Planning an Academic Career - for PhDs and Research Staff

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Michaelmas Term 2013
18th October
12.30-1.30pm
“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower  
1890 – 1969  
Thirty-fourth President of the USA
Today

• What is an academic career really like?
• What are the qualities a successful academic needs?
• What do I need to do to give myself the best chance of success?
• What do I need to know to plan my career?
Do you know enough about what an academic career is really like?

- Talk to academics you know
- Read profiles and listen to career stories e.g. www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk/about/stories
- Explore Vitae resources: http://www.vitaе.ac.uk/researchers/1354/Research.html
- Read job adverts e.g. www.jobs.ac.uk
“I greatly enjoy my job. I especially like the variety and variability – there is no typical week and there is a lot of travel involved.” Lecturer Dr Simon Brocklehurst, Earth Sciences

“Every colleague that I have who has children, waits until the children go to bed and then resumes work. Most colleagues I know either choose to do their emails, or read PhD or undergraduate students’ work in the evenings.” Senior Lecturer in Politics, Dr Angelia Wilson
What are the positive and negative things about an academic career?
An Academic Life
From www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk

**PROS**
- Variety
- Travel
- Research
- Flexibility
- Intellectual freedom
- Teaching
- Challenge

**CONS**
- Competition for jobs
- Temporary contracts
- Funding pressures
- Rejection
- Lonely
- Long hours
Essential Qualities of a Successful Academic

- Networking
- Time management
- Resilience
- Presentation skills
- Leadership and management
## Challenges in transition to job from PhD – from former students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Outside academia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. New skills/experience/knowledge required</td>
<td>1. Adapting to new working environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Lack of teaching &amp; course design experience</td>
<td>2. Lack of relevant skills/sector knowledge/ experience</td>
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<td>3. Limited no. of jobs/competition</td>
<td>3. PhD too specialised / overqualified</td>
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<td>4. Faster pace / workload</td>
<td>4. Competition for jobs</td>
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<td>5. Independent working</td>
<td>5. Employer ignorance of PhDs</td>
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<td>6. Getting funding</td>
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Academic and Professional Development Programme

- 21 Nov  Working with and managing your relationship with your supervisor
- 7 Mar    Developing resilience in academic contexts
- 6 Mar    Managing your work life balance

http://www2.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/TLC/TLCPhD/APDprogramme.aspx
“Academic careers are then sorely beset by chance.”

Max Weber
German Sociologist
1864-1920
Key Principles for Minimising the Role of Chance

1. Produce and disseminate excellent research (easier said than done)
2. Teaching experience (?)
3. Understand your discipline
4. Understand the academic sector
5. Understand how the job market works
1. Research – making an impact!

- Understand how the quality of research is measured in your discipline
- Publish – start as early as possible
- Aim for quality over quantity and choose the right form of publication (journals, books, conferences...)
- Good references are vital
- Think about collaborations, opportunities for interdisciplinary work
2. Teaching – get the most out of it

• Don’t allow teaching to ‘take over’, demonstrate time-management

• There are different types of teaching (one to one, groups, lecturing, course development, marking, undergrad, pgrad)

• PGCertHE

• Think about what sort of department you might ultimately work in
3. Understand your discipline

• What discipline do you fit within?
• Who else works in this discipline?
• What are people working on and where does your research fit in?
• How is research funded?
• What are the top journals? Publishers? Conferences?
4. Understand the academic sector

• Each country has its own system
• Understand the structure of the career paths
• How do universities differ? e.g. Ivy League, Russell Group
• How are universities funded?
• How are universities measured? E.g. REF
• Keep up to date with news
Academic Career Paths

**US**
- PhD
  - Academic job market
    - Assistant Professor
      - Tenure-track
        - Professor/Associate Professor

**UK**
- PhD
  - Research fellow
    - Teaching fellow
      - Senior lecturer
        - Professor
          - Promotion
            - Lecturer
4. Understand the academic sector

Understanding the UK Academic Job Market
PhD Careers Seminar later this year
5. Understand how the job market works

• Understand the timescales/job market cycle.
• Where are positions advertised?
• When are positions advertised?
• How do you present yourself in a CV, cover letter?
• Writing research statements/proposals
• Writing teaching statements
• Interviews
Getting your own funding – one example

• British Academy postdoctoral fellowships
• Tough competition for these!
• Applications around Aug to Oct 2012
• Award to start Sept 2013
• Don’t have to have submitted thesis to apply
• Must have finished PhD within last three years
• Anyone eligible if they have a PhD from UK university
• Need to have arrangements in place with host institution
Looking for vacancies

**Academic360.com** is a meta-collection of internet resources for academic job hunters in the US, Canada, UK and Australia.

**UK and some international:**
- [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk)

**US:**
- Chronicle of Higher Education
- HigherEdJobs.com
- [http://www.academiccareers.com/](http://www.academiccareers.com/)

**Europe:**
- [www.academicjobseu.com](http://www.academicjobseu.com)

**Australia:**
But how will you fit it all in?

• Timely completion of a high quality thesis is your priority

• Review your working practices, organise your time

  http://vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/14885/Helping-researchers-with-time-management.html

  ‘Getting Things Done: How to achieve stress-free productivity’ by David Allen

• Evaluate different choices, weigh up their relative value to you
Sample Plan

• First year:
work out if you want an academic career or not (use resources, compare with other options); understand your discipline: where your work fits, which journals/publishers are good; join societies/membership orgs

• Second year:
understand funders in your discipline, get teaching experience/PGCHE, network at conferences, understand timescales and job market for your subject

• Third year:
prepare for fellowship applications if going that route, build on knowledge of academic sector for your target country, get help with CVs and interviews from LSE Careers
PhD Careers Appointments

• Book at a time that suits you through Career Hub
• Wednesday and Friday afternoons, 2pm to 5pm, 30 minutes, Tower 3, 6th floor
• Term-time and holidays
• Academic or non-academic career discussions
• CV checks, cover letters, practice interviews
Next PhD career seminars:

Career Options for PhD Students: Exploring Choices

4 Dec, 1-2pm

http://careers.lse.ac.uk
Career Hub

• [http://careers.lse.ac.uk](http://careers.lse.ac.uk)
• Book appointments, view job opportunities, see careers events listed
• Update your own preferences
• VERY IMPORTANT: tick that you would like to receive job alerts and LSE Careers News – or I can’t contact you!
Further Support

• Book one-to-one appointments and find out about PhD careers seminars through Career Hub: http://careers.lse.ac.uk/

• PhD section on Careers website http://tinyurl.com/LSECareersPhD new section on academic CVs and cover letters at: https://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/internal/InformationCurrentStudents/PhDsResearchStaff/AcadCareers/CVsCoveringLetters.aspx

• Keep up to date with PhD Careers Blog http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/careers/