

Career progression at MPhil/PhD level: advice to current postgraduate students in the School of Biological Sciences RHUL.

By the end of your PhD course SBS students will have received careers advice as part of the training program offered to MSc/MPhil/PhD students in the School and through a variety of other sources. But so would any other PhD students in other Universities. "**Planning your career**" is a course which Master students in the School have to attend but it is optional for MPhil/PhD

(<https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/restricted/content/biologicalsciences/documents/pdf/pg-timetable.pdf>). This course will be a good place to start, but establishing professional career and finding ideal jobs isn't easy. The feeling of uncertainty when entering job market and the expectations of intense competition for top jobs are not uncommon feelings. These should not deter anyone from trying. And it is also the case that success will depend on your determination, your professional and your job searching skills, your own confidence and experience. Everybody's interests, skills and abilities are different and no single course, career consultant or a webpage (like this one) would be able to provide answers to all your questions. Jobs and career paths are very diverse and one-fits-all solution does not exist. But here are some points which should help you to get started. These may or may not apply to everyone; nevertheless all SBS students are advised to consider the following:

- do not underestimate the importance of career advice courses available to SBS students. "**Planning your career**" course is currently scheduled to run in Term 2 (January). Session notes should be available on Moodle (follow links to **MSc in Biological Sciences Research**).

- **RHUL Careers** (<https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/careers>) provide structured advice to both UG and PG students. If you have asked yourself "Where do I start?" then try to start at the Careers webpage

- The **University of London Careers Group** (<http://www.thecareersgroup.co.uk/career-advice-and-news/>). Although their website is geared for undergraduates, a lot of it is just as relevant to postgraduates, particularly those who are not interested in remaining in academia. This also includes a link to the page below on graduate/postgraduate fairs and events:

<http://www.thecareersgroup.co.uk/fairs-and-events/>
<https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/careers/events/fairs.aspx>

- having realised the enormity of the job market and the endless opportunities available could make anyone feel overwhelmed and still not knowing where to start. Inevitably you will need to become selective. Think what is your personal ideal job, narrow down application areas, employers types and other criteria. Your preference may change in the future but you have to start somewhere. Start with what you currently consider as **your dream job**.

- be realistic when planning your **time and effort** required to construct or update your CV, to conduct regular searches, to prepare and attend any interviews. Such efforts may consume a lot of your time. Make sure this does not affect your performance as a PhD student. Your PhD degree, the outcome of your current PhD research and your most recently developed professional and transferable skills will remain key strong points in any of the job applications you are going to make in the near future, whether it is academic, industrial or other job application.

- do not hesitate to seek **advice from your current supervisory team**. After your own self it is your supervisor who has the most comprehensive view of your skills and abilities. Be open with and seek support from your supervisor. Feel welcome to ask for specific help when needed.

- access to relevant information is important. What is the "relevant information"? The list is probably endless, these may provide good **starting points**:

- If you are still unsure what you can do with your degree or if you are in need of some **additional inspiration**, look here:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/what-can-i-do-with-my-degree>

These do not define your limits but simply are there to outline typical destinations and job profiles. It is also likely that you may find more job adverts in these areas where your professional skills are being sought by employers.

- PhD students and PhD graduates will find a **comprehensive career advice** and many other relevant services at JOBS.AC.UK <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/>

Do explore the site. It is not limited to academic jobs. You will find specific advice related HE careers, Industrial careers, working overseas, job seeking skills, CVs, interviews, relevant publications and much more.

- **Academic AND non-academic jobs in the UK and/or Internationally**

<https://jobs.newscientist.com/en-gb/> Career advice and mostly UK jobs from New Scientists.

Comprehensive search options

<http://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/jobs> Nature journal, comprehensive job search

<http://www.sciencemag.org/careers> Jobs and career advice from Science magazine

<http://www.jobs.ac.uk/> Job search by sector, profession, discipline, etc

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/> Times Higher Education jobs

<https://jobs.theguardian.com/jobs/> The Guardian - jobs and career advice. Currently some 10,000 jobs, mostly in the UK.

<https://www.reed.co.uk> UK jobs, all sectors, browsing, searching, submit CV

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- Do not reply exclusively on the advertised positions. Consider **approaching the selected employers** directly. Large employers almost universally have their own dedicated careers websites. A simple Google search with the company name and "careers" and "job" in the search window will bring you there. For example try searching for "Glaxo careers" using google. See what you get. Correct answer: <http://uk.gsk.com/en-gb/careers/>

- Do not underestimate the importance of **networking** with colleagues, past and present, as well as with external contacts. Make the most of group and School meetings, of your attendance of National or International Conferences. Even if you have no budget to register to attend expensive Conferences, there are free to attend events nationally and locally where you will see many employers. Equally, do help your fellow students if you can.

Having said all that, it still remains your responsibility to look for and apply for the jobs of your choice. School of Biological Sciences provides advice to help you in that transition from University to work. We are delighted to learn about your job progression, please do share with us your success stories. Currently these can be sent by email to [Tracey Jeffries](mailto:Tracey.Jeffries@rhul.ac.uk)

With best wishes and a good luck in your search for a new job,

Mikhail Soloviev, Director of Graduate Studies, SBS

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