



**Career Decisions and Job Hunting in the Real World:  
A Self-Help Guide for Ethnic Minority Students and  
Graduates**

**Part 3: Surveying the graduate job market:**

**What is available?**

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## *Foreword*

This part of the guide deals with two important career planning and job hunting issues. In the first two sections, a basic career decision question is considered: how to evaluate and identify employment sectors that offer the prospect of a rewarding graduate career that matches your skills and values. A systematic approach to this is presented, based on developments in the psychology of decision making.

In the final sections, information is presented to help resolve the more specific problem of locating appropriate job opportunities within your targeted employment sectors. Directories of job vacancies are identified, including those specifically aimed at supporting ethnic minority students and graduates.

We hope that students and graduates of all ethnic backgrounds will find the information and exercises in this part of the guide useful. We would welcome feedback on any experiences of using it and all suggestions for improvements.

## **Notes**

1. The project web pages can be found at:  
[www.bolton.ac.uk/uni/research/psych/behavior.html](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/uni/research/psych/behavior.html)
2. Contact e-mail addresses:  
[R.Ranyard@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:R.Ranyard@bolton.ac.uk); [C.Hewson@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:C.Hewson@bolton.ac.uk); [J.Charlton@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:J.Charlton@bolton.ac.uk)

## *1. Phase 1: Exploring the range of employment sectors available*

Having developed a skills portfolio (described in Part 1), and reviewed your values (described in Part 2), a preliminary review of the range of employment sectors suitable for graduates is useful. A number of resources are available to help achieve this. These include the following two books, which provide an informative and comprehensive overview of the range of job sectors into which graduates may proceed (as described in the introduction to this guide):

Leach, J. (Ed.). (2005). *The Guardian Guide to Careers*. Atlantic Books. London.

Widmer, J. (2002). *The Penguin Careers Guide* (11<sup>th</sup> Edition). Penguin: London.

These guides offer descriptions of the possible roles within each sector, the skills and qualifications needed, the expected salary range and the level of competition in entering into that sector.

The 'Prospects' website (see the list of resources below) also provides an 'explore job sectors' page, with information about a range of different employment sectors, and may prove a useful and accessible starting point.

Reviewing the range of employment sectors which graduates may move into is a useful exercise, before narrowing down focus to those sectors which are of particular interest to you personally (as discussed below). Although graduates may often already have narrowed down the range of options and areas in which they are interested through their choice of degree subject, it is always useful to keep your options open and explore other avenues.

Clearly, your own skills and values will play a key role in determining the right job for you. Matching skills, values and specific job profiles is given a more detailed and formal treatment in the next part of this guide. First, an exercise for narrowing down the range of job options to explore, in terms of different sectors, is provided in section 2 below. The following book also offers some useful exercises for exploring different employment areas which link with your interests:

Lees, J. (2005). *How to get a job you'll love: A practical guide to unlocking your talents and finding your ideal career*. McGraw Hill, UK.

## *2. An exercise in exploring employment sectors*

### Step 1: preliminary exploration

Your aim in reviewing the range of employment sectors should be to identify a small number that seem particularly promising candidates for your ideal career path in terms of their match with your skills and values. However, given the bewildering range of opportunities that exist you need to work out a strategy for exploring them. At this stage you should not be too specific in your thinking about employment sectors. For example, if you are studying psychology and your current idea of your ideal career is as a Clinical Psychologist, you should keep a broader range of careers in applied psychology in view, as other similar roles may be more readily attainable and just as rewarding.

In reviewing the range of employment sectors, you could, if you had the time and the inclination, investigate them all of them systematically. The *Penguin Careers Guide*, for example, covers nearly all sectors alphabetically, and it is perfectly feasible to work through it from A to Z. In practice, however, there are many that you could safely reject without spending a lot of time thinking about them, for example because they require a degree in a discipline you don't have and would not wish to undertake. Rather than spending a lot of time on a full systematic search, there are more efficient tactics you can adopt. First you can make a list of all the employment sectors that you have considered before that you still think of as possibilities for your career. Second, you can browse through one of the guides listed earlier and make a note of other sectors that might be of interest. Finally, as well as browsing through a guide, this would be a good point in the job hunting cycle to consult your university or college's Careers Advisory Service, especially if you have no idea where to start. An interview with a student careers advisor would be a very effective way of helping you to decide which sectors to focus on in your job search. Using one or more of the above methods you should aim to end up with a shortlist of up to five employment sectors.

#### Step 2: identifying the most promising employment sectors

The next step is to narrow down even further and decide on the most promising one or two sectors for your job search focus. One useful tactic in this is to draw up a table, or decision matrix, in which you try to evaluate, in some depth, the important characteristics of each sector in terms of how well they match your skills and values.

In considering your shortlist you need to think about particular issues that are important to you, and seek further information from the various careers guides and other sources. Ethnic minority students may wish to appraise the working environment with respect to attitudes towards equality and diversity. For example, what is the representation of ethnic minority employees within a sector, or job role, and at what level in the organisation does this representation occur (managerial, administrative, support staff, etc.). It is not always easy to find such information. As discussed further below, the Penguin careers guide includes information relevant to issues of sex discrimination, and the position of women within various sectors, but does not include ethnic minority-specific information. Many general guides do not address equal opportunities issues at all. Most useful in relation to ethnicity-related equal opportunities considerations are the *GET 2006 Guide for Ethnic Minorities* (as discussed in the introduction), and several careers-related websites which focus particularly on equal opportunities for ethnic minority applicants (see the list at the end of this part of the guide). Because equal opportunities is a key consideration for ethnic minority job seekers, one of the job characteristics listed in Table 1 below is 'equal opportunities', which allows information to be entered about the position of ethnic minorities within the relevant sector.

More generally, the broad characteristics of an ideal career path discussed in Part 2 should be considered:

- 1 The environment you work in – its location; the type of organisation, its main purpose or function, and organisational culture;

- 2 The people you work with – their attitudes and behaviour (related to the organisational culture); your role and status in the organisation with respect to work colleagues and management position;
- 3 The kind of work itself – whether you would be managing people or complex information;
- 4 The opportunities for career development through training and promotion;
- 5 The extrinsic rewards of the job and career – its status in the eyes of the world, the opportunities it offers for travel, its material rewards;
- 6 The demands of the work – in terms of time commitment, threats to your physical and psychological health and well-being, pressure on your work-life balance.

The *Guardian Guide to Careers* includes a useful summary for each sector on its *corporate culture* which can give some indication of whether the sector is likely to give priority to equal opportunities in recruitment or to value diversity in the workplace. Also, there is a discussion of ethical questions relevant to each sector that can help you evaluate the match between your personal values, and those of the sector and the organisations within it. Let's take an example of the financial services sector, in particular insurance. The guide mentions that one aspect of its corporate culture is: *you ... have to appear professional, probably a nice suit with shiny shoes, clean hanky, the lot* (pp. 103-4). Also, under ethical questions it suggests you should ask about firms in this sector: *What is the firm's attitude towards ethical investments, or the mis-selling of financial products such as pensions?* The *Penguin Careers Guide* also includes information on broader issues, in particular the attitudes to older applicants, and the position of women. It states that in the insurance sector, training vacancies can be more difficult to obtain after the age of 30, and the proportion of women members of the Chartered Institute of Insurers is nearly 50% among the under 25s. Finally, the *GET Guide for Ethnic Minorities* gives information on sectors that are more positive towards ethnic minority job seekers.

The decision matrix you construct (the rows being characteristics of employment sectors, the columns being the specific sectors short-listed, and the entries being perceptions and evaluations of each of them) should include the important information you need in order to decide which of them is the most promising sector for you. Table 1 gives an example of a job sector decision matrix that a student considering either the Probation Service or the Insurance sector might construct. The entries in the table summarise the job seeker's own personal perceptions of those sectors and include how he or she rates them. A seven point scale can be useful for this (e.g. Excellent, Very good, Good, Average, Not so good, Poor, Completely unacceptable). The advantage of setting out perceptions of job sectors in a table like this is that it highlights the careers conflicts you need to resolve – for example, excellent extrinsic rewards but not so good for equal opportunities, compared to average extrinsic rewards but good with respect to equal opportunities. The first step in deciding which sectors to focus on, then, is to complete your own decision matrix. Table 2 is a blank decision matrix to be completed.

**Table 1: An example matrix of job sectors and their characteristics**

	Probation Service	Insurance
Environment	5 good	4 average
People, culture	5 good	4 average
Type of work	7 excellent	4 average
Career development opportunities	5 good	6 very good
Status and extrinsic and intrinsic rewards	4 average	7 excellent
Work demands	3 not so good	4 average
Equal opportunities	6 very good	5 good

Having completed your decision matrix, considering as many job sectors as you want to think about, you should try to decide on one or two to focus on in your job search. One useful tactic to achieve this is to first compare columns 1 and 2 and keep the more promising, then compare this one to column 3, and keep comparing the more promising of each pair with the next column until you have compared them all.

**Table 2: A blank decision matrix for three job sectors**

	1.	2.	3.
Environment			
People, culture			
Type of work			
Career development opportunities			
Status and extrinsic and intrinsic rewards			
Work demands			
Equal opportunities			

### *3. Phase 2: Exploring what types of jobs are out there*

Having gained an impression of the range of job sectors which exist, their skills requirements, and other characteristics, the next step is to get an impression of what job vacancies are currently out there in the graduate job market. Directories of employers seeking applicants are useful for this. These tend to be found in the following places: online careers and job-seeking websites; professional body publications; careers magazines; careers advice centres. A list of currently available (at the time of publication, November 2006) directories of graduate level jobs are listed below (alphabetically, not in order of importance), each with a short description. Both general directories, and those aimed specifically at ethnic minority graduates, are included. Having conducted a review of the graduate job market, and narrowed down your range of sectors, or fields, of interest (as described above), these directories can be searched in a more directed manner.

### *4. Directories of job vacancies*

Websites:

#### *General*

Courses and Careers UK: [www.courses-careers.com/](http://www.courses-careers.com/)

This site offers information about courses and careers, including higher education courses, and provides advice on aspects of the recruitment and selection process, such as how to construct a CV and how to perform well at interviews. An alphabetical list of fields is presented, e.g. nursing, publishing, architecture, with a description of the type of work involved, and the career opportunities. Further contact details are also provided. This website thus provides similar information to that given in the Penguin and Guardian careers guides, but also includes links to specific advertised vacancies.

Diversity workforce: [www.diversityworkforce.co.uk/](http://www.diversityworkforce.co.uk/)

A resource for job seekers with a focus on diversity and equal opportunities issues.

Prospects: [www.prospects.ac.uk/](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/)

A very informative site, which includes a “career centre” section with information about employment opportunities, graduate destinations, further study options, skills acquired, case studies, and contacts and resources, for a comprehensive range of degree subjects. The “jobs and work” pages provide information about job sectors, current vacancies, job hunting tips, and the application process. A range of useful tools and services are available if you register with this site, including email-based support from a careers consultant, a CV checking service, online chat forums, and a ‘prospects planner’ which allows you to develop a profile based on your skills and motivations and use this to generate suitable career options.

*Ethnic minority specific*

Asian job site: [www.asianjobsite.co.uk/](http://www.asianjobsite.co.uk/)

A website aimed at Asians, with a list of current vacancies, and other information such as recruitment events and advice for interviews.

Black and Asian grad: [www.blackandasiangrad.ac.uk](http://www.blackandasiangrad.ac.uk)

Lists some current vacancies, and offers advice, employer profiles, positive action initiatives, etc.

Ethnic Britain: [www.ethnicbritain.co.uk/](http://www.ethnicbritain.co.uk/)

A directory of current vacancies, and equal opportunities information, aimed at ethnic minorities.

Ethnic Minority Jobsite: [www.ethnicjobsite.co.uk/](http://www.ethnicjobsite.co.uk/)

A website listing current vacancies which is aimed at ethnic minorities and dedicated to promoting equality and diversity at work.

Kal magazine online: [www.kalmagazine.com/](http://www.kalmagazine.com/)

A range of resources aimed particularly at ethnic minorities, including an employers directory, events diary and case studies. The KAL magazine is available for download in pdf format from this site, and features articles on employment issues facing ethnic minority students and graduates.

Prospects ethnicity page:

[www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/Handling\\_discrimination/Ethnic\\_minorities/Overview/p!efLbcc\)](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Handling_discrimination/Ethnic_minorities/Overview/p!efLbcc)

Provides advice specifically for ethnic minority graduates, covering race-related anti-discrimination legislation, targeting positive employers, ethnic-specific issues relating to the application process, and a list of useful contacts and resources.

Offline resources.

*General*

‘A level playing field’: AGCAS publication, available through careers centres.

*Ethnic minority specific*

Kal magazine: available through careers centres