

Career Essentials for Taught Postgraduates



A guide to:

- Next steps after your PG study
- Making choices
- Taking action
- Help from the Careers Service



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Postgraduate study covers a wide range of courses, from vocational qualifications for a specific career; those designed to add to existing professional experience; through to purely academic courses. There are also 'semi-vocational' courses which focus on a particular employment sector but with no automatic link to a specific profession.

Given this broad nature of postgraduate study, it is impossible to cover everything in one publication, but this guide does give advice on the main issues that postgraduate students face, from deciding what to do after your course through to practical help with pursuing your chosen career. It also explains the help and advice available from the Careers Service.



HOW THE CAREERS SERVICE CAN HELP YOU

Postgraduate students can use the Careers Service for the duration of their study and normally for up to three years after graduation. We are based at 388 Glossop Road in Sheffield, close to the Students' Union and Octagon Centre and open throughout the year, apart from public holidays and brief annual closures – check our website for further details www.shef.ac.uk/careers/aboutus. Students studying on a part-time or distance learning basis will find the Email Enquiry Service particularly useful.

Our website www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers is a good starting point for information. We also have a series of online talks on careers topics including 'Careers Advice for Taught Postgraduates' which can be found at www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes.

The Careers Service has a wide range of free publications, covering occupations, employers, further study, work and study abroad, and materials on CVs, applications and interviews. Information staff are available to deal with any general information queries that you might have.

Our Careers Advisers provide impartial advice and guidance on a range of careers issues. You can book a 20-minute advice session, available Monday to Friday, by calling into the Careers Service or telephoning us. If you need further, in-depth support you'll then be referred for a longer appointment. We can also provide feedback on your CVs and applications.

We want to help you make the most of your master's course, so we've produced **Make it Count**, a series of careers seminars especially for postgraduates. Written by our experts, Make it Count helps you choose and

secure your future career. If you can't attend the talks, there's also an online version meaning you can take part in them at a time to suit you. Look out for details of Make it Count via our What's On programme, website and social media.

Our **What's On Diary** has details of careers talks, workshops, employer presentations, and fairs organised by the Careers Service www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/events. A number of events are aimed specifically at postgraduate students.

Our **Student Jobshop** provides help with finding work experience or a part-time job during your studies www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/jobshop, while vacancies for work experience and graduate jobs are listed on **myVacancies** www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs.

Whatever stage you have reached in planning your next career move, we are happy to help you.

OPTIONS AFTER YOUR PG STUDY

Depending to some extent on the nature of your course, there are a variety of options open to you after completing your postgraduate study. Some students choose to follow the PhD or MPhil route, especially if they want a career in academia or research, but there are many more options.

If you are on a vocational course it is likely that you already have a career in mind and may have established a number of contacts in your field, through networking and placements. Attending seminars and conferences is a good way to develop your links further and to keep in touch with developments in your occupational field. If you are doing a vocational or semi-vocational course, your academic department can also help you identify useful networking

opportunities. In addition, check to see which employers are on campus at Careers Service events as well as other external events: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/events. You can also use social media such as LinkedIn to build up your professional network: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob/media.

You might like to set up a period of work shadowing or work experience if your course does not involve a formal placement. The Careers Service Vacancies webpages www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs will be able to assist you. If you are undertaking a dissertation or extended research project, this can also provide a valuable opportunity to make links with organisations and to explore professional issues that will add to your employability.



Semi-vocational courses, for example in some science or business and management areas, may have given you an insight into a particular industry sector. Look for opportunities available in this field (read the sections on 'Targeting Employers' and 'Applications and interviews' for help with this). You may wish to explore employment opportunities in the UK or overseas. You might also wish to consider alternative work styles such as self-employment, freelance work or developing a 'portfolio' career. Whatever your situation, the Careers Service can provide support and guidance.

If your course is a purely academic one with no vocational link, you will need to start thinking about your career plans early on in your postgraduate course. Similarly, if you are pursuing (semi-) vocational study, you may feel that your course is enabling you to develop a range of transferable skills that can be used in a wide range of jobs, not just one profession. The following section will help you get started if you are uncertain where your current course might lead.



WHICH OPTION SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

If you aren't sure where your postgraduate course could take you, bear in mind that in the UK roughly 60% of graduates enter employment that is not degree specific. Possession of the degree is taken as evidence of intellectual potential but what is also important to the prospective employer are the transferable skills and experience that you can demonstrate.

Skills developed during postgraduate study

Don't underestimate what you can offer to an employer, especially if you decide to pursue a career which is not directly related to the course you've undertaken. Think about the range of transferable skills you will have developed through both your degree and your Masters, PG Diploma or PG Certificate.

For academic courses some of the skills that you are likely to develop will include:

- Data collection and analysis
- Communication skills – both written and verbal

- Research skills
- Time management
- Project management
- Familiarity with various IT packages

Students on more vocational courses may be able to show:

- Commercial awareness
- Technical/clinical skills
- Project work
- Organisational skills
- Leadership
- Negotiation skills
- Innovation and creativity

For help with developing your skills, including work experience, skills or enterprise workshops, and extra-curricular activities see our webpages www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/advice. You can also take advantage of initiatives to help you identify and gain recognition for your skills including the **Skills for Work Certificate** and **The Sheffield Graduate Award** - do this early on in your course so that you don't miss registration dates.

The new **301 Student Skills and Development Centre**, based at 301 Glossop Road, offers opportunities for students to develop their academic study skills. Go online for more information www.shef.ac.uk/studentsskills.

Making career choices

Making career choices involves the following elements:

- Being able to look objectively at yourself in relation to your work
- Identifying your career goals and ways of achieving them
- Making effective use of the resources available to assist you in this process
- Taking responsibility for your own career development
- Seeking out opportunities
- Regularly reviewing your career progression, identifying your learning and highlighting further action to be taken

Once you have begun to identify your skills and what you are looking for in a career, use the **Prospects Career Planner** programme and the Careers Service's **Profiling for Success** personality and career motivations questionnaires. Both are accessible via www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/getstarted. For a practical introduction to making career choices, read the Careers Service publication **Getting Started**.

Exploring careers

If you have some careers in mind, use the Careers Service to explore these occupations in more detail. We have a wealth of information and useful links online: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/worktypes/options. Also see the Careers Service guide to **Exploring Careers**.

PhD and MPhil opportunities

If you have plans to work in academia, or in professions which require a higher degree by research such as scientific/ industrial research and development or social research, you will need to start investigating PhDs and MPhil opportunities early on in your current postgraduate course. The Careers Service publication **Postgraduate Study and Research** has more information on PhDs and other higher degree qualifications.



APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

The key to success in the job market is the ability to identify clearly what you have to offer and to promote this effectively to potential employers. It is not sufficient to say you possess a Masters, PG Diploma or PG Certificate – you need to spell out what you have gained from the experience. This is especially true if you are looking for employment in a field unrelated to your subject where your postgraduate qualification might even be off-putting to the employer, who could wrongly assume that your experience is too specialised. It is important that you provide an overview of your course, so that the employer has a clear idea of what it actually involves. You will also need to highlight the range of skills that you have developed through study, work experience and additional responsibilities, and then relate these to the post that you are applying for. This is not necessarily straightforward, so use the Careers Service guides to **Applications and Interviews and Assessment Centres** for more advice on this. Also see our website: www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/gettingajob.

FINDING JOBS AND TARGETING EMPLOYERS

Some employers specify the need for a postgraduate qualification, but most other employers do not have a separate recruitment process for postgraduate students. The starting salaries offered may be no higher than for people with a first degree only, although some employers may be open to negotiation. Therefore it is up to you to demonstrate the 'added value' that you can offer given your course and the wealth of highly developed transferable skills that you possess.

The Careers Service advertises jobs and work experience on **myVacancies** www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs. There are also links to some of the most common recruitment sites at www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs. Other sources of vacancy information include newspapers, journals, websites, recruitment agencies and graduate recruitment fairs.

Forthcoming employer presentations, recruitment fairs and other careers events at Sheffield can be found in WOW, our **What's On Weekly** email, or in our 'What's On Diary' www.sheffield.ac.uk/careers/students/events. In addition to applying for advertised vacancies, you should use a variety of other strategies such as speculative applications; networking via possible links through postgraduate course tutors and professional bodies etc; and work shadowing. For further information read the Careers Service publication **Job Hunting Strategies**.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The Careers Service website includes advice on jobs and careers in over 60 countries. See **myInternational career** www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/inter including our detailed international career guides on 'Going Global'. There is also information for many other countries in the careers library.

International students from non-EU/ EEA countries who are thinking about possible employment in the UK need to be aware of current work permit regulations. Government regulations concerning the provision of immigration advice mean the Careers Service cannot advise individuals on how they are likely to be affected by the Work Permit rules. However, the Careers Service publication **'International Students'** contains useful information as does the International Students section of

our website www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/inter including links to the relevant government website www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration. More detailed individual guidance is available from the Student Advice Centre.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

You may have particular concerns if you have a disability or health-related issue. We recognise the particular needs of students with disabilities and dyslexia and offer confidential, personalised advice and guidance at any stage during your postgraduate course. We also try to ensure that you can access the full range of our reference materials (in alternative format if necessary) and that you can participate in all events we organise. If you have any specific requirements, please let us know in advance and we will make every effort to accommodate your needs. Also see the Careers Service publications **Dyslexia and Employment** and **Support for Disabled Students**.

FURTHER HELP FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATES

Information resources for postgraduate students at www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/infotree/Postgraduates.php.

CAREERS SERVICE



**The University of Sheffield
Careers Service**
@ 388 Glossop Road

Student Jobshop
@ Sheffield Students' Union

Tel: 0114 222 0910

