The Employability Guide:
Helping you graduate with far more than a degree!
Welcome

Thank you for picking up this Employability Guide – it will help to change your life.

Your career on graduation may seem a long way off, but believe me, it isn’t. Competition for graduate jobs is increasing each year so it is really important that you begin to look at your skills, experience, aptitudes and abilities at an early stage, so that you can consider what is available, what might suit you, and what you would be best at.

If you still haven’t made those important decisions, then do not panic; there is plenty of help and support available to you whilst you are at the University of Bolton.

You should also remember that you may already have lots of the qualities employers are looking for; you may already have job experience, or have been involved in your community as a volunteer. What is important is that you start to understand the skills you have gained, and then plan to fill the gaps that may exist.

This guide will take you through the steps to consider when planning ahead for your future career. You will find lots of practical help, advice and ideas about how to improve your employability and your skills further, how to present yourself and what tips to consider when applying for jobs. Whatever your situation, there will be something in this guide for you.

Good luck with your career planning; we look forward to working with you.

Rob Campbell
Pro Vice Chancellor
What is Employability

What does it actually mean?
Employability is a term that you will hear a lot whilst at university, and in simple terms it refers to your capability of obtaining employment, staying in employment and then, if you so wish, seeking new opportunities as you progress through your working life.

Why is it so important?
While there is no doubt that investing in a university education is one of the best things you can do to help you achieve your future goals, it’s also true that in this day and age a degree is no longer enough.

Employers will assess your employability by looking for evidence of skills during the recruitment process. In order for you to remain competitive, you need to have a wide range of employability skills which will complement your academic achievements.

So, what can you do to improve your chances of success? The simple answer is to gain and develop as many relevant skills and aptitudes as possible during your time at university, starting in your first year.

Employability skills
The general skills and abilities that all employers look for – employability skills – are those that you develop and can apply in most environments or workplaces.

The University of Bolton has reviewed a range of these skills and chosen ten with which it is expected all students should graduate. These are:
- Communication
- Team work
- Organisation and planning
- Problem solving
- Initiative
- Self-awareness
- Flexibility
- Numerical interpretation
- Personal impact and confidence
- Action Planning

Employers also cite other key attributes such as commercial awareness and leadership skills so it is important to recognise the skills you have to offer a future employer, and present them in such a way which an organisation will find attractive and valuable.

Developing your employability skills
Through academic study
You need to make sure that you plan the development of your employability skills early on in your course, and understand that the learning process you are undertaking as part of your degree has value in other contexts.

Some students undertake studies purely to learn, but with changes to current fee regimes, many students see university as a chance to enhance their career and job prospects.

The learning process holds many opportunities to enhance your skills, such as writing assignments, reports and dissertations, and taking part in presentations, discussions and debates, all of which help you to develop the key skills that employers look for.

Through work experience
Why not think about gaining some work experience by undertaking a placement, internship or securing a part-time job? It’s an excellent way to develop your skills and check out a potential industry that you are interested in. You should consider the skills you want to develop further and then choose an appropriate context in which you can gain that experience.

Through extra-curricular activities
During any job application process it is important that you articulate all the skills you have gained, and not just those from work or study. For example, you may have been involved in a student society or club, or held a position of responsibility within the University such as Student Representative or Student Ambassador. Also, many students acquire a range of marketable skills from undertaking voluntary work but don’t always record this as they think it isn’t important…but it is!

Lauren graduated in 2012 with First Class honours, and completed a mandatory work experience module which was part of her course.

“The course was a great opportunity to study for a business degree that was specifically catered to a particular industry. The work experience module was important in allowing me to make contacts and work in my chosen field, and to expand my knowledge on a professional level.”

Lauren Fearns.
Degree: BSc International Tourism Management.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers
**Personal Development Planning**

**Make it personal!**

Personal development planning is a process that allows you to think about, and then record, your skills, achievements and learning outcomes. By completing it you will identify which areas you need to develop further, helping you to plan for your future and your career.

PDP is arranged through the University in different ways. It can be built into course programmes, addressed through personal tutoring and supported by other central services such as the Careers Service.

**Why it’s so important**

Spending time developing and focusing on your PDP will help you prepare for graduate recruitment and employment. Having a degree is no longer enough. You need to be able to stand out from the crowd and, most importantly, be able to demonstrate and articulate to potential employers the skills and experiences you have.

Therefore, while you’re here, it makes sense to use your time wisely to improve your employability skills and gain the experience you need in order to put together strong applications and prepare yourself for that all-important interview.

**How it works**

PDP will help you start to:

- Think about where you are now, your interests, your strengths and weaknesses, and the improvements you could make.
- Plan where you want to go, what skills and knowledge you need to get there and how you will acquire them.
- Take action, by setting personal targets, identifying when you need to achieve your goals and recording your progress.
- Reflect on your achievements, as well as areas for further development.

**Top tips for starting your PDP**

While you’re here at Bolton grab the chance to:

- Familiarise yourself with the Careers Service and the useful resources on offer.
- See a Careers Adviser for help with career planning, preparing CVs, job applications etc.
- Attend your personal tutor sessions to assess the skills you have gained from your degree course.
- Set up a personal record or e-portfolio to evidence your skills, achievements, work experience, volunteering activities – and maybe consider writing a diary or blog.
- Attend skills sessions delivered by academic staff or by the Careers Service team.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers
Employability: Are you prepared?

Employ your ability from day one to be ready for graduation!

Whatever stage you are at in your studies, there are still steps you can take to maximize your chances of improving your skills before your leave university.

Year One
• Make sure you are involved in at least one non-academic activity that is of interest to you.
• Visit Freshers’ fair and think about joining student clubs and societies.
• Visit the Careers Service to find out about all the support and resources available.
• Find out about the areas of work available to you after your course
• Register with the Job Shop to keep informed of jobs and opportunities
• Find out about the types of employers that advertise graduate opportunities
• Consider doing some voluntary work to help you meet new people and gain new skills
• Start your personal development plan (PDP) and keep a record of what you do and the skills you develop
• Freshen up your CV or create a new one
• Plan how you are going to spend your vacations well in advance
• Start to audit your own employability skills and undertake a self-assessment profile
• Start to consider whether you might benefit from an extended placement in industry before you enter your final year. This would take careful planning and organisation
• Find out about overseas placements such as Erasmus

Penultimate Year
• Find out and apply for industrial and vacation placements and arrange some work experience or work shadowing in career areas that interest you
• Start to consider careers that require postgraduate qualifications. It may be some time before you apply but it does take careful planning and research to find the most appropriate course
• Start to research graduate schemes that interest you
• Participate in career and skills sessions and employer presentations
• Have your CV checked by a Careers Adviser
• If you are still undecided about your career path on leaving university, speak to a Careers Adviser now.
• Start to research employers and organisations that you are interested in, ready for applications in your final year
• Secure some relevant work experience
• Continue to build and develop your PDP and employability skills profile
• Learn about the importance of networking and work towards building your contacts

Final Year
• Visit the Careers Service and collect your free copies of careers-related and vacancy publications
• Check out the Careers Service website, which advertises hundreds of vacancies and job-related links
• Arrange a one-to-one appointment with a Careers Adviser to review your options
• Spend time reflecting on your course, your experiences and the skills you have gained whilst at university and update your CV accordingly
• Apply for relevant graduate schemes, taking into account that some deadlines are as early as November
• Attend relevant career and skills sessions
• Ask for a mock interview to practise your techniques
• If you want to teach, make sure you apply early; check out the closing dates at the start of your final year
• Make sure you attend the annual Careers Fair here at the University in November
• If you need any help with your job search techniques, sign up for the Graduate Summer Schools

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers
Get Work Experience

Are you experienced?

Gaining work experience is one of the best ways of improving your chances of future success because, by doing so, you will develop as many relevant transferable skills as possible.

In a recent survey of 100 of the UK’s best-known and successful employers, there is confirmation that in 2012, a third of all graduate entry positions are expected to be filled by those who have already worked for their organisation – either through placements, work experience or sponsorships – and are therefore not open to other graduating students. (‘The Graduate Market in 2012’ – High Fliers Research Limited)

Why you should be
You can never have too much experience and so it is something you should be thinking about from your first day at university. Never simply leave it until your final year.

Competition for graduate positions is stronger than ever, and so students need to stand out from the crowd when applying for jobs. Employers increasingly want new recruits to be able to add value to their company straight away. If you can demonstrate that you have already achieved a certain level of competence, you will be far more likely to get the job you want.

Work experience helps you to make new business contacts which may prove useful when you are looking for that graduate position. It will also help you to understand how a business operates – often called commercial awareness – and will almost certainly allow you to observe other staff and see what professional roles are available to you within your preferred sector.

What you can do
There are lots of different ways you can gain experience, including:

• Part-time work
• Work placements
• Internships
• Vacation work
• Work shadowing
• Volunteering
• Career mentoring
• Open days
• Work experience overseas

You really need to be thinking about complementing what you learn on your course with practical experience from the time you arrive at university and, if this is via some paid part-time work, it will also mean you’ll be earning at the same time too.

Next steps

• Make sure you pay a visit to the Careers Service as soon as possible, so that we can help you gain that vital work experience. Some of the things we offer help with include:
  • Applying for jobs and placements
  • Sourcing work experience and placement information
  • Researching career ideas
  • Developing and updating your CV and covering letter
  • Assessing and developing your employability skills
• Sign up with the Job Shop. This is where we advertise part-time and vacation work to support you while studying, as well as providing information and advice on issues such as employment, minimum wage, tax and national insurance. Every year we advertise approximately 1,700 vacancies through the Job Shop.
• Investigate volunteering opportunities, which are just as valuable as any paid work experience, and may be the only option if you are finding it difficult to find paid work.
• Make sure you spend time planning and researching any potential work experience opportunities. Many placements aren’t advertised, so keeping your eye on social media platforms such as LinkedIn is a good idea, while the Careers Service website and Moodle site also have a wide range of links to work experience-related opportunities.
• Try making speculative applications, whether you know people in the organisation or not. Do not wait for positions to be advertised. Consider approaching organisations that interest you, even if they do not have any formal work experience schemes in place. Don’t be afraid to send a speculative letter and CV asking about placement opportunities.
• Look into the possibility of gaining experience by supporting the University of Bolton, as we recruit a number of student ambassadors on a paid basis to promote what we do to prospective students, and to help with open days, campus tours and conferences. There are also opportunities to become course representatives or to work in a number of departments on campus such as administration, the sports centre and the library. Positions are advertised on the Job Shop vacancy site.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers

So far, I have gained experience at Wigan Warriors RLFC, Wigan Athletic FC and the Sports and Spinal Injuries Clinic based at the University. All of these placements have been of invaluable experience. This is a great course if you have a passion for sport and an interest in anatomy, physiology and musculoskeletal injury.

James Naylor
Degree: BSc (Hons) Sports Rehabilitation

Wigan W arriors RLFC, Wigan Athletic FC

Rehabilitation

Degree: James N aylor

m usculoskeletal injury.
Volunteering

Your time is precious. Why not make it useful too?

Finding out what you are good at and developing new skills doesn’t have to happen just through paid work. Often, paid, relevant roles for students are hard to find and so you need to consider other ways of picking up valuable experience.

One of the most obvious ways is through volunteering, which can offer real benefits. A 2008 survey, carried out by Time Bank, with over 200 of the UK’s leading businesses, showed that:

- 73% of employers would recruit a candidate with volunteering experience over one without
- 94% of employers believe that volunteering can add to skills
- 94% of employees who volunteered to learn new skills had benefits either by getting their first job, improving their salary or being promoted

Volunteering reflects what you’re like as a person, helps to show a more complete picture of you and gives real examples of your commitment, dedication and interests.

Why volunteer?

Whatever your motivation for getting involved as a volunteer, there’s no doubting the value – both to those you are helping and to yourself. Some of the key benefits include:

- Developing new contacts and increasing your networks
- Gaining experience of a real role in a local organisation
- Developing your skills and knowledge
- Trying out different roles to help you prepare for your future career
- Having an impact and making a change for an organisation or group
- Enhancing your CV and your employability

What do volunteers do?

The answer is…almost anything, as there are so many opportunities available. A few are listed below to give you an idea:

Opportunities in the Local Community:

there are a wide range of charities and local community groups that need help and support. We promote a wide variety of opportunities including fundraising, mentoring and befriending, conservation, working with young people and the elderly…and many more!

Student volunteering:

there are many opportunities on-campus where you can support the university and also support your fellow students. Some of the roles include being a Peer Mentor and volunteering through the many Student Union activities such as the radio and student newspaper.

Time Commitment

The beauty of volunteering is that you can give as much or as little time that you want. Whether it’s a few hours a week, one day a week or maybe an evening, the fact is that volunteering can fit around your other commitments and responsibilities.

It is important to realise that some volunteering opportunities require a much longer-term commitment, so you need to think about how long you wish to be involved for.

What to do next

If you would like to explore volunteering opportunities whilst you are at University then contact our Volunteering Coordinator on 01204 903489 or visit our volunteering website www.bolton.ac.uk/careers/volunteering

“I started volunteering in September 2011 as an Assistant Cub Scout Leader. The first few weeks were daunting, however, once I was given a meeting to run I found that I was in my element. The meetings were fun and the children love every minute of it. Recently myself and another leader took the children to an ‘It’s a Knockout’ competition with the rest of the district and spent the day getting wet and muddy. Volunteering has allowed me to develop my communication skills, manage a large group of children and have fun. I am now also undertaking training to become a fully qualified leader. This has opened a variety of doors, I have made new connections and friends and it has been a great addition to my CV.”

Lauren Balmer

Degree: Modern and Contemporary History
What next after graduation?

As you approach the end of your time at university you are faced with a lot of choices. If you’re not sure about what life may hold for you after you graduate, it makes sense to get some advice about those first steps, and to start planning early.

While still at university, you can develop your skills and work experience, before you have the pressure of your final exams. You can spend time researching possible occupations, graduate employers and schemes and consider what other graduates have gone on to do that have undertaken the same programme as you.

What are the options?

Employment – the obvious route for most students after graduation is to find a full-time job, particularly if you are keen to start earning a wage. Gaining full-time employment can be a challenge, so it is important, when applying for jobs, to tailor your experience and skills to each particular post. Whatever your plans, the Careers Service has a wealth of resources to help with your initial job search, from employer directories to graduate website links. Our Advisers are also on hand to make sure your applications are effective and targeted.

Graduate programmes – if you have already decided on a specific industry or position that you want to pursue, then a graduate programme may be the perfect match. They typically last one to two years and provide you with the training and skills development you will need for that particular field. You often get the chance to experience different departments within the organisation. Many employers go on to offer graduates full-time positions once they have completed the programme.

Further study – continuing with your studies is a good way to develop your knowledge, skills and experiences further, and will also help you to add new professional qualifications to your CV. For some careers such as Law or Teaching, further study is essential. As with all options, this needs careful planning and research. Check out the ‘Further Study’ section of this guide for more advice.

Self-employment – while being your own boss may seem like a great idea (and often is) don’t be fooled into thinking it’s the easy option. Going freelance, setting up a new business or stepping into an existing one can be a lot of hard work and takes time, commitment, energy and drive to reap the rewards. See our section on ‘Being an Entrepreneur’ to see what further support and information is available.

Taking a gap year – after working hard at university for so long, taking some time out before making your next move can be a great way of seeing the world, meeting new people and developing key life skills. In today’s competitive environment it is vital to also look at a gap year as a step towards employment, rather than simply as a break. It can inform your career by helping you to mature as a person, giving you time to reflect and review your goals, and offer a fresh perspective about what it is you want from life. Employers now look more favourably on organised gap years which appear to have provided you with some structure and the chance to develop your employability skills further.

Working outside the UK – heading abroad to work generally falls into two different categories: jobs that finance you as you travel (which you can often find once you reach your destination) and jobs that require or develop particular skills or experience (which are generally organised before you leave the UK).

When applying for work or voluntary opportunities abroad, you need to ensure you plan your trip carefully. You need to make sure you have adequate and appropriate travel insurance; it is advisable to organise your accommodation in advance and ensure you have the right visas. Always ensure you have the money available to fund the whole trip and build in extra for contingencies should they arise.

How to decide

Some people know from a very early age what they want to do but, for others, deciding upon a particular career path is a daunting task. There is no single way to approach career planning, as everyone makes decisions in different ways. Working towards an answer often involves:

• Understanding what matters to you in terms of your career
• Exploring the options available and researching your ideas
• Assessing your skills and identifying what you have to offer
• Making that final decision

It is always a good idea to develop a careers action plan to help keep you focused and on track. This will help you to plan your short and long-term goals. You need to bear in mind practical considerations such as your personal circumstances and family commitments that might impact on any career choice that you make. Whether it appears to be straightforward, or more complex, our Careers Advisers can help you with your first steps to achieving your career goals.
Further Study

What are the options?

With a wide range of choices, all with different content, fees and time required to complete, it's important that you're clear about exactly why you want to undertake postgraduate study.

Reasons do vary but some of the main ones include:

• It is a requirement for a particular career or profession
• You want to study your chosen subject in more depth as you find it interesting
• You need to gain research experience or a particular specialism
• You want to gain an advantage in the job market

Continuing with your education can often be a difficult decision to make so it is important to consider your options. These may include:

Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas – These are usually delivered by universities and are often essential for entry into certain professions such as law. They will almost certainly help you to gain recognition in your chosen field and help you with career progression. An Honours degree is usually a requirement and, in some sectors, relevant experience is often also a necessity. Duration of these qualifications depends on the sector and type of award but they often take up to 12 months to complete full-time.

Taught Masters Degrees – Masters courses (MA, MSc, MBA and MEd) are usually either one year full-time or two years part-time, cover the subjects studied at degree level in further detail and are assessed by exams, coursework and research projects. An Honours degree is usually a requirement and some programmes will require a minimum 2:1 classification.

Higher degrees by research – The best known research qualification is the PhD (or Doctorate). Other possible courses are the MA and MSc degrees by research and the MPhil, which is sometimes taken before embarking on a PhD. PhDs involve contributing new knowledge via a well-designed research project or thesis that is worthy of publication. They take a minimum of three years and may be even longer, especially if undertaken on a part-time basis. A high 2:1 or 1st in a relevant honours degree is usually required for PhD study, whilst MPhils may have a less demanding pre-entry requirement.

Funding your further study

After paying for life as an undergraduate, deciding to stay on and undertake further study is not a decision you can take lightly. Postgraduate study is expensive and fees can vary between institutions. The funding system can be very complex so it is advisable to seek further guidance.

As a starting point a good source of information is the Prospects Postgraduate Funding Guide which can be found at: http://www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_my_further_study.htm. Here you will find information on grants, awards and scholarships, as well as links to educational charities and trusts.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers

Studying for a PhD at Bolton helped me to effectively translate fundamental science and engineering into solving practical day-to-day human problems. It also helped me to develop the skill to effectively engage with the railway industry through solving rail safety problems. This was crucial for my career, as my job now requires me to work on engineering research to solve current issues within rail transportation across Europe.

Dr Emmanuel Matsika
Degree: Research Student with the Automotive and Aerospace Research

Points to consider

• Start planning early for postgraduate study – take time to consider the best options for you. Ensure you have researched all the relevant courses and that your reasons for continuing with your education are strong. For some programmes you may need relevant work experience, so careful planning will ensure that you can achieve this in time.

• Assess the content and programme features – when you have found a programme that interests you, look carefully at the content, and consider the facilities and resources that will be made available to you. It is also worth looking at the research rating and reputation of the institution to which you are applying.

• Check out the application deadlines – applications for postgraduate study are dealt with in a different way from undergraduate courses, so make sure you allow yourself enough time to submit a decent application.

• Research possible funding streams – make sure you know how you can get funding, and ensure that you apply in plenty of time. If you intend to finance yourself, ensure that you will be able to cover all your personal expenses and costs.
Be an Entrepreneur!

Working for yourself

Have you ever thought about setting up your own business? Have you got a good idea that you would like to get off the ground? Being an entrepreneur can be a real option, but don’t be fooled! It is extremely hard work and takes large amounts of dedication and motivation.

Self-employment can have many benefits, the obvious ones being the freedom to make your own choices and decisions, being your own boss, working flexible hours to suit your needs and potentially earning a decent salary.

But there are risks to consider too. You alone are accountable; making unwise decisions could affect your business and your income. If you are unable to work from home, then there are large costs associated with premises and utilities. You will have to manage all your own tax, pension and national insurance, and in the early months you may have to consider taking a second job in order to support your income and personal financial commitments.

Whatever stage you are at, there are a number of issues that you will need to consider and research you will need to undertake before starting your own business venture. We understand this and therefore provide support to those students who want to become their own boss.

Questions to consider as a starting point

- Is there a demand for the product or service you want to offer? How do you know?
- Would you have any competition for your product or service?
- Do you have the necessary skill-set to make your idea work? If not, what training and development will you need?
- Will you be setting up your business on your own, or going into a partnership? Do you understand the legal implications of this?
- How will you finance your business?
- Do you have an up-to-date business plan?
- Do you have the time and energy to start up a new business? What other commitments do you need to consider?

Support available

We have a strong network of support for enterprise and business start-up across the University, with nominated Enterprise Champions – members of staff who can help to turn your business idea into a reality – in each of the three Faculties.

The Careers Service also runs a number of interactive sessions throughout the academic year, inviting experts into the university to provide business start-up advice and guidance and to talk with any budding entrepreneurs on a one-to-one basis to explore business ideas.

Mentoring support

A number of mentors from the business community provide individual support to help you get your business idea up and running. Through one-to-one and online meetings with your specialist mentor, you can share your ideas and formulate a plan of action. You will also have access to online resources that are essential to get your business started.

Business challenge

The Business Simulation Game is available throughout the year and aims to give you a virtual experience of running a business. You can try out and learn about pricing strategies, marketing plans, business finances, production, distribution and legislation, as well as the many other challenges faced when running a business.

‘Switched On’ programme

Introduced in 2011/12, our popular ‘Switched On’ Enterprise and Entrepreneurship project provides a wide range of business start-up support and master classes. A key aspect is the Business Boot Camp, a free three-day comprehensive programme dedicated to getting student and graduate businesses off the ground. This covers setting up your own business, legal issues involved, managing accounts, marketing, advertising and sources of support. All participants are offered a business mentor to guide them beyond the three days.
Allison Haslam
Degree: BSc Sports Rehabilitation
Job: Soft Tissue Specialist and Sports Rehabilitator.

Allison completed a successful 3 month work placement at Wigan Athletic Football Club and has now secured a full-time role.

"The University staff played an extremely important role in my employment, as without their hard work and efforts to secure my placement I would certainly not be in this fantastic job."

Graduate recruitment is now highly competitive, so when meeting employers for the first time it is vital that you are prepared and show your enthusiasm for the role and the organisation that you want to be part of. While it is natural to feel nervous or unsure about what to say, by doing your research you will create the right impression and be able to ask the right questions.

You need to be able to show interest in the organisation that you are applying for. As well as looking at their website, try and get hold of annual reports and literature that will tell you more about their products and services, their competitors, current issues affecting their business interests, and their size and location.

Other ways of building your commercial awareness include taking part in discussion forums, joining industry-specific networking events, attending lectures and seminars at university which focus primarily on business and commerce, or interacting with business professionals via social media platforms such as LinkedIn.

Try and prepare thoughtful questions to ask, and avoid asking questions that just relate to money and personal gain. There is a wealth of information out there and while this might feel like a lot of hard work, there are ‘rules’ you have to follow when seeking out your dream job. If you put the effort in, you will most definitely stand out from the other candidates.

Connecting you to opportunities from day one

Our extensive links with employers and community-based organisations means we can ensure that the content of your course is up-to-date and meets the needs of the different job markets.

Whilst you are on your course you will learn about the world of work through a variety of approaches, including:

- Opportunities to undertake ‘live’ projects and assessment briefs set by employers
- Master classes with industrialists and practitioners to help you either prepare for work or progress in your current employment
- Employability, enterprise and professional practice modules to broaden your understanding of different areas of employment

• The chance to take part in graduate enterprise activities
• Placement and internship opportunities with employers, enabling you to make a contribution to their business while gaining invaluable experience at the same time

Employers on campus

The University works closely with a range of employers to ensure they come on to campus and interact with our students at events such as our annual careers fair, mock interviews, skills development sessions and guest lectures. A small selection of the employers we have worked with includes Warburtons, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Matalan, Coca Cola Enterprises, Leyland Trucks and United Utilities.

Improving your commercial awareness

Commercial awareness is about understanding and having knowledge of a business environment, and understanding the industry which you are applying to join. It is a key competency that graduates should have.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers
Local experience – global value

By choosing to move abroad and study in the UK, you have already proved your willingness to try something different and experience completely new cultures and ways of life.

Whilst it’s undoubtedly a chance to meet loads of people, make new friends from all over the world and learn about completely new things, you could really add to that while you are here by developing your skills and picking up valuable experience, through either paid work or volunteering.

It is also important to get involved in university life whilst at Bolton. The Students’ Union has a range of activities and a thriving International Society which brings together students from all nations to share each other’s cultures and explore the local community together. Joining student clubs, improving your language skills and taking extra classes really does demonstrate to future employers your enthusiasm and commitment.

Working in the UK while studying

Many of our international students are able to find part-time jobs while studying at Bolton, but be aware that there are restrictions on the type of things you can do and the number of hours you can work.

Employment regulations:

- European Economic Area (EEA) nationals are free to work unrestricted hours in the UK and do not need to obtain permission to do so. However, the exceptions are students from Bulgaria and Romania who may need to apply to the Worker Authorisation Scheme for a registration certificate before starting any work.
- Non-EEA nationals normally receive a stamp in their passport that restricts what work they can do and for how many hours. If you have such a stamp, then you are subject to these restrictions:
  - You must not work for more than 20 hours per week during term time, except if it is a placement as part of your course and you have the University’s permission.
  - You must not engage in business, self-employment or provide services as a professional sportsperson or entertainer.
  - You must not pursue a career by filling a permanent full-time vacancy.
  - If you are studying a foundation degree or English language foundation course, you may only be able to work for 10 hours a week so you need to check for permission.

Working in the UK after graduation

The UK has strict legislation about working here once you have graduated. Students who have studied in the UK on a Tier 4 visa can normally continue to work full-time in the UK after the course has officially ended and before their visa expires. This is for approximately 4 months. After this date, if you are a non-EEA national on a Tier 4 visa, you must have permission to remain here in accordance with the UK’s point-based immigration system.

For most students, this will mean being sponsored by a Tier 2 employer to obtain a work visa. Employers must be a registered sponsor with the UKBA to be eligible to offer positions under this scheme. The job must be of graduate level and the salary must be a minimum of £20,000 per annum.

Support while you are here

We want all of our students to enjoy their time with us and, just as importantly, make sure it is of real value in terms of helping you to achieve your future goals. We know that the majority of international students appreciate information and career sessions designed just for them, so wherever possible, we provide more tailored support.

The Careers Service can arrange one-to-one appointments for you to speak to a Careers Adviser and we run induction sessions for all new international students to pass on relevant information about working in the UK.

The Students Union can provide advice and information as can our International and Immigration Welfare team. See their web pages at: [www.bolton.ac.uk/international/home](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/international/home)

The British Council, UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and the UK Border Agency websites all have useful further information on working during your studies. See their web pages at: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org) [www.ukcisa.org.uk/](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/) [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/)
Building a Professional Network

Widening your net

Nowadays there are countless ways to find out about opportunities and apply for them, but there’s no doubt that still one of the most effective is one of the oldest and most established: networking. They say ‘it is not what you know, but who you know’ and this is for a very good reason. 
A very large percentage of jobs are secured through contacts and so people who network are far more likely to learn about hidden opportunities and then have a foot in the door when they arise.

Quite simply, if you’re looking to succeed after graduation, being a networking job hunter means you can tap into and share information through your connections, you will meet people in wider circles than your student peers and you will have access to solid, reliable advice and feedback.

Getting started

You can begin building your networks informally and not always with the immediate aim of securing a job or finding out about hidden opportunities. As an example, while still at university, simply joining groups or societies, signing up to mailing lists, attending conferences and visiting exhibitions or events are all good ways of making contact with relevant and influential people.

With the advent of online technology, the ways in which you can network are almost limitless and chat rooms, forums and industry websites are all good areas to explore.

Using existing networks

One of your best resources is the people you already know. As a result, when looking for a job, make sure that the influential people around you know about your qualifications, your skills and what type of job it is that you are after. Make a list of friends and family who are employed, current bosses, previous employers and teachers/lecturers. Get in touch with everyone on your list and ask them questions such as whether they know anyone you can talk to or anyone who employs people with skills like yours. Include your CV with your letter or email so that your contacts can forward it on to their associates if they wish.

Building new networks

Often though, making contact with people you don’t already know can be the key to success in job hunting. Events such as careers fairs, trade shows and conferences can be really useful, with many large employers often having stands at them. Find out about these type of events through trade publications, on the internet or through the Careers Service, and then try and visit as many as you can, remembering to have some pre-prepared questions and a copy of your CV ready.

On top of this, spend some time finding out the names of recruiters and HR contacts in companies where you think you’d like to work, and then write, email or call them, asking for advice or an interview so you can learn more about the organisation. It’s surprising how many opportunities arise from speculative efforts such as these.

Top tips to follow when making contact for the first time

• Identify yourself clearly; explain why you are getting in touch and how you obtained their name and details.
• Ask if they are happy to talk to you now or whether another time would be more convenient.
• Have a list of questions prepared so that you are ready if they do wish to speak to you straight away.
• Ask what key qualities and skills are needed for their organisation and what types of roles are generally available.
• Ask their advice on the best routes into the organisation.
• Don’t pry or ask any personal questions and stay focused on why you are getting in touch.
• Listen carefully and take notes.
• Be polite and courteous at all times. Remember that they are doing you a favour, have taken time out to help you and may also be able to put you in touch with others who can help.
• Networking means different things to different people, so try to tailor your approach depending on who you are talking to.
• Follow it up with a thank you note or telephone call and, if appropriate, tell your contact how much they have helped you by referring to particularly useful, specific advice.
• Keep in touch with your contacts, as staying on their radars without being imposing or invasive means they may think of you if an opportunity arises.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers
Using Social Media

Using social media to find a job
From Facebook pages to Twitter feeds and LinkedIn groups, social media applications that you often use every day can also help you in your search for employment. These networks can give you instant access to company information and insights, and allow you to ‘follow’ and ‘connect’ with potential employees.

Social networks are starting to become part of the criteria that recruitment teams are using to ‘weed out’ applicants, so it is vital that you are using some of the platforms and also ensuring that what you write hides your more personal side, but keeps your employable attributes and skills firmly on show.

Make connections
Some job roles are advertised via social media platforms, but many studies have noted that 80% of jobs are secured through the networking process. It is a good idea, therefore, to make a list of the companies that you are interested in working for. You can then search for the organisations and also the employees that currently work there. Social media then allows you to make contacts and connections even if you do not know them directly.

Social media has broken down many barriers, but make sure you do your homework on the company first and tailor your messages. Do not go in straight away asking for a job. Try and build a rapport and get to know them first. Only then should you start to ask for job and placement opportunities.

Be proactive
Before you start to use any of the social media platforms always ensure your profiles are completed and up-to-date. Try and include a short biography about yourself, listing your skills and experience and your qualification history. Make sure your profiles are succinct and catchy and, if the site allows you to seek recommendations as LinkedIn does, try and obtain a quote from a previous employer.

Search on the move
There are now a large number of apps on the market for jobseekers that you can often download to your phone for free. This allows you to gain up-to-date information about any opportunities out there and to respond quickly. Some larger organisations will have their own apps too.

Build your online influence and promote yourself
There is so much competition now for graduate jobs that ‘standing out from the crowd’ is paramount. One way of doing this is to build your online influence. This can be measured by how many connections/followers you have and how many times you contribute information online. Having more influence can attract employers to your profile. The larger number of networks you have, the more chance you are going to be productive, bring in new business and market a brand more successfully if you were to be recruited.

Start to join discussion groups that allow you to showcase your experience and skills further. There are also specific discussion groups which allow you to ask questions and seek advice about the whole recruitment process.

Staying safe
Always take care when posting information on any of the social media sites. Review your information regularly. Do not post private information, or post anything that might be embarrassing, particularly if you want to share your profile with employers. People have been denied work or have lost their jobs, because of information that has been found on such sites. Take time to monitor your privacy settings regularly, to control who has access to your personal information.

Quick overview of popular social media platforms

LinkedIn
This is a social networking site for working professionals. You can connect with former co-workers and colleagues, as well as make new connections. You can seek recommendations and also provide an outline of your skills, experience and qualifications. You can search for jobs as well as join professional groups and browse company profiles.

Twitter
Twitter allows you to connect with people who share similar interests. This allows you to follow people without requesting their permission and start a conversation with them. Twitter also allows you to search for jobs. Type in your key words i.e. marketing jobs, and then all conversations with these exact words should be displayed.

Facebook
This is probably one of the most popular social media platforms. Generally used for more social and personal networking. Many graduate recruiters have Facebook pages where you can hear all about their products, services and job opportunities. You can also search for people you might know in a specific industry.

For more information call 01204 903080 or email info@bolton.ac.uk/careers
Applying for Jobs: An overview

Employer research
Before you apply for any jobs you should spend time and energy on researching the employers you are interested in working for. Avoiding this part of the process could prove costly. One of the biggest complaints we receive from employers is that candidates do not ‘do their homework’ about the company, and also about the role for which they are applying. Ultimately your research shows that you are keen and interested in working for their company.

Find out…background information
1. What does the organisation do?
2. Which markets or service areas does it operate within?
3. What products or services does it sell?
4. Where is the company based?
5. What are the core values and mission of the company?
6. Who are their competitors?
7. Which social media platforms do they use?
8. What is their annual turnover?
9. Who are their customers?
10. What are their marketing campaigns?

Find out…recruitment information
1. What roles are available to graduates?
2. Are there any specific degree disciplines needed for the role in which you are interested?
3. Are there any specific qualifications you will need?
4. What skills and experiences are they looking for?
5. What time of the year do they recruit?
6. How do you apply?
7. When are the application deadlines?
8. What does the rest of the recruitment process involve?
9. Which career fairs do they attend?
10. Where do they advertise their vacancies?

Covering Letters
A covering letter should always be sent with a CV unless specified. It should immediately capture the reader’s attention. It is often the first thing an employer will read, so be sure to create the right impression.

A standard covering letter should include the following:
• Why you are writing to the employer: is it in response to an advert or is this a speculative enquiry?
• What you can offer the employer and why you are suitable for the role: always highlight your skills which meet the job specification.
• Why you are interested in working for the organisation: show that you understand what they do and that you have carried out your research.
• Let them know when you are available for an interview.

When putting together a covering letter do not forget:
• To try to use just one side of A4 unlined paper.
• Ensure your letter is laid out correctly, checking for spelling and grammar.
• Always write a new covering letter for each position you apply for. Do not send out a generic letter.
• Always try to address the letter to a named contact within the organisation.

Creating a CV
Like an application form, your CV is created to try and encourage an employer to interview you. You should only send in a CV if the job advert asks for one, or you are applying speculatively to a company.

There is no such thing as a ‘perfect’ CV but, like an application form, there are certain rules that you will need to follow. Remember: you should choose a format that reflects your skills and experiences in the best light. The layout should present your information in a logical order.

What should a CV contain?
Personal details: name, address, email, telephone number(s).
Education and qualifications: university education with key modules and grades. A Level subject and grades and number of GCSEs.
Skills: key skills linked to the role for which you are applying plus additional skills such as IT, language skills etc.
Work Experience: paid and voluntary.
Interests: hobbies, sports, clubs, societies, travel etc.
References: always try to include an academic reference and one from a previous employer. Never use a relative.
CV tips
• Always adapt your CV for each job.
• Use a maximum of 2 sides of A4 paper unless applying for academic posts.
• Always check your spelling and grammar before sending.
• Be thorough and honest about your experiences.
• Use action words when describing your experiences.
• Provide evidence against the skills you are listing.
• Try and ensure your CV is focused on results, achievements and accomplishments – elements that are quantifiable.
• Do not write anything negative about yourself.
• Ensure the layout of your CV is attractive and easy to follow – use reverse chronology, starting with your most recent experiences.
• Never send a CV without a covering letter.

Application Forms
Application forms are designed to collect information about how you meet the job role set by the employer. Most employers have their own application forms which they either send out via post or ask you to complete online. Job application forms determine whether or not you will make it to the interview stage, therefore there are a few simple steps you should follow:
• All sections of an application form are important and should be completed. Only write ‘not applicable’ if absolutely necessary.
• Always prepare. Complete a rough draft beforehand that you can work on before sending.
• Allow plenty of time to complete the form.
• Use the person specification to structure your statement.
• Do not write the same information in the ‘personal statement’ section for all applications you make. Ensure you address the key points from each job specification and use good examples.

• Show employers that you have a good understanding of their business and have undertaken your research fully.
• Try and make your answers interesting and concise. Employers may have to read through hundreds of applications, so ensure your information is to the point.
• Always check over your applications before sending. It may be a good idea to ask someone else to read over the form, such as a Careers Adviser. Pay close attention to spelling and grammar.
• Keep a copy of your application form. This will come in handy if you are asked to go for an interview.

Assessment Centres
Many large graduate recruiters use assessment centres to help choose their employees. This is where you will be observed undertaking a range of activities to see how you interact with other applicants, and how you cope in certain situations which are often modelled on real life work-based scenarios. Most assessment centres require your attendance for one full day, but in some circumstances this could be for longer.

• Show employers that you have a good understanding of their business and have undertaken your research fully.
• Try and make your answers interesting and concise. Employers may have to read through hundreds of applications, so ensure your information is to the point.
• Always check over your applications before sending. It may be a good idea to ask someone else to read over the form, such as a Careers Adviser. Pay close attention to spelling and grammar.
• Keep a copy of your application form. This will come in handy if you are asked to go for an interview.

Activities
Assessment centres use a range of different activities. Some of the more common ones include:
• Psychometric tests: these will assess aptitudes such as verbal and numerical skills as well as your personality traits.
• Presentations: sometimes you will be given the topic in advance, or at the start of the day. Designed to see how you research, communicate effectively to an audience and how you organise and present information.
• In-tray exercises: these are individual tasks in which you are given a real-life scenario and asked to prioritise and make certain decisions. These are usually timed.
• Written exercises: you may be provided with a variety of documents relating to a business situation and then asked to write a brief report.
• Group exercises/role play: designed to see how well you work in a team and what you are able to contribute.
**Skills for success**

In order to get the most out of your time at the assessment centre you need to:

- Show enthusiasm at all times, particularly in relation to your involvement in activities.
- Pay attention to your body language and facial expressions; ensure you look engaged and interested even when you are not talking.
- Avoid being too loud or domineering, this can work against you as much as being quiet and timid.
- Express yourself clearly and assertively and avoid being influenced or swayed from your opinions.
- Listen carefully to everything that is said, from the instructions by staff to the comments made by other candidates.

Assessment centres can be daunting, so ensure you prepare as much as you can in advance. Remember that the employer was obviously impressed with your application for you to have made it to this stage!

**Interviews**

An interview is a chance for an employer to meet and assess your suitability for a particular role. Most face to face interviews last between one and two hours, although telephone interviews can be much shorter.

As well as asking you a series of questions, most interviews will also now include a presentation on a specific topic. The topic will generally be provided prior to your attendance, allowing you a chance to prepare.

An interview is a two-way process. The employer will want to know if you have the skills and abilities required, but an interview will also give you the chance to assess the culture and demands of the position and then you can decide if the company is right for you.

**Be prepared**

You need to review your original application form and also research the organisation you have an interview with. If you can demonstrate your knowledge of the company, this will show that you are motivated and keen to work there. Consider how your skills match with the requirements of the job.

**Think STAR**

Try and anticipate the questions they may ask you. Some of the questions will inevitably ask you about your experience, your skills, your understanding of the organisation, your degree and your interests. Look at the job description. Write down the skills they are looking for, and then map your skills against this information. For each skill required write down examples of situations where you have demonstrated this particular skill. When answering questions think about the following:

- **Situation**: describe the situation/context
- **Task**: what did you have to do?
- **Action**: what did you actually do? What skills did you use? Keep the focus on yourself.
- **Result**: what was achieved? What did you learn?

You will also be given the chance to ask questions at the interview, so spend some time beforehand thinking about the most appropriate questions you can ask.

**Remember...**

- Always wear something smart and clean.
- Plan your journey in advance.
- First impressions are vital so always remember to smile, shake hands, make eye contact and greet people in a friendly and professional manner.
- Leave all unnecessary bags outside of the interview room. Switch off your mobile phone.
- If you do not understand a question, be sure to ask for clarification.
- Ensure you have prepared some questions to ask at the end of the interview.

The Careers Service has produced a number of career guides on all of the topics above. Call into the Careers Office to pick up your hard copy or access them online at www.bolton.ac.uk/careers
The University Careers Service — here for you from day one!

Please don’t think you have to be in your final year to use the Careers Service. We encourage all students to visit us from day one in order to see our extensive resources and find out all about the help we offer. Whether you’re interested in work experience, getting involved in volunteering or need to find out about graduate careers, we can help.

It really doesn’t matter whether you want to explore specific options or have no idea at all about what you want to do; we have a wide range of support that will meet your needs, including:

- **Careers Advice**: Our Careers Adviser’s offer confidential, one-to-one appointments throughout the week, as well as running drop-in sessions for any quick queries you may have. If you are struggling to get into the careers office, you can access a wealth of information and career guides via our dedicated website, or use our e-guidance enquiry service for individual advice.

- **Job Shop**: This is the focal point for students wanting to find part-time and vacation work. Register online to receive exclusive job and vacancy updates.

- **Career Resources**: Our information team will help you to access the full range of paper-based and online resources, including a variety of student guides written by our experienced careers team, employer directories, career management books and journals; all in accessible formats.

- **Career Workshops**: We run a number of career workshops throughout the year, which are a good starting point for learning the basics of writing CVs and covering letters, accessing relevant work experience opportunities, coping with interviews and the application process. We also organise campus visits from employers, big and small, who talk about their industries and opportunities within them.

- **Careers Fair**: We hold an annual Careers Fair every November, attended by a variety of employers and relevant organisations. Ahead of our Careers Fair look out for our preparation sessions and check out our website to see which employers will be attending.

**Find out more**

You can find us in the Student Centre within Chancellor’s Mall, and we are open between 8.45am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

- Telephone: 01204 903080
- Email: careers@bolton.ac.uk
- Website: www.bolton.ac.uk/careers
- Moodle: http://elearning.bolton.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3650

By now you should have a better idea about the steps you can start to make to improve your employability skills and your chances of securing that graduate role.

Use the following list as a final check, and start to tick off what you are going to do now:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book an appointment to see one of our Careers Advisers to explore your options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get your CV, covering letter and/or application form reviewed by one of our team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check out our online guides for more detailed advice and tips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Register online with the Job Shop to receive job alerts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check out the closing dates of the many graduate schemes available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend the Careers Fair and employer events to speak to employers about their many opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend one of our career workshops to learn about job hunting, career options or starting your own business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do something practical – organise a work placement, volunteering opportunity or join a student club or society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undertake a skills audit to assess your own employability skills and plug any gaps as necessary</td>
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</table>

**GOOD LUCK!**