

Effective Job Search for Researchers

Looking beyond your current research degree or fixed-term contract while you are still working hard to finish it can be stressful as well as exciting. It's easy to underestimate the amount of time and energy that typically goes into finding, applying for and securing your next position. Fortunately, there is plenty of support on offer at Careers and key strategies you can adopt to help you in the first part of the process by identifying the *right* opportunities to apply for, significantly increasing your chances of success and making the whole job search process less painful.

Top Tips for conducting an effective job search

- Take a targeted approach to your job search based on an understanding of the match between your own skills, experience and career needs and what specific employers in the current labour market are looking for
- Mix it up! Don't just rely on looking for advertised vacancies – speak to employers directly to find out about the realities, needs and recruitment plans in their organisation. Using more proactive, speculative job search methods can help to maximise your chances of success by uncovering hidden opportunities and new sources of insider support and encouragement
- Be realistic without selling yourself short. Most happily employed people do not achieve a 100% perfect match and sometimes a job search can stall simply because you are looking for a job that doesn't really exist. Aiming for a 70/30 or 80/20 balance between enjoyable and less appealing aspects of a job might save you some wasted time and can still lead to real job satisfaction
- Seek support – if you are unsure about your options or struggling to find the right match for you get in touch with Careers to speak to us or arrange a telephone/Zoom appointment with a Careers Consultant. Support continues for 3 years after graduation for Brookes students or for the duration of your contract if you are a staff member on a fixed-term research-only contract.

Finding advertised vacancies

There are advantages and disadvantages to conducting a job search via the advertised job market. On the one hand, you know that a job exists and exactly what they're looking for. Detailed job and person specifications can help you assess whether it is worth the investment of your time to apply or if there are gaps in your experience that you need to address first. On the other hand, applying in open competition means that everyone else knows this too! In addition, many opportunities are never advertised at all but filled through word of mouth and more informal recruitment methods. A really effective job search is usually a combination of formal as well as more informal networking approaches. Start your search by finding the right places to look for vacancies you are interested in – as well as finding vacancies to apply now you can also use them as a valuable source of labour market intelligence ahead of asking questions or speaking to existing or new contacts.

Sources of advertised vacancies – academia

The typical early career academic roles and job titles may vary depending on your discipline and the country you are applying in. In the UK they are broadly:

- Research-only positions - may be titled Postdoctoral Researcher, Research Fellow or Assistant, Research Associate or Junior Research Fellow (Oxbridge)
- Teaching-only positions - Associate Lecturer, Teaching Fellowship, Temporary or Sessional Lecturer
- Combination of research and teaching - Lecturer

To explore applying for a funding grant or fellowship as part of your early career development as a researcher at Brookes - www.brookes.ac.uk/research/research-support

Find academic jobs:

- On individual university websites - search World Higher Education Database <https://whed.net>
- Main sites in the UK www.jobs.ac.uk and www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs
- Within the EU - <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu> www.academicjobseu.com
- Worldwide postdoc search - www.findapostdoc.com
- US - www.chronicle.com <https://careers.nationalpostdoc.org> US and worldwide - www.higheredjobs.com
- Science - www.nature.com/naturecareers www.sciencemag.org/careers
- Engineering and technical - <https://computeroxy.com> <https://engineeroxy.com>
- Business schools worldwide - www.akadeus.com

Sources of advertised vacancies - beyond academia

Research graduates go into a wide variety of roles beyond academia, from research in other settings to roles related to their specific knowledge or expertise, to positions drawing on the transferable skills developed from their research and wider experience. While research vacancies may well say 'PhD required' many other roles will not. When assessing vacancies outside academia, it may help to view your research as a form of professional experience in itself – often skills and activities that have been an integral part of your research are just described using different language by employers. See the Hot Tips 'Careers Options for Researchers' if you are just beginning to think about what your options might be.

There are a range of good general sites to help you start your job search for roles outside academia but usually you will need to supplement these with more targeted sites for your chosen sector. Find these **targeted vacancy sources** for specific roles and sectors at:

www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles

<https://targetjobs.co.uk>

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/sectors-occupations

www.ukecc-services.net/ukpbata.cfm - find relevant **professional body websites** for valuable careers information and jobs boards

Identify vacancy sources in **specific countries** at:

www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/working-abroad

www.brookes.ac.uk/careers - 'Resources' > 'Hot Tips and Key Resources' > 'Goin Global' - Country Guides

Other useful **general recruitment sites**:

<https://jobs.theguardian.com>

www.indeed.com

www.milkround.com

www.grb.uk.com

www.graduate-jobs.com

www.studentladder.co.uk

www.brookes.ac.uk/careers

Social media - recent figures suggest 92% of recruiters now use social media to advertise positions.

LinkedIn: Advice about creating an effective profile and how to conduct an effective job search via

LinkedIn www.youtube.com/linkedin

<https://students.linkedin.com/>

Search for vacancies <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs>

Optimise your profile and search terms to receive relevant job alerts. Many vacancies are also posted more informally in special interest groups or on employer profiles (where it is free to post them) so joining, connecting and following within your areas of interest can really pay dividends.

Twitter – the most effective way of using Twitter to find jobs is to develop an engaging profile and to build an online presence and network by putting out relevant content, connecting with individuals and following organisations. You can also identify relevant hashtags for vacancy postings in your field (e.g. #quantjobs), use the search function for more specific search terms (e.g. 'qualitative research job London') or identify individual accounts that act as jobs boards in specific sectors.

www.brookes.ac.uk/careers

Good advice to get started: www.savethestudent.org/student-jobs/how-to-get-a-job-using-twitter.html

Recruitment agencies – often a great source of information about specific sector recruiting patterns, and specialist recruitment agencies can be good sources of vacancies in certain disciplines. To find the most relevant recruitment agency for your needs:

- Database of Specialist Recruitment Agencies www.rec.uk.com
- Recruitment agencies and job sites directory www.agencycentral.co.uk
- www.freshminds.co.uk/minds/why-freshminds - recruitment agency with a focus on academic high-fliers, consultancy and project placement for researchers with specific skills

Selected vacancy sites that may be of particular interest for some research graduates

www.careersportal.co.uk/UKRI-careers - the combined vacancy site for positions at UKRI and with the Research Councils

www.airto.co.uk - Applied Industrial Research Trading Organisations –includes a directory of industrial research organisations

www.ukspa.org.uk - UK Science Park Associations

www.researchgate.net/jobs - searchable database of scientific and research jobs

www.theengineer.co.uk

www.researchjobfinder.com – mainly jobs in market research

<https://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk> and www.charityjob.co.uk - for jobs across the charity and NGO sector

www.jobsgopublic.com - for vacancies across the public sector

<https://jobs.newscientist.com>

www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk - graduate level, PhD level and experienced hire jobs within research, administration, policy and scientific/engineering/technical roles. See also Civil Service FastStream

www.faststream.gov.uk/

www.ecmselection.co.uk – ECM, high tech recruitment specialists

www.naturejobs.com – science job listings

www.artsjobs.org.uk/ - wide-ranging arts jobs listings (Arts Council run)

www.w4mpjobs.org/ - think tanks, policy, Westminster jobs

www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/update/jobs/ - jobs in the heritage and buildings conservation sector

<https://jobs.the-sra.org.uk/>- Social Research Association jobs board

www.bd4jobs.com www.careersinconstruction.com – jobs across the built environment

<http://www.insidecareers.co.uk/professions/management-consultancy> - a range of consultancy jobs boards

Creative Job Search Strategies

For every advertised vacancy there are many more that are never advertised or that you can position yourself for well before they go into open competition. These unadvertised or ‘insider’ vacancies are collectively called the ‘hidden jobs market’ and while estimates vary widely some place them at as much as 60-70% of all available jobs. They may arise from

- Word of mouth including via social media networks
- Personal recommendation by someone within your network
- Taking short-term casual or project work which then gets extended to a permanent contract
- Internal opportunities from an existing employer
- Speculative approaches to likely employers

As a researcher you may particularly benefit from developing tactics to access this ‘hidden jobs market’ because your specialist skills and knowledge may apply to relatively niche markets where it pays to make yourself known. Conversely, if you are looking to transfer your skills and/or knowledge into a broader field it can be particularly helpful to gain an insider understanding of the new territory and so be able to help employers ‘translate’ your research background into what, tangibly, you will bring to their organisation.

Networking is *the* key skill in accessing the ‘hidden jobs market’, but if even the thought of it makes you shudder, remember it is really all about being curious, making connections, having interesting conversations and exchanging knowledge, information and support - something you have probably already been doing with considerable proficiency as part of your research project.

Why network?

A Vitae survey back in 2010 of how early career PhD graduates found their current job showed

- Over a third did so through professional, work or educational contacts (this rose to nearly 40% for those in HE research occupations)
- Nearly a quarter already or previously worked for the organisation (rising to 27% and nearly 30% for those in HE research occupations and HE teaching respectively)
- Over 15% did so through personal contacts, including family, friends and social networks (this was higher the further away from HE research respondents worked)
- Over 6% (9.2% for HE research occupations) did so through speculative approaches*

A smaller proportion of respondents had seen their position advertised in a newspaper, magazine or website (22%) or directly via an employer's website (20%)

([Vitae What do Researchers Do? Doctoral graduate destinations 3 years on](#))

* Multi-response question: sum will be greater than 100%

How to get started:

- Remember -it's not about getting a job per se, it's about making contacts and connections with people who may be able to help you in *the process* of finding a job, usually by giving you information and advice in the first instance
- Try drawing a map of your existing network- start with your closest contacts and work outwards - who are you currently not connecting with that you could be? Who do people in your network know that they might be prepared to put you in contact with?
- Identify other potential networks and communities you would like to join - where do conversations take place? Are there any easy ways of joining in? Conferences? Events? Forums? Who might help you to find a way in? LinkedIn is an excellent way of finding connections or putting out feelers
- If you need to make direct contact speculatively, do your research to identify the right person - perhaps a relevant manager or someone from HR, and be clear about what you might realistically expect from them. By far the best approach is to start small by asking for information or advice – try arranging an Information Interview (below).
- Don't forget that Brookes has a range of mentoring schemes including Brookes Connections which allows you to ask questions of professionals across a range of sectors via an online platform – for this and other schemes: www.brookes.ac.uk/mentoring
- Remember that you can help others too - the person whose work you show an interest in today or whom you offer to help out may be the person who can offer you an essential lead tomorrow.

Information Interviewing

- Make your initial contact personalised – say how you know the person or what you know of their work or organisation
- Be clear what you are asking for – a 15 minute conversation to ask for any advice or insights that could help you gain access to your chosen field, or to find out more about what they do
- *Don't* ask for jobs, work experience, internships – not good etiquette! But you may get intel about this as part of your conversation.
- Prepare some good questions – day-to-day nature of the job; their path into their role and what they enjoy about it; recruitment preferences and patterns – what do they look for?; current challenges, priorities, preoccupations; if the conversation has gone well, towards the end – would you have any feedback about my CV / current skills gaps / suitable entry points? Is there anyone else you would recommend I talk to?
- Thank them, and follow up with an e-mail and offer of any reciprocal help they might value

Good resources on how to network successfully as part of your job search:

<https://career-advice.jobs.ac.uk/career-development/networking-how-to-maximize-opportunities-and-boost-your-career-connections/>

www.careers.ox.ac.uk/networking/

Support from Careers with your job search

You are not alone! To access a wide range of information or arrange to speak to a Careers Consultant for bespoke help with developing a sense of direction and/or clear tactics in your job search:

www.brookes.ac.uk/careers

careers@brookes.ac.uk

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