

Researching Careers



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Why is research important?

The process of getting into a specific kind of job can take a number of years, so if you are interested in particular careers it is important that you research them as early as possible to make sure that you are taking the right courses and getting the right experience.

Ways to research

1. Use a jobs database

A database of careers can be very useful. These databases are searchable by job title and give details of salary scales, entry qualifications, training and experience requirements, job vacancy sources and case studies. Two very good databases are:

- http://www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm
- <http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/careertool>

2. Identify and research industry specific bodies

In many professions there are industry specific bodies that represent the profession and provide additional careers information. These include organisations such as the Scottish Social Services Council (for Social Work and Social Care) or OPITO (for Oil and Gas Careers). You can identify the appropriate bodies for your area of interest by looking up careers on the jobs databases and following the links for additional information.

3. Search for job adverts

Searching for job adverts for the kind of job you're interested in can be a good way of finding out what employers look for in terms of qualifications, skills and experience. Our job searching advice sheet will give you some ideas of job databases that you could use to look for jobs.

4. Information Interviewing

An information interview is like market research, it involves meeting with professionals in the kind of work you are interested in and asking them questions about their job. In an information interview your sole aim is to increase your knowledge and your network, and you should never



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ask for a job in an information interview. The basic steps in information interviewing are:

1. Identify people to interview: you may know people already, or you could ask around your network (e.g. your friends and family) to find out if anyone knows anyone you could interview, or you can contact organisations directly.
2. When you ask for a meeting, ask for a short amount of time (twenty minutes or half an hour should be enough), and explain that you are thinking about your own career options, that you are interested in their work and would like to hear more about it.
3. Prepare some questions before you meet your contact. Remember that you are looking for information and tips, you should not ask for work as part of the interview. Examples of questions you could ask include:
 - a. How did you get into this line of work?
 - b. What do you enjoy most / least in your work?
 - c. What skills do you need in your job?
 - d. What changes do you see happening in this field over the next few years?
 - e. Who are the main employers in your field?
 - f. What tips would you give to someone in my position looking to enter your kind of career?
4. Try to appear interested, engaged and positive in your conversation. Remember that your time is short so keep your conversation relatively focused.
5. Always thank your contact at the end of the interview, and send them a thank you email or letter after the meeting.

Further Help and Resources

Information on this and other careers and employability topics can be found on the Careers and Employability Centre website: www.uhi.ac.uk/careers. You can also follow the centre on Facebook: www.facebook.com/UHICareers, and on Twitter: twitter.com/UHICareers

You may find it particularly useful to refer to our 'Job Searching' and 'Networking' Advice sheets these can be found on our website in the 'resources' section.

Free confidential one to one advice on what jobs would suit you is also available to all students on an HNC course or above via telephone, videoconference or email. Contact our advisers by clicking on 'speak to an adviser' on our website: <http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/careers/use-the-service/speak-to-an-adviser>. This service is also available to graduates within two years of graduating from an HNC course or higher.



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Worksheet: Researching Careers

Using each of the methods listed in this advice sheet, conduct some research into a kind of career that interests you. Record your findings on the sheet below.

Career to be researched*	
Method 1: Jobs Database	<i>Use this space to record what database you used, and what you found out about the career area you are interested in. You may wish to print out information and attach it to this worksheet.</i>
Method 2: Industry Body	<i>Use this space to record what industry body you looked at and what you found out about the career from them. You may wish to print out information and attach it to this worksheet.</i>
Method 3: Job advert	<i>Use this space to record what job advert you found, and what you found out about the career from them. You may wish to print out information and attach it to this worksheet.</i>
Method 4: Information Interview	<i>Use this space to record the name of the person you spoke to, how you contacted them, and what you found about the career from them.</i>

* Note that the more specific your career or job interest is the harder it may be to find information about. If you have a very specific career in mind you may need to broaden your research to include related careers.