CAREER PLANNING GUIDE FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Steps to a successful career
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Welcome to the Careers and Employability Service!

Whatever the subject of your degree, and whatever stage of your studies you are at, we hope that this booklet will be useful in helping you to plan your future career and to make the most of your time at university.

It aims to give an overview of the Careers and Employability Service (CES) – who we are, what we do and how we can help you prepare for your future – and to signpost you to useful information on career choice, job applications and the skills employers look for.

You may already have definite career plans or, like many other students, have no idea what you want to do after university. Whatever your position, this booklet should be useful in helping you to make your next move.

In the space available, we can do no more than give a brief introduction to some of the most important issues, but our web and print information resources referred to throughout the booklet will help you to build on this and find out more. At any stage of your studies, and even for up to three years after you have graduated, you can also discuss any questions or issues with one of the careers and employability advisers at Kent.

Career planning is not something that should be left until your final year. It is a long-term process and everything that you are doing now – study, part-time work or extra-curricular activities – will contribute to helping you make career decisions and successful applications. Students who begin to think about their career early and take advantage of the opportunities to find out about careers, gain experience, and develop their employability skills are the ones most likely to succeed in a competitive job market.

Do make use of the advice and information offered by the Careers and Employability Service and take advantage of all the opportunities which the University of Kent offers. Your time here is not only for developing your academic skills and knowledge but also the wider skills and interests that, whichever career path you choose, will benefit you in the longer term.
TOP TIPS TO HELP YOUR CAREER WHILE AT UNIVERSITY

Graduate Attributes
Employers look for a range of attributes in their graduate recruits including confidence, creativity and innovation, critical reflection, global and cultural awareness, integrity and accountability, intellectual curiosity and resilience. These are qualities you can develop during your time at Kent through curricular and co-curricular activity.

Gain experience of work
This is essential: many top graduate recruiters warn that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all are unlikely to be able to demonstrate the skills and commercial awareness needed to apply successfully for their graduate training schemes. Even casual jobs such as retail, hospitality or customer service are of interest.

Students can find part-time or temporary work in a wide range of areas through Jobshop, a free service run by Kent Union. https://kentunion.co.uk/jobshop

Students in a wide range of degree disciplines can spend a year in industry as part of their degree. There are many benefits to this, not least that students who have done a placement year are highly employable after they graduate. For further information see www.kent.ac.uk/ces/placements.html

Our vacancy database has hundreds of opportunities, not only for graduates, but also for placement students, interns and volunteers with local, regional, national and international employers. https://careers.kent.ac.uk

Learn outside your degree with Kent Extra
Kent Extra describes a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to enhance your employability and add a new dimension to student life. You can gain work experience, volunteer, learn a language, attend a summer school or add an extra year to your course to gain knowledge in a different discipline.

www.kent.ac.uk/kent-extra

Get involved
You can get involved with student groups, societies and sports clubs through Kent Union (Canterbury) and The Hub (Medway). These opportunities can help you to improve your employability skills and develop an impressive CV. https://kentunion.co.uk www.greenwichsu.co.uk/medway

Take the Careers Award
Improve your career planning and job hunting skills with this online programme. The programme covers how to develop your career action plan, CV support, video interview and psychometric testing practice with feedback online or through an appointment. www.kent.ac.uk/ces

Collect Employability Points
Students who take part in employability activities can gain reward points which can be exchanged for prizes ranging from Amazon vouchers to paid summer internships exclusively available through the Employability Points Scheme.

www.kent.ac.uk/employability-points
CHOOSING A CAREER

This involves four key stages:
- Self awareness
- Opportunity awareness
- Decision making
- Taking action

Self awareness and opportunity awareness
Self-awareness involves looking at your SKILLS, VALUES, INTERESTS and PERSONALITY and analysing where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Once you have done this, you can relate your skills, interests etc. to different career areas and begin to research your opportunities. There are two programs that can help you to do this on the Prospects website.

Prospects Career Planner and Job Match are powerful programs to help you choose a career by helping you to identify your skills, motivations and interests. Based on your answers to the questions asked you will get a list of occupations that are good matches with your profile and an explanation of the reasons why. You can then find out more about these occupations including job descriptions, work conditions, entry requirements (including the skills required), salary, training and case studies. www.prospects.ac.uk/planner

Making decisions and taking action
Taking action can include DEVELOPING your skills, GAINING EXPERIENCE and RESEARCHING careers. This will help you to make decisions. An important part of making decisions is discussion with other people. Friends, family and academic advisers, as well as careers advisers, can all play a part here. Talking to people already working in your chosen career area will help you to decide if the career is really right for you, far better than by simply reading about it. See page 6 for advice on networking.

You will need to find out more about these jobs through research, networking, events and discussion with careers advisers.

Our ‘What can I do with my degree?’ pages at www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/degree will give information on career options related to your degree. Don't forget, though, that many careers will be open to graduates in any degree subject, so your opportunities are very wide-ranging.

Our ‘I want to work in...’ pages at www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/workin. These pages give short introductions to popular graduate career areas, with links to sources of further information.

Once you have reached your decision, you are ready to take action in another way: by finding out about employers and vacancy sources, applying for internships, jobs or further study and attending interviews and assessment centres. The CES can help you to do all of these effectively!
WHAT THE CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY SERVICE OFFERS

We are committed to successfully preparing you for employment and further study.

What we offer:
• A comprehensive careers website
• Information booklets
• Online careers award and learning resources
• Skills workshops
• Presentations by employers
• Annual Careers Fair
• One-to-one guidance with careers advisers
• Daily ‘quick advice’ sessions
• Help with CVs and application forms
• Practice interviews
• Funding for unpaid experience
• Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity in all our practices.

www.kent.ac.uk/ces

Quick advice
Careers and employability advisers are on duty at regular times to help with quick queries such as giving feedback on your CV, advice on job hunting or interview advice. Book an appointment to speak to an adviser for approximately 15 minutes. https://careers.kent.ac.uk

Careers guidance interviews
If you have a more complex query or problem – such as ‘I have no idea what I want to do!’ – then book in for a careers guidance interview. Here, you will have time to talk things over in more detail with a careers adviser.

Book an appointment to speak to an adviser for up to 45 minutes. https://careers.kent.ac.uk
EMPLOYERS AND VACANCIES

Whether you are searching for an internship, placement or graduate job, it is important to research employers and typical deadlines in advance. Large organisations will often have application deadlines in autumn term for start dates the following summer or autumn.

You can use the following websites as a starting point and the job profiles on the Prospects website can also help you find sector specific vacancy websites.

Useful recruitment sites
Most of these can be searched by type of work, location and vacancy type (eg graduate job, internships or placement year) and include background information as well as vacancies.

Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk

TARGET Jobs
https://targetjobs.co.uk

Milkround
www.milkround.com

Glassdoor
www.glassdoor.co.uk
Includes reviews and interview feedback.

The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers
www.top100graduateemployers.com
As chosen by students.

Inside Careers
www.insidecareers.co.uk
Covers actuarial, accountancy, intellectual property, pension and insurance roles.

Gradcracker
www.gradcracker.com
For science, technology and engineering students.

Rate My Placement
www.ratemyplacement.co.uk
Internships and year-in-industry jobs and company reviews.

See our job hunting webpages for more: www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/findajob.html

Recruitment processes
When you apply for internship, placement and graduate vacancies you are likely to have to complete one or more of the following:

• CV
• Covering letter
• Application form
• Selection/psychometric test
• Telephone interview
• Video interview
• Face-to-face interview
• Assessment centre

The CES can help you to prepare for all of these processes through the resources and programs on our website, our workshops and employer events and appointments or practice interviews with an adviser. www.kent.ac.uk/ces
NETWORKING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

What is networking?
Through networking, you can gain a first-hand insight into jobs and careers that will help you to ensure that you have made the right choice. It can also be used for actual job hunting as the contacts that you make through networking to inform yourself about careers may also be helpful in finding work experience or graduate jobs.

At its simplest, networking is just talking to people! Most people enjoy talking about their work and are usually happy to help others who are interested in that work. Events and presentations organised at the University, by the Careers and Employability Service, your Academic School, Kent Union or student societies, can be a good way to make contact with people – employers or Kent alumni – working in areas that interest you and to gather information from them.

Social media networking
Social networking sites are not just for keeping in touch with friends and family: recruiters and students can also use it to recruit or search for jobs. You can use social media in many ways: for example, to develop a network of people in the career areas that interest you; to find jobs and work experience; to promote yourself and your skills or to research employers you’d like to work for. The following tips will help you to make the most of social media in your career planning.

Set up a LinkedIn profile
LinkedIn is a professional social networking site with over 380 million members worldwide. It focuses on work and achievements so is more widely used by recruiters to source candidates than other social media sites. A personal profile on LinkedIn works in the same way as an online CV, allowing you to showcase your career goals, education, experience, posts of responsibility and skills (often more comprehensively than can be managed in a traditional two-page CV). Keep it up-to-date as you add to your experience and achievements.

Use social media actively
Setting up a LinkedIn profile is just the beginning. The next step is to build your online professional network by adding connections. These could be from work experience, part-time work and volunteering as well as extra-curricular activities. In addition, you can gather ‘endorsements’ from your connections: recommendations from tutors, previous employers and co-workers that validate the skills you can offer.

Don’t let your online presence ruin your career search!
The personal material on any social media site that employers might see should be professional in appearance and content. You may want to consider setting up separate Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts to use for career-related networking and job searching: this will avoid people who you want to network with you on a professional level seeing inappropriate messages from your friends and prevent your job search from getting in the way of your social life!

If your full name is distinctive, you may want to use a shortened version or nickname on your personal pages to prevent it being picked up by search engines. Even so, you should use high-level privacy settings and Google yourself regularly (or use alerts to notify you of any changes): friends and family might have added new photos or information even if you haven’t.

Keep safe: don’t give away any personal details such as address or phone number on your websites or online CVs – just your email address. This should be straightforward and professional: avoid anything ‘funny’ as employers may not share your sense of humour.
Students undertake postgraduate degrees for many reasons. You may hope to improve your career prospects or just to explore your subject further.

If you are considering postgraduate study, there is a lot to think about. There is a huge range of postgraduate courses available, both in the UK and overseas.

Before starting you should think about what you hope to gain from further study and whether it is the right option for you.

Our postgraduate study web pages www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/further study.html will help you to do this and also provide information on further study.

Another useful site is www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate_study.htm which includes a searchable database of postgraduate courses and detailed profiles of universities and departments. There are also pages on funding postgraduate study, Master’s degrees and PhD study, professional qualifications and teacher training.

Planning and applying for postgraduate study takes time, so start before your final year if possible and look at all the options – including what you hope to go on to after completing your postgraduate degree.
TIME OUT

Many students think of ‘taking a year out’ after they graduate, but, if you don’t plan ahead for this, you run the risk of spending a year stuck in an unchallenging job or series of jobs, gaining little in the way of skills, experience or satisfaction. The resources listed below will help you to avoid this trap but first, ask yourself a couple of questions:

Why do you want to take time out?
- To earn some money to pay off your debts?
- To travel?
- To decide on a career?
- To gain some relevant work experience?
- A bit of all the above?

What can you do?
Almost anything! but these are some of the most popular options:
- join an organised project
- find your own job or internship
- travel independently, working as you go
- follow a course to improve your skills or develop an interest

What will future employers think?
A lot will depend on what you have done during a gap year and how you present it. If you have spent a year backpacking around the world, your applications should show how you planned and organised the trip; how you dealt with any problems you met along the way; how you funded it and what you learnt from the experience, rather than just listing all the exotic countries you visited.

For further information and ideas, [www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/gap-year](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/gap-year)

A number of organisations offering gap year opportunities visit the University to make presentations and answer questions, especially during the Employability Festival and at the Careers Fair. Find out more at [www.kent.ac.uk/ces/events/index.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/events/index.html)