

Welcome to the Career and Employment Service seminar -

Postgraduate students and career issues



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Welcome. I am John Ross – one of Massey’s team of four careers advisers. I’m based on the Manawatu campus in Palmerston North and, if you have queries arising from this seminar I can be reached via J.A.Ross@massey.ac.nz or on 06 350 5923.

Let's begin...

Why did you take on postgraduate study?

- It is essential or useful for the career that I'm interested in.
- I thought that having a postgraduate qualification would place me ahead of job seekers with a bachelor degree.
- For a better salary and for better career progression.
- I have a passion for the subject.
- To move into a new career area.
- To develop your skills base.
- I didn't know what else to do!

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You are likely to have had powerful personal and academic motivations to study at postgraduate level. These may have included -

The fact that it is essential or useful for the career I'm interested in: Some career areas do require a professional qualification whilst for others a postgraduate qualification, although not essential, will provide a distinct advantage to applicants, particularly when competition for places is fierce.

I thought that having a postgraduate qualification would place me ahead of job seekers with a bachelor degree: This may be true but would it be valued more than relevant experience and/or skills? How might you demonstrate its value to employers where it is not a requirement for the role?


I believed that I would earn a higher starting salary or would progress more quickly within an organisation.

I have a real passion for the subject: This is a really common reason but I'd stress the need for you to research how your choice of course fits in with your longer-term career plans.

To develop my skills base: Are you keen to develop new skills; enhance ones that you feel you have and find ways of utilising your competencies?

The world of work today...

- It is impossible to know all there is to know about the jobs that are out there
- Job roles change constantly
- Competition for jobs is now global.
- It is common to change jobs and employers a number of times
- Career can include periods of voluntary work; short contract employment; part-time work etc.
- The key is to remain employable rather than necessarily employed.
- The onus is on **you** to manage your career.

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It is very tempting to think that there is an ‘ideal’ job out there for us and that everything else will be ‘wrong’. However, when we’re asking ourselves ‘what job can I do’ it is worth remembering that it’s impossible to know all of the job options that we have and what they involve. Indeed, there are jobs available now where the role didn’t exist even five years ago! Coupled with this is the fact that technological advances mean that many roles can be undertaken from anywhere in the world – the job market is increasingly a global one!

Also worth noting is that there are no guarantees of a job for life. Many people make a number of job changes in their career and they may be changes of role; employer and career direction as a whole. Your future career may also be a combination of full-time and part time work; short contracts; voluntary work; self-employment and portfolio working (i.e. having two or more jobs at the same time).

More than ever before, the onus will be on **you** to manage your career and to ensure that you stay employable.

More on the world of work today...

- This includes keeping your work skills current and relevant
- You should also have a clear sense of how you want your career to develop – and a 'Plan B'
- You'll need to show a commitment to life-long learning and continued professional development
- Consider how you can 'add value' to what the employer does.
- Thus, your qualifications are important but so too are many other factors – particularly the skills that you have. These will be 'technical' and 'soft' skills.
- Coupled with this you'll need to show a passion for the role; an interest in working for them; a career plan and self-management abilities.

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As you pursue your career you'll need to have a clear sense of the direction in which you are going. How do you see your career developing; what skills do you have at the moment? What skills will you need in the future and how might you fill any skills gaps that you have? What if things don't work out – what might your 'Plan B' be?

Keeping your work-related skills current and relevant is central to this, as is creating a 'track record' of achievement. Potential employers are likely to be less interested in why you want the job than in what you can do for them and how you might 'add value' to their work. Additionally, they'll expect you to be committed to learning throughout your life and to developing as a professional.

Thus, although your qualifications and educational attainments will be valued crucial too will be your passion for the work; the organisation and sector; the extent to which you've researched these; your career plan and your ability to manage your work and career development. Then, of course, the skills that you have...

Self – appraisal

- Vital in choosing a career and work setting and in applying for work – not least because most of you will not work in academia or spend your entire working life in that sector
- Used to find the 'best fit' between you and a role
- Includes identifying – and analysing – your:
 - Skills – including non-technical competencies
 - Interests
 - Values
 - Personality – and that of those you want around you

For more on this see the 'choosing a career' section at – <http://careers.massey.ac.nz> – particularly the link to on-line tools.

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We are, of course, all unique. As a result, it is more than likely that your 'ideal' career will be one that fits with your needs, interests, values, satisfactions and personality. How well would you say that you know yourself? To what extent do you feel ready to apply this knowledge to a choice of role; sector and employer?

What are your skills, interests and values? What does your personality say about you? What are the options with the subject(s) that you've studied?

This can be defined as 'self - appraisal'. Ask yourself these questions:

Where do you want to work? For example, indoors or out primarily? How much travel, if any, do you want in a job? Do you have a preference for a particular location and/or work environment? What size of organisation would you prefer and to what extent do you want to work in a team? Is self-employment of interest to you?

What do you want to do? It's crucial that – by the time you submit job applications – you're clear about what the role(s) concerned involve and why they appeal to you. As a result, it's vital that you research them in advance.

What skills and strengths do you have? No matter what role you choose, potential employers will want to see that you have **relevant** skills and that you can provide **evidence** of them. Which of your skills would you want to use in a job? Which are you best at? What skill gaps do you have and – if they are relevant to the work that interests you – what might you do to fill them. Apart from your research skills, what others do you have that you could build a career upon? Can your skills be 'transferred' into other areas?

What about your values? What's important to you? What makes you tick and come alive? For example, are you naturally drawn to being an expert in something? To being your own boss? To managing others? To helping people? Then – what about who you want to work for? To what extent are the values of the organisation, or the sectors you might work in important to you?


Your sense of identity. What might allow you to say "I do what I love and I love what I do". What do you **really** want to do and what makes you happy?

Your skills portfolio

Your postgraduate studies are enabling you to develop skills that include:

- Conceptual and critical thinking abilities
- Research and information management skills
- Ability to communicate complex information simply
- Project management skills
- Organisational skills
- Public speaking and presentation skills
- Negotiating and influencing skills
- Ability to innovate and propose new ideas and methods
- Advanced computer skills (specific software packages)

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New Zealand is no exception in being a country in which many employers expect you to articulate your skills – in your CV/resume and at interview. In doing so, employers are particularly keen to attract applicants who can identify and articulate skills that are **relevant** to the role and who can offer **evidence** of their use of such skills.

Identifying your skills is not an easy task. Indeed, it is one in which you may want to enlist the help of those who know you well. You could start with your family, friends, colleagues and tutors. Furthermore, consider the skills you're developing as a postgraduate student. This slide outlines some of these.

At this stage, consider too:

- Which of these skills do I feel that I currently have?
- What evidence might I offer to show that I have them?
- How relevant are they for the careers I'm considering?
- What other skills am I developing as a postgraduate student?

Chances are, you'll have skills related to research. These will have direct applicability to research work in your field. However, you'll also have 'softer' non-technical skills that can be transferred into a whole host of other work areas. **Evidence for these can be drawn from all aspects of your life** including your studies; your work experience and your extra-curricular activities.

Research – related skills could include:

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Survey design & methodology | Designing experiments, plans or models |
| Conduct of interviews/focus groups | Testing of the above |
| Formulation of research questions | Designing research programmes |
| Analysis/synthesis of information | Using relevant resources for information |
| Implementation of solutions | Development of organising principles to effectively sort & evaluate data |
| Budgeting | Using laboratory equipment |
| Use of statistical packages | Set up/running of laboratory experiments |
| Adaptability | Ability to challenge and question |
| Ability to interpret meaning | Confident presentation – oral and written |
| Ability to deal with criticism | Summarising |

Non-technical skills could include:

| | |
|---|---|
| Written & oral communication | Innovation |
| Creativity | Interpersonal |
| Leadership | Project management |
| Self-motivation/direction/discipline | Mentoring |
| Time management | Tutoring |
| Lateral and creative thinking | Cross-cultural sensitivity |
| Goal setting | Ability to work unsupervised |
| Commitment to personal & professional development | Strategic thinking |
| Seeing work through to completion | Ability to plan; troubleshoot and allocate time/money |
| Flexibility and ability to change direction | Coping with isolation/resilience |
| Teamwork | I.T. literacy |
| Negotiation | Networking |



No employer will

What skills do employers seek?

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| •Commitment and drive | •Motivation and enthusiasm |
| •Teamworking | •Oral communication |
| •Flexibility and adaptability | •Customer focus |
| •Problem solving * | •Managing learning and career * |
| •Commercial awareness * | •Planning and organisation |
| •Time management | •Leadership * |
| •Numeracy | •Cultural sensitivity |
| •Report writing | •Risk taking/enterprise. * |
| •Computer literacy | •Project management * |

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The Association of Graduate Recruiters is a UK based representative body for recruiters of graduates. In 2006 it surveyed 236 employers and found that the the skills and attributes noted on this slides were those that were the most sought after. **Those marked with an asterix denote the ones that the recruiters have most difficulty finding.**

Crucially...

- Think further than your subject expertise
- Note that most employers are keenest to recruit applicants with **transferable** specialist; generalist; self-reliance and teamwork skills
- Ask yourself – is what I'm doing important; will it make a difference and if so, to whom?
- Remember that your evidence of skills can come from all aspects of your life – your studies; work and interests for example.

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You'll find more information on skills and how to articulate them on the 'CVs and interviews' section of our website – <http://careers.massey.ac.nz>

In addition, for doctoral students in particular there are good skills resources under 'Researchers' then 'careers' then 'marketing yourself for employment' at www.vitae.ac.uk

Crucially too...

Although postgraduate study may well offer you the chance to develop most of these skills to a high level, in job applications and interviews you'll have to clearly translate and articulate your experience:

- Thesis = report writing abilities
- Research/Project groups = teamwork and creativity
- Scholarship = planning, creativity and analysis
- Conducting experiments and implementing methodologies = project management and problem solving skills.

Research...

It's time to apply your research skills to your career plans...

For research into possible roles and to access job opportunities try:

| | |
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| Your networks | the careers service |
| informational interviewing | professional bodies |

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In the twenty-first century labour market it is increasingly vital – and expected – that you’ll have explored in some depth the roles; sectors and organisations that interest you. There is a wealth of ways in which you might do so. On this slide you’ll see some of those ways but you can find out more by selecting the ‘looking for work’ section of Massey’s career service web pages or by contacting any of the service’s staff. The latter is a particularly good option if you’re keen to research roles; sectors and organisations outside of New Zealand – yes - we can help with that too!

What though, do we mean by the terms on this slide?


Networking – Not surprisingly, people offer the best insights into what particular roles are really like. Your careers service can offer information and advice on making contacts; networking and informational interviewing. Who could be in your network? It’s likely that your answer will include family; friends; academic colleagues; current or previous employers; people with whom you share interests etc.

Professional Bodies – Are you aware of any professional bodies that exist in the career areas that interest you? What do they offer? They can be invaluable sources of careers information; skill development and job opportunities and a means of networking.

More research...

Issues to consider in your research include:

- Does the role meet your needs and priorities?
- Do you have the skills, knowledge, experience needed?
- Is the sector expanding or contracting?
- Does it fit with your work and lifestyle preferences?
- What might hinder your chances of finding work in the role?
- Who might employ you? Where might you work?

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It is, of course, very possible that you already have a career in mind. Even where this is the case though, it is still likely to pay dividends if you apply your research skills to it in the way that you would with any role. Here you'll find an outline of some of the questions that might frame your role research. For example:

What are your current needs and priorities? These might include earning money; a desire to travel; a need or wish to stay in (or move to) a particular location; a goal of finding interesting work; a wish to develop your skills base etc, etc. What are the skills; knowledge and experience required for the role? Do you have this? If not, how might you develop what's needed? Are there 'stepping-stone' jobs you could do as routes in? If you do have what's required, how might you evidence the fact?


Is the sector expanding or contracting? How important is this to you? How might you find out about the labour market in the locations and sectors that interest you? For example, in NZ the Department of Labour and the Immigration Service can be good sources of information on this, as can relevant professional bodies. Does the role fit with your lifestyle and work preferences? Some of these may have been outlined earlier but they could also include factors such as hours of work; the work environment; the status of the role; responsibility; travel opportunities; sense of autonomy; opportunities for personal and professional development; supportive colleagues; working ethically; undertaking work that is valued and social opportunities.

Although it is crucial to stay positive as you research careers and apply for work it is also vital to have a 'Plan B'. In developing one consider the factors that could stand in the way of pursuing 'Plan A'. What can you do now to address them? Will your Plan B work towards you achieving Plan A? Finally, explore who the employers might be in the roles that interest you. Be creative in this and look at and beyond the well-known organisations.

Taking action...

In short, the marketing campaign – with you the product!

- First, know yourself – what **relevant** skills, talents, knowledge and experience do you have?
- Then, know your audience – who will you apply to; what are they looking for; why do they appeal to you; how do they recruit and select staff?
- Finally, plan and begin your job-search campaign.

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There's a mantra that getting a job can be a job in itself! By this we mean that you should approach your job search as a research project or indeed – as this slide suggests – as a marketing campaign.

As the latter, you are the product. Through your CV or resume you're trying to secure an interview and through interviews you're trying to secure a job.

Start by ensuring that you know the product, namely yourself! Consider the skills; attributes; knowledge and experience that you can offer and the relevance of this to the job and the employer. Secondly, know your target - not only who you'll apply to but what they need; how they recruit and select and why they appeal to you. Think carefully about how you might interest them; how you could 'add value' to what they do and the possible benefits to both parties.

Only then should you really embark upon your job search campaign!

Networking

This can be crucial. Although the sites previously listed are useful for advertised vacancies many are never publicised!

- Need not be daunting – you network every day
- Can be used to seek information; new contacts; referrals and even job offers!
- Can be face-to-face; by 'phone and on-line
- We have information on making and using contacts; networking and informational interviewing on the Career Service web site. You'll find this under 'finding work' then 'other ways of finding work' at <http://careers.massey.ac.nz>

Many people find the idea of networking daunting but it is actually something that we do every time we meet someone. It is simply an interaction between people and, done well, can lead to long-term and mutually beneficial relationships. Given the high proportion of jobs that are never advertised it is usually a crucial element of effective job search. However, asking for a job is probably not a good thing to do in your first contact with someone. Rather, use this initial contact to seek information. Often, people are keen to offer advice and are touched that you sought their help. Ask the Career and Employment Service for information and advice on effective networking.

More on networking...


- Your network can include family; friends; peers; tutors; your supervisor and departments etc. Also, people you meet by attending career expos; alumni events; conferences and seminars; professional body events – the list in endless.
- Additionally, there are more and more opportunities to network on-line. However, be selective in the on-line resources that you use. Take time to find the most useful and relevant for you. Consider too the on-line profile that you have and that you want to develop.

Effective networking requires you to listen attentively; to keep the discussion relevant; to pass on information about your relevant skills; experience and knowledge and to be interested and interesting. Try to speak with a wide range of people and to show interest in each one. Pay attention to your body language; expressions and any cultural differences and sensitivities. Ask about the person's role; organisation and background and be keenly aware of what you want them to know about you.

Now – about your CV...

Academic positions – require an academic CV:

- Details of degrees (include abstract of research as an appendix)
- Details of teaching and research experience
- Research techniques
- Publications and presentations
- Fellowships, awards, memberships etc
- Future research plans
- Academic referees

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Crucial to securing a ‘good’ job is a good CV or resume. It is your opportunity to showcase your qualifications; experience; relevant skills; interests etc but must be concise; easy to read and tailored to the role in question.


Where you are applying for lecturing; tutoring or a university research role – or where you’re applying for a postgraduate scholarship – you should use an academic CV. This differs somewhat from the CV/resume that you’d use for non-academic roles. On this slide – and on the next – we offer advice on the content of an academic CV. Remember though, that any one of the Massey Career and Employment Service staff can offer much more information on this topic and can review a draft CV that you develop. We can do so face-to-face or by email.

Although this is the type of information that your academic CV is likely to contain always retain sight of the fact that the employer will want to see the benefits to **them** of employing **you**. The items on this slide offer you a way of showing the contribution that you could potentially make. Another mantra is that ‘people choose people not papers’. By this we mean that although your qualifications are important – particularly for academic jobs – employers will look at the ‘whole package’ and this includes your personality; skills; knowledge; preparedness; attributes and motivation. As a result, it’s probable that your academic CV will also include an experience section; an interests section and perhaps a section on relevant skills and attributes. This will vary depending upon the country you’re seeking to work in and – again – the Career and Employment Service can advise further on this.

Non academic CV's:

Non-academic positions - identify the skills developed from your research and prepare a skills-based general CV. This should be targeted for each role and should include:

- Details of **relevant** skills - with **evidence**
- Work experience - responsibilities and achievements
- Education and qualifications
- Extracurricular interests and activities
- Academic and work related referees

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At this stage, let's move on to the design of a CV or resume for non-academic positions:

You'll see from this slide that we suggest that you develop a skills-based CV. Indeed, you may want to include (on the first page) a section headed 'Relevant skills and attributes'. This section would change in each CV to reflect the skills and attributes that you know are needed for the role. They'll be taken from any job advertisement/job description that applies and/or from other research that you should have done into the role.

For each skill or attribute include a sentence or two where you outline what you mean by the skill – use action words for this if you can. The 'applying for work' section on the Massey career service web pages has more information on this together with a list of possible action words you could use. Then, add a sentence or two against each skill/attribute where you offer an example of utilising it. Where possible, draw upon all aspects of your life for these examples – your studies; your experience and your interests and achievements. In your work experience section it is crucial to say a little about your responsibilities and particular achievements. Doing so is likely to carry more weight than a simple list of duties and tasks.

Where your work history is an extensive one you may want to consider splitting this section into 'Relevant Experience' and 'Additional Experience'. Should you do so you'd say more in the former than in the latter. Equally, you could group experience together – e.g. Teaching Experience; Research Experience and the like. This may be particularly useful where there is a danger of repetition in your responsibilities and achievements.

Where to from here... ?

Contact the Career and Employment Service – see 'contact us' at <http://careers.massey.ac.nz> – as we can help with:

- Career choice – we offer resources and advice to help with the early stages of your career choice.
- Labour Market - Information on graduate destinations, salaries and economic trends.
- Occupational information - advice on a vast range of occupations - covering the nature of the work, means of entry, training, career prospects, professional bodies etc.

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Where else from here... ?

- **Job vacancies** – see Massey CareerHub, our on-line system for advertising jobs on behalf of employers. We also use this to profile events and useful resources. In addition, this and the links we offer to other vacancy sites, publicise graduate jobs but also part-time; vacation and internship opportunities in NZ and abroad
- **Job search skills** - Resources to help with CV writing, applications, interviews, psychometric tests and networking.
- **Employer Information** - Graduate employer directories; recruitment brochures and other materials
- **Information for International Students** - Information on working in NZ and overseas, sources of vacancies, employer information, help with application process and interviews.

