

Exploring Career Ideas

There are a wide range of career options to choose from. You could choose to embark on a career relating to your degree subject. However many graduate roles do not require a specific subject and are open to applicants from many types of degrees. This handout will introduce you to ways of thinking about what you want from your career and give you advice on how to research your options. Spending time on this will help you to take the next steps after university with confidence.

SELF REFLECTION QUESTIONS

We are all different which means that what type of work suits an individual is very personal. Self-reflection helps you to work out what is important to you and is the basis for making good career choices. It's a good starting point because it will help you evaluate the options that you research. You will continue to make decisions about your career throughout your working life, so developing your ability to assess yourself and identify what you want is a skill you will use again and again. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. What do you want your work to do for you?

Here are some typical factors that an individual may prioritise when choosing a career.

Circle the ones that are important to you -

Salary	Stability/ security	Becoming an expert	Risk	Benefitting society
Work-life balance	Status	Promotional pathway	Being part of a team	Using your knowledge/ skills from your degree
Location	Challenge	Professional	Travel	Visa sponsorship

Are there other factors you would add? Which are your priorities? What won't you compromise on?

2. What do you have to offer an employer?

You will already have developed knowledge, skills and abilities that will be valued by your future employers and you will continue developing throughout your career. Spend some time identifying what you are good at and what you would like to

become better at. You will have knowledge and skills coming from your degree discipline and also skills developed outside of study in extracurricular activities, volunteering, sports, student societies and work experience. These could include: communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, working quickly, being organized, motivating others, coming up with ideas, learning fast, being resilient. What are your particular strengths?

RESEARCHING YOUR OPTIONS

It can feel overwhelming that there are so many options available. However fortunately there is no need to research every possibility in depth – in fact you will not have time to do that. Aim instead to start off by choosing three or four areas that interest you and exploring them further. As you research different options, link what you are finding out to your self-reflection.

Create a starter list

To select three or four career areas of interest you could get inspiration by looking at what other people from your degree have gone on to do (see 'What do Imperial graduates do?' on the Imperial website). You could also try using the free 'Prospects Planner' tool available at www.prospects.ac.uk. This will ask you select your preferences and then suggest careers that may interest you.

You may also find it helpful to ask yourself what you would like to know more about. In your working life you will ultimately become an expert in one or several areas of our complex society. You may already have an interests that you could build on in this way, or you may want to think about developing your interests as the basis of a career. Here are some of the areas that you may want to specialize in:

aerospace | banking | business | charities | data science | drug discovery | education | energy | engineering | environment & conservation | finance | games | government and policy | health | law | manufacturing | marketing | media | patents | research | security & defense | technology & IT

Have we missed any that you would like to add?

Read

Once you have a few ideas, start by reading about them to learn more. You can find lots of information online. The Prospects site has a very useful set of 'Job profiles' which give excellent and up to date introductions to many jobs: www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles. Many professions have a 'professional body' which



provides career information and networking opportunities. (For example actuaries are represented by the Institutes and Faculty of Actuaries.) Larger employers will often have excellent sources of information on careers on their websites. For example the NHS and many professional finance, banking and consulting firms all have a wealth of careers information online.

Talk

Talking to people can give you a deeper level of insight that you cannot find by just reading. Take any opportunity to meet and talk to people working in areas that interest you. The Imperial Careers service offers that chance to email alumni in different career areas through the 'Ask an alumnus' resource (see the website). There are also many chances to meet employers at careers fairs and events through the autumn and spring terms.

Questions you might like to ask;

- What is a typical day like?
- What do recruiters look for?
- Where are opportunities advertised?
- Who are the typical employers? How are they different to each other?
- What are the current and future salary prospects?
- What are the best and worst things about the job?
- How would a typical career look in the longer term?
- Should I consider postgraduate study?

Do

Work experience such as career insight days, internships or volunteering will give you a real insight into whether this type of work is for you, as well as make you more competitive for jobs after graduation. Look out for opportunities advertised on JobsLive as well as other jobs boards such as TargetJobs. Follow the social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) of organisations that interest you, as opportunities are often announced there first. See our handout 'Work Experience & Internships'.

TIMESCALES

Many graduate recruiters start advertising opportunities in late summer/autumn at the start of your final year of study and the deadlines can be as early as October. Applications for postgraduate study also usually take place in the autumn. Therefore, ideally you will already have a clear career plan as you go into your final year. It will help you to make competitive applications at this stage if you have been able to secure relevant work experience in your previous summers. This means being ready to apply for internships and work experience at the start of your penultimate year of study, if not before. Bear in mind that for some sectors such as investment banking, application for Spring Weeks as early as your first year is recommended. Therefore it makes sense to start your career planning as early as possible. However....

REMEMBER

- It's never too late to start planning your future career. It does help to start early if possible, but you will have access to the Imperial Careers Service for 3 years after graduation and we are here to help, no matter what stage

you are at.

- Remember that you are not committing to your first job for life. Many people change direction multiple times during their working life, so don't be afraid to try something that interests you.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Self-reflection

- Prospects Planner takes you through sets of self-awareness questions and then suggests possible jobs of interest. Find it at: www.prospects.ac.uk
- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a self-reporting questionnaire designed to increase your understanding of yourself. The Careers Service offers workshops on MBTI – see JobsLive for dates.
- A selection of careers books are available in the Careers Information Room, 5th floor, Sherfield Building

Researching options

- Find out what others on your course have gone on to do at 'What do Imperial graduates do?' www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/destinations/
- Read job profiles at: www.prospects.ac.uk
- Use 'Ask an Alumnus' at Imperial Careers to connect to alumni in different jobs Available from the Careers Service website.
- **Bookable appointments** with Careers Consultants: book through JobsLive*
- **Careers Service events** - each year we plan talks, presentations and workshops which are designed to enhance your chances of success in the application process - for details, see JobsLive*
- For information on the disclosure of disability or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia please see information on the Careers Service website: www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/disclosure

* www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/jobslive