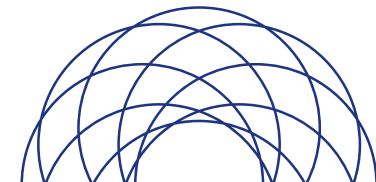
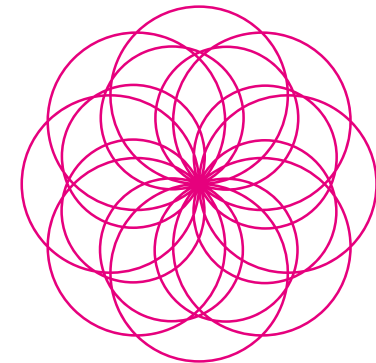
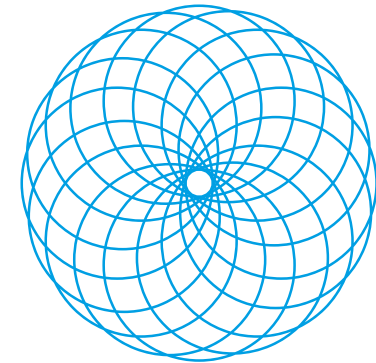
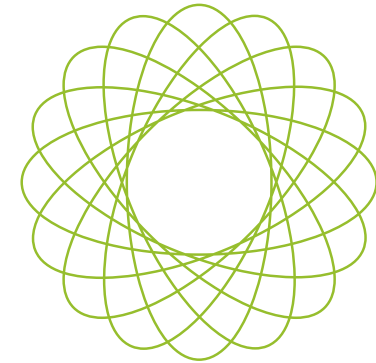


CAREER SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH STAFF AT READING

**CONNECTING
RESEARCH**

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1. Career management in a rapidly changing world

The world of work is fast changing. Factors such as technological progress, globalisation, ageing populations and more recently, a pandemic, have had a significant impact on what we do and how we do it. Changing labour markets mean we need to manage our careers differently, acknowledging and embracing change and chance in our career planning. It is now more appropriate to view our careers as climbing walls, with potential sideways and downward steps, rather than the more traditional career ladder that is so often referred to in discussions about careers. Although it may be comforting to think of one's career on an upward, linear trajectory, this is probably increasingly unhelpful given the likelihood that labour markets will continue to change.

The academic labour market is changing too. There is an increased drive for higher education to meet the needs of its customers. The business model of higher education looks very different today compared to 30 years ago as it continues to expand. These changes are very likely to continue, with higher education adapting to the changing needs of the market.



The key to career success today involves a flexible, curious, and proactive mindset, scanning the horizon for opportunities, updating skills according to the demands of the changing labour market.

Reflect upon what might happen in the academic sector in the short and long term. This will help you develop the skills and knowledge you will need to thrive in the sector.



Further learning

The books and links below look at career management in a changing world:

- *The Squiggly Career*. Book by Helen Tupper and Sarah Ellis.
- The Squiggly Career [TED Talk](#) by Sarah Ellis and Helen Tupper.
- *Luck is No Accident. Making the Most of Happenstance in Your life*. Book by John D. Krumboltz and Al S. Levin.
- [Chaos Career Theory](#). YouTube Video by Bright and Pryor (2012).

It is worth subscribing to articles such as those below, to keep up to date with policy and events in the HE sector:

- [Higher Education Policy Institute](#)
- [Times Higher Education](#)
- [WONKHE](#)

2. Evaluating your career

The early stage of an academic career presents several challenges, most of which you will be familiar with. As one's career progresses, there are shifts in living circumstances and personal values. Rather than taking your next career step by default it is worth taking time to consciously think about:

- **Your career values:** What do you specifically want and need in a career? Is an academic career likely to align with your values in the short and long term?
- **Your skills and experience:** What skills and experience do you have? Think broadly about how and where you can apply your skills and experience. Consider your specific research skills and knowledge, and your broader, transferable skills such as the ability to manage a project.



Request a yearly, detailed review of your career progress with your manager. This is referred to as a performance and development review (**PDR**) at the University of Reading. Take the time to prepare for the review, have an honest discussion about opportunities for academic progression in your field. Ask your manager for support and guidance on how to progress.

Read the mission statements of different universities and research institutes. Such statements can give you an insight into the values and drivers of different institutions. Think about whether their messaging resonates with you. Are you inspired to work there?

Look at academic job descriptions and make a note of the skills and experience being sought. Make a note of the skills that you have. Also, identify skills or experience gaps and proactively seek out opportunities to bridge these gaps in your current role.



Further learning

It is worth doing an **assessment of your career values** to see if they align with an academic career. **Carry out a skills evaluation** to help you think broadly about your skills and how they can be **applied both within academia and other contexts**. Here is a list of websites that offer values and skills assessments. There are also links to resources that identify and define skills that relate specifically to researchers.

- **[Vitae Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\)](#)**. A framework describing the knowledge, behaviour, and attributes of a successful researcher. The framework can be viewed through several lenses, depending on what you want to use it for e.g., it has an employability lens if you are thinking about researcher skills and how they relate to jobs outside academia.
- **[My IDP](#)**. A US link for scientists with PhDs from the journal, *Science*. Contains free exercises to help you examine your skills, interests, and values.
- **[Imagine PhD](#)**. A career exploration and planning tool for humanities and social scientists with PhDs. A US resource, containing a free, values evaluation assessment tool.
- **[Transferable Skills for PhDs](#)**. A list of transferable skills and how these can be further defined. Written for humanities academics but useful for all researchers.
- **[Academic and Professional Skills](#)**. A blog from [\[re\]searching](#), describing skills possessed by industry professionals and academics.
- **[Be the Solution: How to Really Articulate your PhD \(and other\) Skills to Employers](#)**. A blog from [Postgradual: The PhD Careers Blog](#).
- **[Eurodoc. Identifying Transferable Skills and Competencies to Enhance Early Career Researcher's Employability and Competitiveness](#)**. Outlines the skills and competencies that are developed as a researcher.
- **[What Every Postdoc Needs to Know](#)**. Copies of this book are available from the University of Reading library.

3. Progressing in your academic career

In the UK, broadly speaking, there are three types of academic contracts. These are:

- Teaching and Scholarship
- Teaching and Research
- Principal Investigator (PI)

At the University of Reading the academic contract classifications are known as Teaching Intensive (TI), Teaching and Research (T&R) and Research Intensive (RI).

The type of skills and experience you will need to develop for your academic career depends on the career track that you choose. So, for example, you will need evidence of securing research funding if you want to be a PI but teaching experience is less important. However, if you are aiming for the teaching and scholarship (or TI) route, you will need significant teaching experience. Many academics are also required to have experience in collegial activities (also referred to as academic administration) and entrepreneurship.

At the start of your research career, think about securing travel and small research grants to build your experience in acquiring funding. When you are more advanced in your career, you should seek larger grants, in collaboration with others. [The Research Services](#) team at the University of Reading can support you in applying for research funding. See their [research funding page](#) for more details.

Acquiring teaching experience can help to broaden your career options. Teaching is also a useful communication skill. You may need to be proactive in securing teaching experience. It can also be very challenging fitting this in around your research so think carefully about whether it will enhance your CV and align with the needs of your future career. Ask your manager about teaching opportunities within your department or write speculative applications to departments and other universities, suggesting modules you can teach. There may also be opportunities to teach at secondary schools on a part-time basis. Programmes such as The Brilliant Club Scholars Programme will help with this.

One of the most important factors in many careers is your association with relevant people. Over time, try to find individuals that can guide and support you in your work. Some of these relationships may be casual and infrequent and others may be closer and more significant. Developing relationships with allies in your career will increase your chances of securing relevant opportunities, from research collaborations to funding opportunities. You may also want to consider finding an academic mentor or two! Finding trusted and credible colleagues to support you can be an invaluable asset to an academic career.



You can meet new people in your field by joining a relevant academic or professional association. Check that they offer opportunities for training and development and become an active member.

Make efforts to build and sustain reciprocal relationships with the people that you meet. Speak to them at conferences, send them a congratulations when they publish or secure funding, and seek their input and advice on your work and career.

Remember that career management is a work in progress and that building a community of support around you takes time.

Further learning

Read about how to develop and plan an academic career in more detail.

- [Managing your Career](#). From the University of Reading
- [The Essential Guide to Moving Up the Academic Career Ladder](#). From [Jobs.ac.uk](#).
- [Early Career Researchers – 20 Tips for Career Development](#). From [BERA](#).
- [Career Development Toolkit for Researchers](#). From [Jobs.ac.uk](#).
- [Funding opportunities at University of Reading](#)
- [Advance, HE Fellowship](#). A qualification that recognises teaching in Higher Education.
- [The Brilliant Club Scholars Programme](#). A social enterprise sending people with PhDs to teach in secondary schools. It aims to improve access to university for pupils from underrepresented groups.
- [How do I Choose a Mentor?](#) A Postdoc's Guide. From [The Nerd Coach](#).
- [Tips and Tricks for Academic Networking](#). An article from Christopher Huggins at the UACES.
- [Networking Strategies for Academics Who Are Bad at It](#). From [Inside Higher Ed](#).
- [How to Find an Academic Mentor](#). A blog from The Wiley Network.
- [Academic Mentoring for Editors and ECRs](#). An article from Taylor and Francis
- [Hundreds of Academics Give Advice to Their Younger Selves](#). A Times Higher Education (THE) article with some interesting and honest advice.



4. Considering a career pivot

You probably do not need to be reminded that very few people with PhDs become professors or principal investigators (PIs). The percentage of people that reach these positions varies, but some data suggests as few as **0.45%** of science PhDs become professors.

There are different ways to interpret these findings, depending on your perspective. If the intention of a researcher is to become a professor or PI, then the lack of opportunities available to reach this ambition could be interpreted negatively. Indeed, at the PhD stage of an academic career, a **2020 report from HEPI** showed that 67% of PhD students wanted an academic research career but only 30% were in academia three years later.

However, people's values and ambitions shift over the course of their life. We also see, as described in section 1, that the values and ambitions of a sector change over time with academia being a very different place today compared to 30 years ago. Some researchers want to make a purposeful shift in their career, ensuring that their next step aligns with their career values and suits their changing lifestyle. Such a move is sometimes referred to as a career pivot. A career pivot is something that you can consider at any stage of your career. It does, however, take time and effort to make a transition so it needs to be considered carefully.



If you are considering a career pivot or a new role, think about using a career coach who understands both the academic sector and other sectors.

Websites such as **Chaperone**, which is aimed at scientists, can help you source a career coach. The LinkedIn group, **PhD careers outside academia**, also has several PhD careers coaches amongst its subscribers who you could contact for advice and support.



Further learning

Read articles and watch videos that discuss career change or career pivots.

- **[Career Pivot: Know What you Want and Ask for It.](#)** A video from Stanford Graduate School of Business.
- **[Making a Career Change.](#)** A video from Chieh Huang offering advice on how to change careers.
- **[Careershifters.](#)** A website and organisation supporting career changers.
- *Finding Your Element.* Book and **[YouTube video](#)** by Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica. A collection of stories about people that have found jobs they love.
- *Pivot. The Only Move that Matters is Your Next One.* A book by Jenny Blake explaining how to make a career change.
- *A Job to Love. The School of Life.* This book provides numerous exercises helping to explore and identify your career needs.



5. What else can I do?

Part of making a career pivot involves researching career options. This takes time and effort, so dedicate around 2 hours a week, for several months, to do this research. Make it your new career side-line!

When considering career options, do not look for job titles alone. This can be limiting and frustrating as you will only find job titles for roles that currently exist; job titles change all the time. Focus on sector(s) and the type of work that you would like to be doing e.g., public engagement work in higher or secondary education.

You could do a macro-based search and identify the category of job that appeals to you. Sarah Blackford on her [bioscience careers blog](#) has a very [good article](#) on making career choices. It groups jobs into one of six typologies according to [Holland's occupational themes](#) i.e., functional, investigative, enterprising, social, artistic and management. Rank these typologies in order of preference, with your most preferred typology ranked '1'. The article then suggests a range of job titles, aimed at scientists, that fit the six typologies. Although aimed at bio scientists, the article is helpful for other individuals in all disciplines. It will help you explore the category of jobs that appeal to you even if some of the job titles are not relevant.

In 2016, Vitae, in collaboration with Naturejobs and other partners, published [What do research staff do next?](#) The article, which contains data from 856 respondents across different countries and disciplines, explores the motivations and challenges of transitioning to a range of careers beyond academia, as well as listing career options and giving advice on making a career pivot.

Career options were grouped into seven categories as below:

- Professional roles in higher education
- Research outside of higher education
- Research policy and administration
- Public engagement and science communication
- Teaching
- Writing and publishing
- Other occupations

There is also the option of creating your own job and becoming self-employed. You may be able to offer your services or skills as a freelancer. There are websites such as [upwork](#) and [peopleperhour](#) where you can advertise your services.



Start by looking at different websites and resources for lists and descriptions of jobs. Set up an excel spreadsheet of career options. There will be some options that you can strike off immediately. Eliminating options is progress. There will, however, be many options that you cannot strike off as it is difficult to grasp what the job entails from the descriptions you read. Keep these on your list.

You can go beyond online research by talking to different people that are doing jobs that interest you. Think about past colleagues, look at the job titles of people you encounter at conferences and other events. Look on LinkedIn and search for people doing interesting roles. Contact people and ask for 15 minutes of their time online or in person. Use the opportunity to ask them about their job, what they enjoy, what they find challenging and any other tips they can give to people interested in their type of work. This is called an informational interview.



Further learning

To begin exploring other options, explore the following resources and begin to make your options list:

- [What do Research Staff do Next?](#) As described above.
- [PhD Careers Outside Academia](#). A LinkedIn group which posts resources and jobs for academics looking to career pivot.
- [From PhD to life. Recommended Reading List from Jennifer Polk](#). A list of books for PhDs and researchers looking to career pivot.
- [Imagine PhD Job Families](#). Career options for humanities and social science PhDs. You will need to sign up to the website, but this US resource is free.
- [Possible Careers for PhDs in Biomedical Science](#). An extensive list of career options for biomedical scientists from Lauren Easterling at Indiana University.
- [10 Top Non-Academic Jobs for STEM PhDs](#) and [PhD Jobs for People who Hate People](#). Two lists from the US – based [Cheeky Scientist](#). Some useful resources and videos but subscribing to the email list results in unwanted emails/SPAM.
- [Common Careers of Physicists in the Private Sector](#). A US publication listing career options for PhD physicists.
- [Science Communication Resources](#). A useful list of resources, from Stephanie Deppe, for those interested in science communication.
- [Research Careers](#). Career profiles from more than 90 people, many of whom have been early career researchers and moved to different careers. Collated by PhD students and postdoctoral researchers at Oxford University.
- [How to Get the Most Out of Informational Interview](#). From the Harvard Business Review.

6. Skills gaps, further training, and work transition opportunities

Any additional skills you need to develop will depend on the type of role you are thinking about next. Such skills can sometimes be highly specific to your area of expertise so this is something you may also need to explore with your manager. This section looks at more general skills gaps that relate to securing roles beyond academia.

When exploring career opportunities, remember that employers do not always find someone with all the skills on the job description. A job description is often a wish-list of the skills an employer would ideally like. There should be room for you to grow and develop in your next role, so apply for jobs even if you do not fulfil all the requirements on the job description, especially if they are 'desirable' rather than 'essential' skills. Some employers, particularly, small, and medium size enterprises (SMEs) may be willing to take a gamble and recruit you based on your potential, motivation, and mindset despite a lack of skills in some areas.

Remember the power of networks when exploring and securing opportunities. You may not have all the skills for the job but a supportive person in the right place, who knows you and has worked with you, may be able to open doors despite your skills gaps. Always send your CV to a named person in an organisation if you can. This may be someone that you know or someone you have spoken to during the process of job hunting and building connections.

If you are considering a professional role within higher education, such as technology transfer or academic and professional development, it is worth speaking to people in the relevant department of your university. They may be able to create an opportunity for you to gain an insight into their work e.g., some work shadowing or some part-time work experience. Proactively seeking out such experiences can help bridge skills gaps and enable people to career pivot.



There are several schemes and courses, shown below, that are available to help researchers bridge some general skills gaps e.g., leadership and business awareness.

It is also worth thinking creatively about ways to bridge more specific skills gaps. Can you write some code in a new language to help a colleague or friend with a problem they are trying to solve? Can you write a speculative application to a university of interest, offering to teach relevant modules? Can you contribute to a blog on a topic of interest to develop your online writing skills? Can you attend a local college course on business development? Can you volunteer to organise a conference?

Creating opportunities for yourself is a skill. A strong sense of agency, motivation and proactivity are essential requirements for many roles today. [This talk](#) from Dr Kate Hext at Surrey illustrates how an entrepreneurial mindset can be important in developing an academic career.

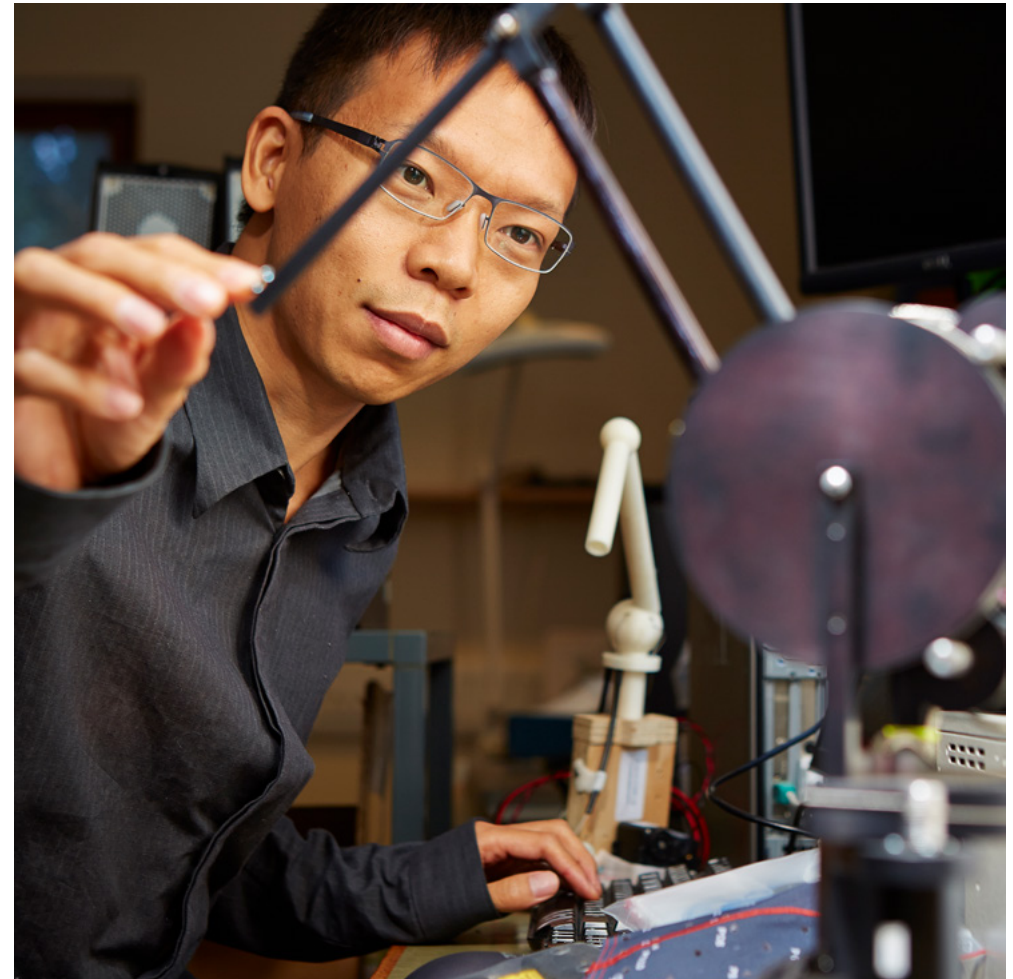


Further learning

The following is a list of resources and opportunities to help bridge skills gaps. It consists of competitions, fellowship schemes, work transition opportunities and online learning platforms.

- **[EMBO Lab Leadership Course](#)**. A leadership course for scientists wanting to work in academia.
- **[Springboard Women's Development Programme](#)**. This training aims to improve communication skills, confidence, and self-esteem and is regularly organised by People Development at the University of Reading.
- **[Advance HE Fellowship](#)**. Qualification that recognises teaching in Higher Education.
- **[Advance HE Academic Leadership Programme](#)**. For researchers aiming for leadership roles.
- **[Life Arc Technology Transfer Fellowships](#)**. A fellowship programme for PhDs and postdoctoral researchers wanting to pivot to a technology transfer role.
- **[The Young Entrepreneur Scheme \(YES\)](#)**. For PhDs and postdoctoral researchers interested in the entrepreneurial aspects of academia and industry. Contact the University of Reading **[Knowledge Transfer Centre](#)** for further details.
- **[Code-Switch Consultants](#)**. An initiative aimed at PhDs and postdoctoral researchers of all disciplines. It provides an opportunity to gain part-time work experience in a different sector, working on a consultancy project. It aims to improve commercial and sector awareness.
- **[Outsidelnsight](#)**. A works shadowing scheme for university professionals, helping them to gain a brief insight into other roles within Higher Education.
- **[Science to Data Science](#)** run by **[Pivigo](#)**. A 5-week training course for analytical PhDs to train in data science, carrying our real-world projects for companies. Costs £800 at the time of publishing.

- **[LinkedIn Learning](#)**. LinkedIn provides online courses on a range of topics which can help you to upskill. The quality and age of the courses is variable. You can access the courses using your University of Reading details, as explained **[here](#)**.
- **[Coursera](#)**. Online courses run in collaboration with leading universities and companies. Many are free to access.
- **[Udemy](#)**. A range of reasonably priced online courses.



7. Presenting yourself to employers outside academia: CVs

An industry CV is different to an academic CV. It needs to be more concise, usually fitting onto 1 – 2 pages. Each CV that you produce should be targeted to a specific job, ensuring that you provide evidence that you fulfil the skills and experience on the job description. A hiring manager is unlikely to spend the time working out whether your experience in academia is relevant for the job. You need to do this for them! In general, most employers are interested in **how useful you will be to them** i.e., how will the skills and knowledge you have gained in your past roles help them solve their problems?

In preparation for presenting yourself to different employers, translate your academic experience using industry jargon. Read and research industry-produced content, go to relevant industry events and set up informational interviews with people working in sectors of interest. Collate and understand the vocabulary and terminology so you can use this in your CVs and cover letters.

Focus on both your technical skills, if relevant to your new role, and your professional skills such as project management, in your CV and cover letter. Quantify your experience, wherever possible e.g., the example below states '*wrote 3 grant applications*' rather than '*wrote grant applications*.'



When writing CVs and making applications, follow this formula for each bullet point in your work experience sections.

1.Skill: State a skill from the job description within the bullet point. This will help you get past any applicant tracking systems (ATS) that a company may use.

2.Evidence: What evidence do you have to illustrate this skill?

3.Outcome: Can you measure outcomes that relate to the skill? i.e., is there a way of quantifying how effective you were when using this skill?

e.g., **Wrote and submitted 3 grant proposals to key funders (NERC and HEFCE), developing commercial awareness. Awarded £500K of funding over a 3-year period.**

If you are uploading your CV to websites such as LinkedIn or applying to large companies, be mindful of the fact that some companies use software to screen CVs for features such as keywords and outcome measures. This software is known as an applicant tracking system or an ATS. When submitting your CV, look out for an ATS vendor name, such as taleo.net, in the URL. This suggests that the company is using an ATS to screen your CV. [Here](#) is a list of ATS vendors that you can use to explore this possibility.

Your CV is more likely to secure you an interview if you can **get it into the hands of a human being!** Failing that, you should aim to make your CV, ATS compliant. Websites such as [Jobscan](#) can help with this.



Further learning

The following is a list of resources to help you write CVs for employers outside of academia.

- [Why Scientists Need to Market Themselves.](#)
From Nature Careers.
- [5 Ways Your Academic Research Skills Transfer to Industry.](#)
From Alaina Talboy on the Microsoft Research Blog.
- [Transferable Skills for PhDs.](#) A list of skills gained in academia, described in language used by employers outside academia.
- [A CV for Leaving Academia.](#) From Shinton Consulting. This website contains a non-academic CV which is then critiqued by a range of individuals from different sectors.
- [Researcher CV Examples.](#) From Vitae.
- [Applications for Non-Academic Roles.](#) A list of resources that relate to non-academic applications, from the University of Cambridge. Some resources are accessible to all.
- [Non-Academic CVs and Cover Letters.](#)
From the University of Edinburgh.
- [University of Reading Careers Service CV Advice.](#) Although aimed at students rather than staff, this is a useful resource containing advice and tips on CVs.

8. Presenting yourself to employers outside academia: LinkedIn

Unless you are already well-connected in your sector of interest, it is a good idea to have a LinkedIn profile. Having a presence on other social media platforms can also reap career benefits. The type of social media you use will largely depend on your field and sector of interest. There are **pros and cons** to using social media so think about these before investing your time and energy into setting up and maintaining accounts.

There are many reasons for using LinkedIn, including:

- You can find people, jobs, and useful information on the platform.
- You can showcase your expertise and skills e.g., by having a complete profile and posting information of interest to your network.
- Around 90% of recruiters use the platform to source individuals for roles that may not be advertised online.

One way to work out whether LinkedIn is worth using is to consult a **LinkedIn industry list**. This will tell you how many people in different sectors are using the platform. If the sector you are aiming for is on the list, then you should consider having a LinkedIn profile. The higher the ranking of your preferred sector on the list, the more important it is to have a profile.

Take the time to create or update your profile, thinking about your future role as well as your current role. Your headline, which is directly under your name, should contain keywords that relate to the jobs you want in the future. It should not say 'Research Fellow at University of Reading.' Replace this with Meteorologist | Data Scientist | Software Developer, for example.



To maximise the chances of being found by recruiters on LinkedIn, use keywords throughout your LinkedIn profile. Find relevant keywords by looking at job descriptions and other relevant people's profiles for ideas.



Further learning

Here are some articles which will help you to build a LinkedIn profile.

- **[Building Your Online Presence as a Researcher](#)**. A YouTube video from The University of Cambridge Careers Service.
- **[Optimise Your LinkedIn Profile for Recruiters](#)**. A LinkedIn Learning video explaining how to construct a profile that will help you be found by recruiters.
- **[How to Make a Better LinkedIn Profile](#)**. An article by Alison Doyle from The Balanced Career.
- **[7 Ways to Include Keywords in Your LinkedIn Profile](#)**. An article from The Cheeky Scientist.
- **[17 LinkedIn Profile Writing Tips to Help You Stand Out](#)**. From Robin Ryan at Forbes.
- **[The Recruiter Job Search Strategy](#)**. How to Get Recruiters to Take You Seriously.

9. Presenting yourself to employers outside academia: Interviews

In an academic or fellowship interview most of the questions and tasks that you are set will relate to your research and teaching experience. Interviews in sectors beyond academia will vary, ranging from an informal discussion for a start-up to an entire day of interviewing for a larger company.

You will be asked different types of questions including motivational questions, technical questions, and competency questions. You may also be set a task that captures part of the role you are applying for e.g., a coding challenge or presentation. Generally, interviewers are trying to ascertain whether you have the ability and motivation to do the job and if you are a good cultural fit for the organisation.



Preparation is the key to interview success. By doing extensive research into the role and the organisation you will hopefully convince yourself and subsequently the employer that this is the right role for you.

Before the interview research:

- **The role:** Speak to someone that is doing, or has done, the role in the past, if possible. Scrutinise the job description and research any terminology that you are not familiar with. If you have any skills gaps, what have you done to bridge these gaps? Look at all the skills on the job description and think of two scenarios where you have used each of the skills listed. Prepare your answers to skills questions (also known as competency questions) using the **STAR method**. Think of a few questions to ask at the end of the interview that demonstrate your interest in the role. For example, "How can I maximise my impact within the first six months?" or "What are the biggest challenges for the organisation over the next few years?"

Do not ask questions about terms and conditions such as pay or annual leave; this information should be available from the job details or ask their HR department outside of the interview.

- **The organisation:** What is the culture or vibe of the organisation? Look at their website and mission statements. Does its message resonate with you and why? Look at websites such as [Glassdoor](#) to see what other people are saying about the company. Be prepared to say why you want to work there.
- **Yourself:** What are your strengths and weaknesses? Have a narrative prepared explaining why you are changing roles and/or sectors. Focus on the positives of what the new role/sector offers, emphasising how you can help the company solve their problems. Do not focus on the any negative aspects of your old job or sector as this will create a negative impression.



Further learning

Here are some articles which will help you to prepare for an interview outside of academia.

- [4 Tactics PhDs Need for Non-Academic Job Interviews.](#) From Beyond the Professoriate.
- [Interviewing for Jobs Outside Academia.](#) Some useful resources from the University of California San Francisco Office of Career and Professional Development.
- [University of Reading Careers Service Interviews Advice.](#) Although aimed at students rather than staff, this is a useful resource containing advice and tips on interviews.

10. Career planning: What next and how to get there?

There are three images in this section to help you with your career planning.

The first image asks you to stand back and reflect on your career from a macro perspective, helping you to think about what you are doing now and what you want to do next. Use the questions to help you broadly reflect on your career.

The second table is designed to help you begin your career action planning from a more detailed or micro perspective. Your time at the University of Reading is divided into three blocks i.e., the early stage of your contract (e.g., year 1), the mid stage of your contract (e.g., year 2) and the late stage of your contract (e.g., year 3).

Column 2 lists some ideas for actions at the three different stages of your contract. Everyone's situation will be different so feel free to set your own career goals, possibly inspired by those listed. The number in brackets at the end of the action points refers to the relevant section in this booklet where the suggested action is discussed in more detail.

The third table asks you to list goals for each stage of your contract, using table 2 for ideas. If you are at the later stage of your contract, there may be ideas you can take from the earlier stage suggestions. Column 3 asks you to break down the goals you have set into smaller SMART goals, if you need to do this. You can then set a time by which you wish to complete the goals and tick the final box in column 5 when completed.

Now

What is happening in your career now?



- Do your career values and skills align with the work you are doing?
- Is higher education a sector that allows you to develop and flourish?
- Are you valued and recognised at work in a way that suits you?

Next

What do you want to do next?



- Is another contract research role in higher education the best next step for you?
- Have you explored other career options?
- Are there any obvious gaps in your skills or expertise? What do you need to do to bridge these?

Plan

What do you need to do to get there?



- What do you need to find out more about?
- What do you need to do in the long term, short term and longer term?
- Do you have an action plan for your career?

Stage of contract	Ideas for actions
Early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organise and establish regular meetings with manager/PI to discuss career progress and ambitions (2). <input type="checkbox"/> Devise a publication strategy with your manager/PI (2). <input type="checkbox"/> Research funding organisations and set up an excel spreadsheet of relevant funders with application deadlines. Ask your manager/PI for suggested funders (3). <input type="checkbox"/> Keep up to date with higher education policy and labour markets (1). <input type="checkbox"/> Establish relevant social media profiles, including LinkedIn (8). <input type="checkbox"/> Begin to build or extend your network of support (3). <input type="checkbox"/> Find a mentor(s) from whom you can seek support and advice (3). <input type="checkbox"/> Spend 1 – 2 hours each week looking at career options beyond academia as a contingency plan (5). <input type="checkbox"/> Explore (further) opportunities for teaching, if relevant to your career plans (3).
Mid stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Continue with all of the ideas suggested in the early stage phase. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask your manager/ PI/network for honest advice regarding opportunities for progression in your field. This will help with the next step of your career planning (2). <input type="checkbox"/> Read academic job descriptions and grant application requirements to ensure you are developing the appropriate experience and skills for your field e.g UKRI now require a narrative CV measuring outputs such as your contribution to the development of others and contributions to the wider research and innovation community (i.e., leadership and outreach). This is an initiative aimed at broadening output measures in academia and improving research culture (3). <input type="checkbox"/> Update your CV – keep your traditional academic CV which lists your publications, grants etc. Also put together a narrative CV or resume for researchers. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider taking a higher education teaching qualification, if relevant (3). <input type="checkbox"/> Consider broadening the scope of your role to acquire a wider range of skills and experience e.g. join a committee, write a grant, join an academic network, organise a conference or mentor junior researchers. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify relevant training opportunities that relate to your field as well as those that are transferable to other fields e.g. embark upon a work transition programme (6). <input type="checkbox"/> Carry out one informational interview a month to explore career options beyond academia as a contingency plan (5).
Late stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss continuing employment with your manager/group leader/PI. Start to plan future research/teaching, if appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Look at the university policies and procedures related to the end of fixed term contracts. <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to your compiled list of funders and begin to make appropriate grant applications, depending on lead times. You may need to apply one year in advance of when you need research funding (3). <input type="checkbox"/> Start to reach out to your network to let them know you are coming to the end of your contract and that you are looking for future opportunities. People can help you secure opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/> Write a 'non-academic' CV (7), update your LinkedIn profile and let recruiters know you are job hunting on LinkedIn (8). <input type="checkbox"/> Start to apply for roles, both academic and roles beyond academia. Jobs beyond academia tend to have a quicker turnover time so start to apply around 3 months or less before your contract ends. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek the help of a careers consultant to help with planning, applications and interviews (4).

Stage of contract	Goals	Overall goal divided into smaller SMART* goals, if needed (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timed)	To be completed by?	Completed?
Early stage				
Mid stage				
Late stage				

CAREER SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH STAFF AT READING

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