part-time, but when I first started I was impatient and unhappy with my low pay. In the end I progressed much more quickly than people who started at a higher level but then had to spend a number of years mastering their role. On reflection I think starting at a lower level and working your way up is the best thing to do because the experience you gain is invaluable.'



Nina - Science Writer (Microbiology, 2005)

How did you become a science writer?

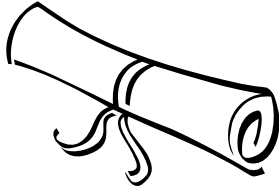
'When I finished university I temped for a couple of months before travelling to Brazil to work as an intern in a microbiology laboratory (a family contact found the post for me). I spent seven months in Brazil working on a research project investigating tuberculosis and then returned to the UK. I then applied to be a bio safety microbiologist for a public body, where I did some research into the transmission of disease, coughs and sneezes. After I had been doing the job for a while I was invited to get involved in writing some literature reviews. I hadn't really done any writing before, but I really enjoyed it so when the opportunity to go on secondment as a science writer came up my boss put me forward for the role. After six months the organisation decided to make the position permanent and I became a full-time science writer. In my current role I coordinate funding proposals, write concept papers and help scientists to write editorial for publications. I've been doing this job for about ten months now and am really enjoying it, although in the future I'd like to combine my writing with some project management as well.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'Obviously having a background in microbiology is very important. I don't really use any of my lab skills, but having a basic knowledge of the techniques is very useful. Participating in seminars, giving presentations and writing essays stood me in good stead when it came to writing for publications and presenting at conferences.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Don't rest on your laurels in your holidays – it's the perfect time to get experience. Consider volunteer work if you can't get paid work (I wasn't paid in Brazil). Do something to broaden your CV – whether that's learning a language or undertaking further training. It'll all help when you're applying for jobs and you never know who you might meet or who can help you. Unfortunately when you're applying for jobs a good degree isn't usually enough – you need to have something interesting to say. When I first graduated I really didn't have much to say about myself until I went travelling. Taking myself out of my comfort zone gave me the confidence I needed to apply for jobs and answer interview questions. My key tip is to look at online application forms or interview questions for the roles you might be interested in, and if you can't think of a good example to demonstrate your ability to meet the criteria make sure you go and do something that will enable you to!'



Susie - Archivist (History, 2007)

How did you become an archivist?

'I spent quite a lot of time in archives doing research for my undergraduate degree, which is how I came to decide that I wanted to pursue a career in that kind of area. The information I needed for my undergraduate dissertation wasn't available to the public anymore so I had to get in touch with the former Curator in order to access the archive and it was through her that I secured my first graduate job with a private research organisation (she introduced me to the director of the company). I then became a volunteer researcher at a local museum, working with a team of graduates to compile biographies of philanthropists who had given money to the museum in the past. By that point I had decided that I wanted to gain some experience of working in an archive so I also volunteered for the York City Archives. The post at the city archives then turned into a casual paid position as an archives assistant and I got a part-time job as an archive and library visitor services assistant at another museum. To begin with I worked in a customer-facing role, but I was soon given an extra day a week to work behind the scenes cataloguing collections. By this point I'd gained plenty of experience, but I really needed a professional qualification to show I was committed to working in the field so I applied to study for an MA in Archives and Record Management. After I completed my MA my old manager offered me some temporary work as a cataloguer which then led to a 6 month contract as an Archivist. That contract was extended after the museum won a bid for another project, but that project is now nearing completion so I'm currently looking for a more permanent role. At the moment I'm considering moving to London because I think there are more opportunities there and I'd like to work in a media archive for a newspaper or an organisation like the BBC because their collections are slightly less technical.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'I have definitely drawn on the experience I gained studying for my MA. The course was quite intensive but really hands-on, and it taught us a lot about the practical reality of working in an archive. We learnt how to manage budgets and plan projects, and were also given the opportunity to undertake two work-experience placements. It was also really useful to meet other students on the course as we were all expected to have a year of practical experience before we joined so we were able to learn from each other as well as from our tutors. My first degree has been useful in that it taught me how to manage my workload and how to analyse and present information. The historical knowledge I gained from my first degree has been useful in providing context for my day-to-day work but I don't think it is essential for my job, and in fact a history degree was not essential when I applied for a place on the postgraduate course.'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'I felt that having a more practical and role-specific qualification would improve my job

prospects. I was interested in archive work and an MA in Archives and Record Management was essential if I wanted to become a professional archivist. I wanted to pursue a career that was related to my first degree, but found that a history degree on its own was not enough.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'I would advise students to do as much volunteering as possible. It is best to do this whilst you are still at university. Unfortunately I left it until I had finished, which led to a relatively long period of unemployment as I had to work for free in order to gain some experience. Volunteering is great because it provides you with experience and some very useful contacts.'



Martin - Corporate Tax Adviser (Accounting & Finance, 2005)

How did you become a corporate tax adviser?

'After I finished university I spent 6 months working in a purchasing department while I went through the application process for my current employer's graduate training scheme. Once I was offered a place on the scheme I accepted straight away and have been with the firm ever since. I work in professional services and currently manage a team in the corporate tax department where we advise clients about tax compliance and deal with other ad-hoc enquiries. I'd like to stay with the same employer for as long as I can and would eventually like to be made a partner. However, if, in the future, it looks like I'm unlikely to be able to do this, I'd probably start to look to move to another financial role in a different sector.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'In terms of some of the softer skills such as giving presentations, communication etc I think I my experience at university gave me a lot of confidence when entering the marketplace. My technical knowledge about taxation and auditing was useful when it came to studying for my professional qualification, but in terms of the day-to-day work the best experience was the work itself (and the associated on-the-job training - which is very good at my organisation).'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'After my first degree I went on to study for a professional business and finance qualification to become a chartered accountant (ACA), and then a chartered tax adviser (CTA). I had to do the ACA qualification if I wanted to work in this field (it was actually part of my training contract). The CTA qualification was optional, but the prestige associated with it meant that when my firm offered to pay for me to do it I jumped at the chance.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Apply for as many roles as possible, but have a clear idea of what each entails and why you are attracted to it. Your need to know the company you are applying to inside out and you also need to think about the market in which it operates. Many companies have open days or events at universities and these are really worth going to if you need to get a better understanding of what each firm does and where you might fit in.'



Sonja - Magazine Editor (English & Politics, 2009)

How did you become a magazine editor?

'After I graduated I decided to move to a different city and got a temporary job as a personal assistant to earn some money while I settled into the area. I spend six months temping before securing a two-week work experience placement in a publishing house. This then turned into a freelance writing position, and a few months later the company offered me a permanent position as the editor of one of their magazine titles. I'd like to stay here and gain some more experience, but once I've done that I'll probably move to a bigger company where I'll have more of an opportunity to progress. Eventually I'd like to manage my own company.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'I was the editor of the student newspaper at university, which has helped me a lot. Working in a position of responsibility meant that I had plenty of experience of attending meetings, dealing with difficult colleagues and delegating work. I don't actually think that my course was as useful as my newspaper experience because it wasn't especially business-focused – but I think this varies across subjects.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'I graduated this year and found myself on the dole for three months and being rejected from jobs on a daily basis. The best advice I can give is to be optimistic, charming and persistent. I got my job through work-experience – turning up everyday and establishing myself as a reliable worker who was hard-working and enthusiastic. It is important to maintain a positive attitude and keep your spirits up because nobody will want to employ a negative character. In some ways I think the current economic climate is a blessing in disguise for graduates as it gives you some space to think about your next step. Plus it gives you a valid excuse as to why you don't have a 'proper' job when members of your extended family ask that dreaded question – 'what have you been doing since graduation?'



Sam - Assistant Editor (French & History, 2006)

How did you become an assistant editor?

'After I left university I alternated between the dole and temporary jobs while I considered my options and tried to find a full-time graduate job in journalism. I'd made some plans to relocate to France, but when these fell through I decided to look into PR and in early 2007 I found a job with a small London-based PR agency. I moved down to London, but quickly realised that I didn't want to continue working in PR and after six months I decided to leave in order to concentrate on building a career in journalism. However, I'm still glad I did it as it was thanks to that short stint in PR that I was accepted onto the graduate training scheme of one of the UK's largest financial trade publishers. I joined the company's editorial team and after two and a half years I'd worked on a variety of titles and felt ready to take the next step in my career so applied to be an Assistant Editor. In my current role I write features, commission articles from freelancers, edit copy as it comes in, run the website, and work with the sales department to work out how the advertising will fit in with the editorial content. In the medium-term I'd like to edit a magazine, but in the future I'm planning to start my own title or go freelance.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'As a journalist, the essay writing and research skills I gained at university have been really useful – there is very little difference between writing essays and writing features, you just have to tone the academic style down a bit. I've been able to use my French skills when working on magazines which have a more international focus. I also attend lots of seminars, press events and teach-ins, which are surprisingly like university tutorials.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Keep looking and don't give up. If you want to get into journalism, a professional journalism qualification isn't necessary – I know hardly anyone who went down that route. However, you have to be able to write and to prove that you are passionate about writing, so keep a blog, work on an e-zine, or ask if you could do some work experience at a local paper. Whatever you do, don't be disheartened by rejection.'



Rachel - Design Consultant (Ceramic Design, 2004)

How did you become a design consultant?

'Two months after I graduated I became a ceramic technician for a terracotta company which sold handmade restoration bricks. Unfortunately after two years with the company I was made redundant, but this actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise as it meant I was able to take advantage of an opportunity to go to Thailand and work as a ceramic designer on a sustainable development project. I spent 6 months in Thailand and then returned to the UK where I secured a role as an office manager for an online boutique which specialised in designer interiors. I spend a year working for the boutique, but then decided to return to university to study full-time for an MA in Design for Development. I continued to work on my own projects while I was studying for my MA, and after I graduated I became a casual lecturer at my old university while receiving job seekers allowance. I applied to be a Studio Manager with a social design agency, but was told the position had already been filled. However, they invited me in for a chat and in the end I was offered some freelance work which I decided to accept (although I had to work as a part-time receptionist at the same time to make it up to a full-time job). I'm now freelancing for the company full-time and I also work as a Studio Manager in a glass blowing workshop and do some voluntary work for a couple of social enterprises. At the moment I'm concentrating on gaining a bit more experience, but eventually I think I'd like to set up and run a company myself.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'Studying at university gave me confidence in my own ability and my MA introduced me to a whole new area of design which I would never have investigated on my own. I still keep in touch with the people I met on my postgraduate course, and this network has been both useful and supportive. The work I produced at university is now part of my portfolio, which I use to show clients what I can do.'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'In 2009 I completed an MA in Design for Development because I wanted to learn more about the subject, and needed to develop my knowledge of social design and sustainable development.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Be flexible, take volunteering positions and internships where you can, and write directly to people you admire, organisations you want to work for, and groups you want to join.'

Meeting potential employers face-to-face without lots of competitors queuing up for a position is much better than spending what can feel like an eternity applying for advertised jobs.'



Jen – Civil Engineer (Civil Engineering, 2008)

How did you become a civil engineer?

'I did a four-year course for my first degree, so when I graduated I had a masters in civil engineering. I managed to secure my current role during my second year at university after completing a 3-month summer placement with the company. I was really impressed by the organisation's commitment to training and development and was keen to get a job there as a permanent employee. I started working for the company as soon as I graduated in 2008, and am now a Civil Engineering Project Leader. In my current role I help clients to clarify their needs and produce detailed drawings and pricing information to help them design their project specification. Once the project has been signed off by the client, I liaise with the site team to provide design support during construction and am responsible for looking after the documentation associated with the project. I've recently started to spend time working with the site management team in order to develop my role, and am currently working towards becoming a chartered member of the Institute of Civil Engineers.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'At times my university experience has been invaluable, whereas at other times it is hard to link my job to my degree. Besides the technical knowledge I gained at university, the experience of report writing and public speaking has been extremely useful.'

What prompted you to undertake further study?

'I have a number of professional site management qualifications that I needed to complete in order to do my job. My employer provided the training for these. My next ambition is to become a chartered engineer.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Do your research into potential employers. The amount you get paid should be incidental. In today's financial climate, things such as the company's ethical code, values and commitment to sustainability could make the difference between a company which is still operating in two years and one which is making redundancies.'



Ed - Operational Research Analyst (Mathematics, Statistics, Operational Research & Economics, 2008)

How did you become an operational research analyst?

'I followed a four year course for my first degree and graduated with an MSc in 2008. I'd applied for a job with the government's operational research service a few months before my course ended and think I was quite lucky to be offered a job as soon as I graduated. However, once I got there I didn't enjoy my first few months because I didn't particularly like the department I was in, so after about six months I applied for a job in a different department. I'm much happier in my new department and have now been working as an Operational Analyst for eighteen months. I do a lot of statistical modelling and data analysis, often working to tight deadlines in order to respond to data requests from senior civil servants and government ministers who use the information to inform their policy decisions. I'm planning to stay with my current department until I'm promoted, then once I'm a Senior Analyst I may look to move into another department to broaden my experience.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'My course gave me a good grounding in technical skills like data analysis, but the really technical stuff (like high level statistical theory) I hardly use at all. Overall I would say I've found the 'soft skills' I learnt more useful - like how to present and explain your findings, how to structure and write a paper etc.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Join the civil service if you can – you'll get good experience, it's interesting work, the environment is generally very friendly, and you won't get worked to the bone like you would in a private consultancy firm. I think the important thing is to get a decent job, whatever it might be. It doesn't matter if you don't know what you want to do in life yet. Just get any job that will help you develop your skills and gain some experience. Don't come back from university and get a menial job while 'deciding' what to do – you could be doing something much more worthwhile while you work out your next move.'



Lucy - Brand Manager (Economics, 2007)

How did you become a brand manager?

'During my second year at university I went on several careers courses that were designed to help students find out more about the kinds of jobs they could do once they graduated. On one of the courses (called 'insight into management') I met some people working in the retail sector who encouraged me to apply for a summer internship with their company (a large multinational manufacturer). I thoroughly enjoyed my internship and decided to apply to the company's graduate training scheme. Once I joined the company I worked my way up through the business and am now a brand development manager. I'm planning to stay in the sector until I become a director, something I'd like to achieve within the next ten years. However, once I've achieved that I'll probably start looking for a new challenge in a different field, but I think the skills I'll have built up as a brand manager will stand me in good stead in the future.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'Studying economics taught me how to manage and interpret data, which has been really useful as I do quite a lot of data analysis in my job.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'My advice would be to get as much work experience as you can. All work experience is valuable, and it also helps you to build up your list of contacts. If you can't get a job straight out of university, look for voluntary work. Volunteering gives you brilliant experience and transferable skills, and it is also very rewarding in its own right. Also, if you can still access your university careers service I would recommend taking advantage of the courses that they offer as they can help you work out what kind of job you would like to do long-term.'



Andy - Games Programmer (Computer Science, 2006)

How did you become a games programmer?

'One of my friends had completed a summer internship with a company which was looking for a programmer and he suggested that I apply for the role. I got in touch with the company and after a meeting with the technical director I was offered the job. I'm currently a games programmer, and recently I've been working on a music game which builds on the Guitar Hero franchise. I'm currently working towards becoming a senior programmer, but in the future I'd like to move into management and head a small team.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'I regularly use the theory I learned at university and apply it to real world problems. Theory is much more useful than practical skills because the field changes so rapidly.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Try to make yourself stand out by working on a small project in your field of interest – you need to showcase what you can do.'



Emma - Learning Resources Adviser (English Studies, 2009)

How did you become a learning resources adviser?

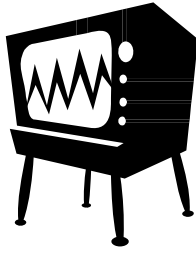
'After I left university I applied for a number of jobs in libraries and museums before I was eventually offered a part-time position as a learning resources adviser. After several months I was offered the opportunity to take on some additional responsibilities and I now work full-time. I really enjoy working with students and would definitely like to continue working in libraries in the future.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'I work in a college library so I'm always drawing on my own experience of studying when I'm advising students about resources. As an English graduate I am also able to help them with things like referencing and can answer any queries about literature.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'If you are passionate about a particular area you wish to work in, don't dismiss lower-paid/lower grade positions when you're starting out – you can always work your way up.'



Laura - Research and Insight Executive (TV) (Sociology, Culture & New Media, 2007)

How did you become a research and insight executive?

'After I left university I spent a few months in New York working at a girl's summer camp before returning to the UK to work as an international research assistant for a US television entertainment channel. After spending nine months in that role I applied for my current job which is with a different television company. I'm now working as a research and insight executive, which involves monitoring the performance of my company and its competitors. I love working in television research and at the moment I plan stay in the field for the foreseeable future.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'My background in social science has proved very useful in my current role, especially my knowledge of research methods.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Get as much work experience as you can, it will be invaluable. I did a placement year as part of my course, and I think that experience is what got me where I am today. Going to employers with both a degree and relevant experience will put you head and shoulders above other graduates.'



Sally – External Relations Officer (Graphic Design, 2004)

How did you become an external relations officer?

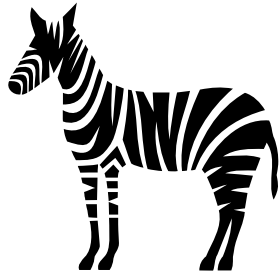
'After I graduated I spent two years sailing around the Caribbean, West Africa and Europe while working on an international charity ship. When I returned to the UK I started working as a freelance designer, but after 6 months I started to miss the structure of a permanent job and decided to look for a temporary position at my local university. I was assigned the role of assistant in the alumni office of the university's business school and once I began work I discovered that the job was exactly what I was looking for. I stayed with the department and in 2008 I was promoted from alumni assistant to alumni officer. My role continued to evolve and I'm now the business school's external relations officer with an even broader remit. In my current role I'm responsible for implementing the business school's external relations strategy, supporting its brand and raising the school's profile by developing and sustaining the school's relationships with its external supporters (including alumni and international/corporate partners). I'm planning to stay in external relations but would like to progress into management in the near future.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'My degree challenged me to think 'outside the box' and to be more creative when it comes to solving problems. My design skills (in terms of managing space, text and images) have also come in useful when I've been involved in developing the material we use to communicate with our external supporters.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Make the most of any opportunity you get – don't always hold out for 'the best thing' – sometimes the best thing is not what you expect.'



**Ben - Assistant Zoo Registrar
(Animal Behaviour and Welfare, 2006)**

How did you become an assistant zoo registrar?

'I spent a number of years in casual posts working in the education department at my local zoo and made lots of contacts in the field. I then volunteered in my current job until I was given more responsibility and the position was made into a paid role in August 2010.'

How have you drawn on the experience you gained at university in your subsequent work?

'My subject knowledge (in animal welfare and conservation) has been hugely important, as have my presentation and communication skills. The interpersonal skills I gained at university have also been really useful when it comes to networking.'

Do you have any careers advice for the students who graduated this year?

'Stick at it. Sheer determination and not taking 'no' for an answer is the reason I have the job I wanted. Getting disheartened does not help and will only hinder you in the future.'