

## Your career journey at university

It's natural to be both excited and worried about what you are going to do when you graduate university. It might seem quite far away now, but it is never too early to start thinking about your future career. You may have already decided on what you want to do, or you may not have thought about it at all – either way it's absolutely fine. From your very first day at university you can use your time to start considering career options, building useful skills, and setting yourself up for whichever path that you choose.

### Step 1: Find your careers service

The first and hopefully easiest step of preparing for your future when you start university is finding out how to access your careers service, either in person or virtually. They may be called something different, such as 'employability service' or 'job shop', but they should all offer similar activities— one to one appointments, workshops, events, and much more. Try and make a note of where they are in your first week. Then once you have settled in, go along and speak to one of the advisors there – they aren't just for final years! It's perfectly okay to make an appointment just to chat about what career options your subject studies might offer you and how you can spend your first year getting started on your career journey.



### Step 2: Think about what you want to do



You can do this before you even start university and it's an ongoing process throughout your career journey. It's all about reflecting on what you enjoy doing at the moment and considering what you want to get out of a career in the future. There are lots of useful online resources including career quizzes, personality tests and job profiles - try websites like [prospects.ac.uk](https://www.prospects.ac.uk) or take the [UCAS Buzz Quiz](#). Remember you don't have to choose the perfect job for you right away, just start to narrow down your interests to sectors or roles that would suit you.

### Step 3: Start building up your CV

Building up your CV is also an ongoing process that can start before university and goes on throughout your whole career. A part time job is a great way to earn extra money while also boosting your CV. But it's not just about employment - many activities that you are already involved in now or want to get involved in once you start university, will look great on your CV – including academics, sports, societies and volunteering. Think about the skills that you are developing from these activities such as teamwork, leadership, and communication skills, and highlight those on your CV. If you need help, you can always speak to your careers service or find useful resources from them about writing a CV from scratch.



#### Top Tip

**Remember, if you want to apply for internships or placements in your second year, your CV will be made up of activities from your first year of university and before that, so start early!**

### Step 4: Explore potential career paths



University provides you with fantastic, unique opportunities to explore a whole variety of career paths. Events like careers fairs, themed weeks, industry speakers and alumni evenings give you an insight into what working in a particular job will be like. Go along to these in your first and second years to learn as much as you can about the industry or jobs that interest you.

## Step 5: Consider Placements and Internships

From a 2-week summer internship to a 12 month year in industry placement, there will be plenty of opportunities to gain work experience while you are at university. Work experience of any length looks fantastic on your CV and can show future employers that you have the knowledge, skills and passion for the jobs that you are applying for. Speak to staff about placement schemes at your university or look into individual internships yourself. Opportunities vary depending on your location and the industry you are interested in, but overall internships are available from the spring of your first year at university to the summer after you graduate. Take a look at internship job boards like [RateMyPlacement](#) or [Target Jobs](#) for some examples.



## Step 6: Apply away!



You might be surprised to know that some companies hire students in the autumn of their final year to start after their graduate – that's almost a year in advance! That means that by your final year you should be ready to start applying for jobs. This is where you can really utilise your careers service for advice on how to search for vacancies, how to write amazing applications and how to succeed at interviews. After you graduate, most universities allow you to access their careers advice for a few more years to help you navigate through life after university.

The Careers & Employability Service at Royal Holloway offers career information, advice and guidance to current students for up to two years following graduation. As Royal Holloway is a part of the University of London, our careers group

The largest higher education careers and employability service in Europe, with over 200 staff members in a range of roles relating to careers, The Careers Group is recognised as a centre of excellence in relation to careers and employability support for HE students and graduates.