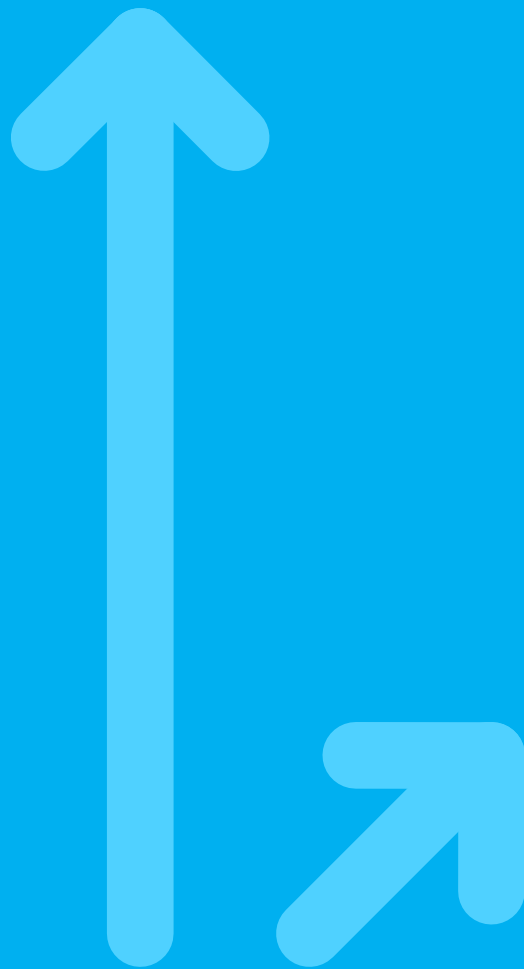


UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

careers and
employability centre

create your own future



A careers guide for first years

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A careers guide For first years

As a new student you will have lots of things to think about as you settle into your first year at the university. One of the things students are often concerned about is their career prospects when they finish their studies.

This guide will help you to plan your career and skills development to prepare you for the transition into graduate employment, and ensure you are aware of the services available to help you with career planning and making yourself more employable.

‘The main thing for me was to get involved as much as possible, whether that be you go and join a student group or you are part of a sports society try and get a position of responsibility. If there are any skills that you learn in terms of dealing with other people or leadership or motivation skills that’s what you can transfer later on when you go into work.’

A Birmingham Alumnus

How can the Careers and Employability Centre help me?

Information & Advice

You can take advantage of careers information, advice and guidance from the Careers and Employability Centre throughout your studies. Careers advisers and members of the Information team can help you with your enquiries. We also give presentations within schools and departments.

In your first year you may want to visit the Careers and Employability Centre sooner rather than later for the following reasons:

I haven't got a clue what I want to do...

That's fine – most people don't. And many people aren't aware what is available, or know what job titles actually mean. But we do. We can help you get started, look at jobs, find out about employers, working abroad, further study and much more.

Find out which college you are in and look out for services and events tailored to you. www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers

You can also get information and advice on what you can do with *your chosen subject* and how much you can expect as a starting salary at www.prospects.ac.uk.

The Careers Adviser's View...

“Many students and recent graduates make immediate decisions about jobs and further study without taking time to research what's out there and what will suit them. Proper career planning can take the pain out of the job hunting process.”

I think I've chosen the wrong course...

Feeling uncertain about your choice of course or degree subject is not unusual when you first start at university, particularly if you have chosen a subject you haven't already studied at school or college and that you are not very familiar with. It usually takes a few weeks before you get a real sense of what studying your subject will be like and whether it is right for you.

If you are feeling unsure after 2-3 weeks arrange to see your personal tutor or course tutor as soon as possible and ask them to talk to you about the content of the degree over the next 3 years. Try to identify if it matches with your expectations and if you are going to enjoy the subjects you will be required to study. It is a good idea to plan a follow up meeting with your tutor in order to re-assess your feelings about the course after a further 2-3 weeks.

You may be concerned about how the course might help with your career plans and future job prospects in which case a visit to the Careers and Employability Centre to talk to a careers adviser will help. The careers adviser can help you to think through all your options and plan your next step if you are undecided about whether to change or leave your course.





Work experience

Relevant work experience gained as a student is valued by employers and will make you a more attractive prospective employee. For help with finding appropriate work experience opportunities:

- Check our website for vacancies www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers
- Attend the Work Experience Fair in the Spring Term
- For West Midlands vacation placements see www.graduateadvantage.co.uk
- Go to the Guild for volunteering opportunities
- Approach your contacts (family, friends, academics) to arrange work shadowing and visits to employers of interest.
- Contact your college internship officer for the latest opportunities

For casual and part time work, go to the Job Zone in the Guild for help with term time and vacation jobs and for information on topics such as income tax, national insurance. www.guildofstudents.com.

Develop your experience and skills

Building up a portfolio of your skills, activities, responsibilities and achievements during your studies is an excellent way of recording your personal development as a student. This will make you feel more confident when writing your CV, making applications and talking to employers about what you have to offer. You can access the University's personal development planning resources >>PROGRESS>> to help you to do this.

www.progress.bham.ac.uk

Ideas for developing your range of experiences include:

- Contribute to any of the wide ranging **activities, events and services run by the Guild of Students** and continue your involvement throughout your studies
- Get involved with one of the many volunteering opportunities available through the Guild; accredited by the Millennium Volunteers Scheme
www.guildofstudents.com
- Use casual work or work experience to enhance your CV - working in a supermarket, behind the Union bar, or in a call centre can give you skills employers are looking for. The secret is to know how to identify them.
- Consider taking up additional courses on campus to improve or develop a new skill. For example the ICT training programmes for undergraduates run by Information Services or the Open Access Language Course organised by the Centre for Modern Languages.



Personal Skills Award

The Personal Skills Award (PSA) is the University's award winning employability programme for undergraduate students. The PSA can enable you to develop, recognise and articulate your skills effectively in preparation for the graduate job market.

The PSA is an opportunity for students to increase their employability skills whilst enhancing their university experience and encourages them to reflect on professional development. Get involved in either the Activity Pathway or the Modular Pathway by enrolling today www.as.bham.ac.uk/psa.

Workshops and Events

We organise around 90 events each year designed to help you become more attractive to potential employers – from workshops on interview skills and how to improve your CV, to talks on how to get valuable work experience, advice on volunteering projects and routes into various occupations.

Network and meet employers

We have good relationships with many local, national and international employers, who are always keen to recruit top quality applicants from the University and target students through us. Our graduates go on to work in many different areas of business - and in many different countries. Opportunities to meet employers are advertised all year round on our website.

What Employers think

“We receive a large number of applications from students studying at Birmingham. Applications are received from a variety of disciplines, with students at Birmingham consistently meeting the academic criteria we set, which is important when completing the professional qualifications we have on offer.”

Deloitte

“Looking at areas that interest me, and thinking ‘What do I like doing?’ whilst walking round the careers fairs talking to people, really helped. I was thinking ‘Well who do I like and what areas would I like to be working in?’ and it also allowed me time to do some research on the internet to find out what opportunities are available and what prospects there are later on. It was mainly starting early and getting involved that enabled me to define what it was I wanted to do.”

An Economic graduate (2006)

How can I get involved

Year 1 Career Development Action Plan

There are lots of activities you can get involved in that will enhance your level of employability and make you better prepared for your graduate career when you finish studying at university. Use the calendar below to help you make the most of your first year at university.



Career Development Action Plan

September

- Join the Guild societies at the Societies Fair & find out more about how to get involved. www.guildofstudents.com
- Attend Job Zone Jobs Fair during Welcome Week and apply for casual work. www.guildofstudents.com
- Visit the Careers and Employability Centre – find out what services are available to you
- Use the >>PROGRESS>> tool to carry out a self assessment of your skills and to identify the skills you want to develop over the coming months. www.progress.bham.ac.uk/

October

- Find out about the PSA & register for your preferred courses. Look out for the work experience modules. www.as.bham.ac.uk/psa
- Get help with making job applications for casual work by attending workshops in the Job Zone and at various locations across campus
- Attend employer recruitment events & fairs in the Great Hall and talk to employers about their opportunities.
- Attend Jobs Zone Jobs Fair in mid October

November

- Consider becoming a student representative on your course or taking up other positions of responsibility within your department or halls of residence
- Participate in activities, events and services organised through the Guild of Students

December

- Learn more about your interests, motivations, skills, values and learning style. Check out the career planning pages on our website. www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers
- Use the Careers and Employability Centre vacancy database to find summer internship programmes open to first year students. Apply early!

January

- Sign up to attend a Planning Your Career Workshop if you haven't already done so
- Learn more about financial help for UK and global work experience and internships. Deadlines for making applications are in February (International, Professional and Research experience), March (Global Challenge Internships) and April (Gateway bursaries)

February

- Attend the Work Experience Fair in the Great Hall. Details available from the Careers and Employability Centre
- Get involved in volunteering with training through the Basement in the Guild. www.guildofstudents.com
- Investigate the possibility of becoming a sabbatical or non-sabbatical officer for the Guild.
- Begin planning your summer vacation. Look for opportunities for summer vacation work that will challenge you and give you a chance to develop new skills. Use the Careers and Employability Centre and the Job Zone to find advertised vacancies. www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers
- Use Careers Centre resources to find out about summer travel & working abroad. www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers
- Start putting together an up-to-date CV. Come into the Careers and Employability Centre for a guide to writing CVs or book a place on a CV workshop

March

- Make speculative enquiries about summer vacation work and send targeted applications
- Use the CV Clinic situated in your college to get your CV checked.

April

- Use the >>PROGRESS>> tool to update your skills audit and to record your personal development

May

- EXAMINATION PERIOD

June

- Approach temping agencies to find out about casual work if you haven't already got plans for the summer vacation

How do I find out more?

- Use our website to access lots of information and find out what's going on at the Careers and Employability Centre www.as.bham.ac.uk/careers
- Look out for your college employability team in various locations in your college
- Follow us @careersbham
- Find us on Facebook.com/careersbham



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